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1-2-1-1 Press (Diamond) *Complete Coaching Guide*



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1-2-1-1 Full Court Diamond Press - Coaching Guide



The 1-2-1-1 full court press is an aggressive full court press with many different variations that can be made to suit your team and/or to give you an advantage over the opponent you're playing against.

Similar starting formation to a 3-1-1 press, except that in the 1-2-1-1 press the front middle player starts close to the baseline pressuring the in-bounder instead of starting around the free-throw line.

Goal of the Press

The main goal of the press is to force the ball to be inbounded to the strong-side corner and then immediately trap the offensive player that catches the basketball using the in-bounder and the closest wing player.

This is the main trap of the press and the goal is to force the trapped offensive player to throw a lob pass over top of the trap and have it picked off by one of the defensive interceptors.

While this is the main goal, there are many other opportunities for steals in other areas of the press.

Advantages of the 1-2-1-1 Diamond Press

1. Lots of time to recover

Since the main trap is being made so close to the oppositions baseline, if the press breaks down the defensive team will have the entire length of the court to recover and stop the basketball.

2. Speeds up the tempo

If you're running a full-court press you must be a team that loves playing fast basketball. Great half-court offensive teams hate presses because it forces them to play faster than they would like to. A full-court press is a great strategy to disrupt tempo.

3. It's exciting basketball!

Let's be honest... Everyone loves an uptempo, high-paced basketball game. The players love playing in it, the parents and fans love watching it, and we all love coaching it!

4. Fatigue your opponent

If your team runs a full-court press they must be fit enough and have the stamina to do so. When you come up against opponents this aren't used to the up-tempo style of play, they will undoubtedly get worn out very quickly and start making more and more mistakes.

5. Force the ball out of a dominant guards hands

Instead of allowing a dominant guard to bring the ball up the court and set up the offense, running a full court press will force them to pass and use their teammates to bring the ball up the court. Once the ball is out of their hands, you have the opportunity to deny them receiving the basketball back.

6. Improves team chemistry

If your players are putting in 100% effort on every possession (they should be), then you will have to use more of the bench to keep everyone fresh. More court time for the bench often means a happier team.

7. Turnovers close to the basket

There's no better time to get a steal than close to your opponents basket. Since the trap location is made in their corners, any steal will be incredibly difficult for the opposition to recover and defend.

Disadvantages of the 1-2-1-1 Diamond Press

1. It's very aggressive

There can be consequences to running a high risk, high reward press like the 1-2-1-1 diamond press. If the offensive team is to break the press, the defense will usually now find themselves with one less player until they front line catches up. This can result in easy scores for the offensive team. If you're running a full court press like this one, you must be able to handle giving away easy scores occasionally.

2. Must have full commitment from the team

The thing about presses is that they require the entire team to work together in sync. If a single player on the court doesn't fulfil their require role, the entire press breaks down and gaps will open up everywhere.

3. It takes time to learn

The 1-2-1-1 diamond press is a fairly advanced full-court press. It's not something your team will learn in a couple of practices. This means the time you devote in practice to learning the 1-2-1-1 takes away from the time your team could be learning and practicing other skills. This isn't a trade all coaches are willing to make.

1-2-1-1 Diamond Press Rules

1. No dribbling down the sideline

The wing players on the front line must not allow the player receiving the basketball to beat them down the sideline. As soon as they do, the press is broken and it will often lead to an easy score.

2. No passes to the middle of the floor

The 1-2-1-1 diamond press is often broken as soon as the ball is passed to the middle of the floor. This is because from the middle of the floor the offensive team will have loose players sprinting down the sidelines while the front line is trying to recover.

3. No fouling on the trap

Be sure to remind your players that the steal shouldn't be made by the players setting the trap. The objective of the trappers is to force the trapped player to make a lob pass that can be intercepted. The trappers must keep their arms out and use their lower body to take up space.

Setup, Roles, and Responsibilities

As you can see in the diagram, the name 'diamond press' comes from its formation. If you were to get a birds-eye view of the press on the initial setup, you would see the first four players are set up very similar to a diamond shape while one fifth player is positioned at the back playing safety.

Let's discuss the roles and responsibilities of each position and then we'll discuss how you should determine which players fill each position and which are the most important to the press.

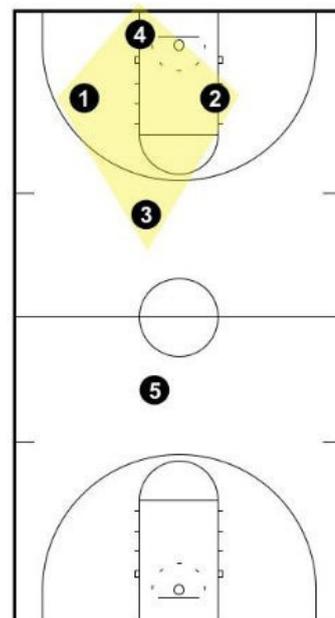
Disruptor

The disruptor starts on the basketball and should be one of the tallest players on your team.

In a perfect world this player is tall, has long arms, and is athletic enough to quickly get to traps and recover.

They have two main roles in the 1-2-1-1 diamond press:

1. Force the pass to be made to the strong-side corner
2. Trap the first pass receiver with either wing player.



Wings

The wing players have two different roles they must fill determined by which side of the court the basketball is inbounded to:

1. **Strong-side wing player** – Their role is to immediately trap the basketball with the disruptor on the inbound pass.
2. **Weak-side wing player** – Their role is to become an interceptor in the middle of the floor.

The weak-side wing player's role is super important in the 1-2-1-1 diamond press since this is the position where a lot of variation will occur and because they're protecting and preventing the pass to a very important part of the floor... the middle of the press.

These players will each start on their respective sides behind the closest player to the ball in their zone.

Interceptor

The interceptor's main role is to anticipate where the pass will be made over the trap and intercept the basketball while in flight.

They will also be required to stop the dribbler if they do break through the initial trap. If they can't stop them completely, the interceptor must at least influence them to the sideline. Don't allow them to blow past!

This player must have a high basketball IQ!

They will set up in line with the player inbounding the basketball, and about half way between the three-point line and half court.

Safety

The safety has two key roles:

1. They must anticipate and intercept long passes.
2. They must be great 2-on-1 defenders since they will find themselves in this situation often.

They will set up as far back as the last offensive player. If the last player is at half way, set up there. If the last player is under the basket, set up at the distance you can cheat up the court while still being able to recover and intercept the lob pass.

It's easier to cheat up the court as safety in youth basketball since the players simply aren't strong enough to make the full-court pass to an offensive player close to the basket.

Assigning Your Player's Positions

Although there will be substitutions so this will change often, here's a quick guide for how I recommend you choose which players fill each positions in the 1-2-1-1 press.

- 1. Start by choosing the 'interceptor'** – In my opinion, this is the most important position of the press. This player should be the best anticipator on your team and preferably athletic. I usually choose the point guard, shooting guard, or small forward for this position so that the bigs can fill the disruptor and safety roles.
- 2. Decide the positions of your bigs** – One of your bigs will be the safety and one will be the disruptor. Allocate the more versatile and athletic big to be the disruptor. They will be required to cover much more of the court and sprint to traps or down the court non-stop. The slower big will be the safety.
- 3. The last two players will be wings** – With the other 3 positions of the press filled, the last two player will each be allocated to a wing. These will usually be a combination of the point guard, shooting guard, and small forward.

Quick Note on Player Roles

Your team may not have the personnel to perfectly fulfil the the requirements of each position I've explained above... and that's okay.

Tall teams can have success with this offense. Short teams can have success with this offense. The point guard may be the best option at your disposal to put all the way back at safety in the defense.

At the end of the day, while I believe using the roles I've written above is the best way to have success with this defense, all positions are interchangeable depending on your personnel.

How to Execute the 1-2-1-1 Diamond Press

On the Inbound

The very first thing you must understand about executing the 1-2-1-1 diamond press is that our first goal is to get the offensive team to inbound the basketball to the corner.

This starts with the disruptor (X4). Depending on where the offensive player takes the ball out of bounds on the baseline, the disruptor must position themselves so that it's difficult for the in-bounder to make a pass anywhere except the strong-side corner.

While the strong-side corner is our preferred area for the opposition to inbound the basketball, they'll often go out of their way to make a pass to the opposite side of the court in an attempt to disrupt our defense.

We don't mind a pass to the weak-side corner although it does result in X4 being required to turn and sprint a further distance which takes extra time.

Two tips the disruptor must follow are:

1. No jumping – The goal of the disruptor is not to intercept the basketball on the inbound (although that would be nice). By jumping off the ground, when the pass is made to the corner it will take longer for the disruptor to react and sprint to the trap.

2. Count out the 5 seconds – By having your disruptor count out the 5 seconds it will put pressure on the referee to make the call and on the offensive player inbounding the basketball to pass the in quickly.

The two wing players begin the press behind the closest offensive players to the ball on their side of the court. This encourages the pass to be made to the corners.

The reason we force the opposition to catch the basketball in the corner limits the options they have to pass since the sideline and baseline become extra defenders.

Further down the floor the main interceptor should try and be about in-line with the in-bounder while reading their eyes in case they make a pass over the top.

The safety should be as far back as the furthest offensive player making sure that there are no easy scores or passes over the top in transition.

The only other thing to be aware of on the inbounds is the in-bounder running the baseline. If they do, X4 must continue to deny the pass to the middle of the floor at all times.



Initial Trap

There are two options you have on the initial trap when running the diamond press...

1. Trap immediately – ‘Fist’

As the name suggest, this involves the disruptor immediately sprinting to trap the basketball with either wing player as soon as the basketball is passed inbounds.

2. Trap after the first dribble – ‘Flat’

This advanced variation involves the disruptor staying and denying the pass back to the in-bounder until the guard who received the pass inbounds puts the ball on the floor. When they’ve taken the first dribble, X4 sprints to set the trap.

(TIP – If you’re coaching a youth basketball team I recommend to stick with trapping immediately until your players understand it and only then consider implementing ‘flat’ for a couple of possessions each game.)

For this example I’ll assume you’re setting the trap immediately (fist).

When the ball is passed in to the strong-side corner, X1 and X4 immediately trap the basketball. X1 must close the space without allowing the ball to be dribbled past them down the sideline. This requires them to close out under control and read the offensive player.

X4 must close out to the trap with high hands so that the pass to the middle of the floor is prevented.

If the offensive guard catches the ball with their back towards the press, X1 should close the space quickly and then the trap should be made before they turn to see the floor. If they catch the ball on the run, then X1 must give them space and corral them towards the middle of the floor so that they aren’t beaten down the sideline and X4 can catch up to trap.

The same trap occurs if the basketball is passed to the weak-side corner. The only difference is that X4 must turn and has a longer distance to run before the trap and the wing defenders switch roles.

When the initial trap is made, the other defenders become 2 interceptors (X2 and X3) and a safety (X5).

1. X2 moves to the middle of the court and prevents the pass into the middle of press.
2. X3 is the interceptor of all lob passes over the press and should be inline with the trap.
3. X5 is equal with the furthest offensive player back to be safety and can also intercept any long passes that are thrown.



Quick Note on Trapping

The two players trapping the basketball should not reach in and try and steal the ball. Doing so will often lead to fouls and that will give the offense the opportunity to set the offense back up.

Rather, the trappers should take up space with their lower body while keeping their arms extended and high for pass deflections, to prevent vision down the floor, and to force the high lob pass over the trap.

Ball Reversal

If the initial trap is set correctly, the only open pass the offensive player will have out of the trap will be to the player that inbounded them the basketball that has stepped inside the court.

This isn't necessarily a bad thing since the in-bounder is often a big player that struggles to dribble and advance the ball up the court.

When this pass is made (assuming the guard doesn't throw a lob pass that we can intercept) the first thing that must happen is for the weak-side wing player to stunt at the player with the ball to give X4 time to catch up, and then recover to denying the player behind them.

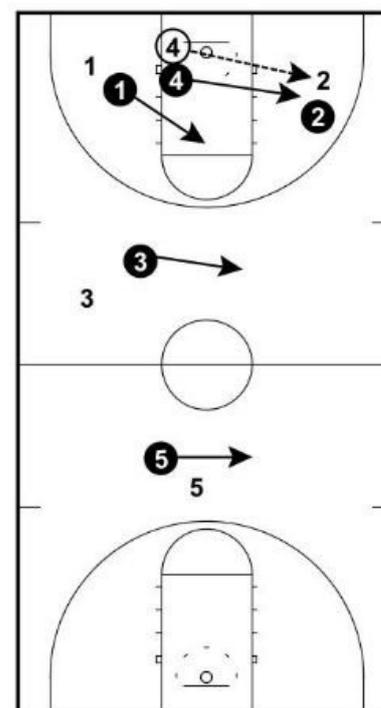
Stunting at the basketball isn't easy for young players to master. If they time it incorrectly there will be an easy pass over the top and consequently a 3-on-2 with advantage to the offense. So if you're coaching a young team it's not crucial to implement as long as X4 hustles to get in front quickly.

When the reverse pass is made X4 must sprint and guard the ball one-on-one while everyone else goes into full court deny. Doing so forces O4 to either advance the basketball by themselves or throw a tough pass. This is all while crucial seconds are ticking off the clock and we're getting closer and closer to an 8 or 10 second violation.

(If the offense gets smart and inbounds with a guard there are changes explained in the 'Variations' section below that you can use to counter this.)

If the ball is reversed a second time to the opposite side of the floor we will trap again with X4 and X2.

This requires the on-ball defender to not allow the offensive player to dribble down the sideline and for the disruptor to close out with high hands, again setting the trap and looking for the interception from the other players.



Pass Over Top

If the offense tries their luck at passing over top of the first defensive line then there should be an immediate trap by X3 and the wing player from whichever side of the court the ball is passed into (X1 in the diagram).

Since the ball must travel through the air there is time for X3 to gain ground and get behind or at least close to the player receiving the basketball.

X3 must play directly in front the offensive player and not allow them to dribble down the sideline. We need to buy time for the wing defender to catch up and be able to set the trap with X3.

The weak-side wing player and the disruptor must sprint back hard and must get into position to intercept the next pass.

Where the offensive players scatter to will vary greatly on this pass over the top so it's up to the two interceptors to be smart and play the passing lanes.

If there's a potential steal situation, we allow X5 to come up and try to intercept the next pass down the line but that requires X4 or X2 to sprint back and get to safety.



When is the Press Over?

As a general overall rule, *stick with the press until the basketball has been passed into the middle of the press or the ball has crossed over the half-way line.*

If the ball gets passed into the middle, the closest player must get in front and slow the ball down while their teammates sprint back. **And I really mean sprint.**

The transition from the press being broken to the half court defense your team is playing must be done as quick as possible. In fact, my number 1 rule of any full-court press is 'players must sprint back when it's broken or beaten!'.

While sprinting back, players should attempt to back-tap the basketball from behind to one of their teammates.



Variations

Denying the Reverse Pass

This is a common way to make the 1-2-1-1 diamond press super aggressive.

If the opposition get smart and start inbounding the ball with a guard, then you must make a change to the defense. We don't want one of our bigs guarding one of their guards full court, do we?

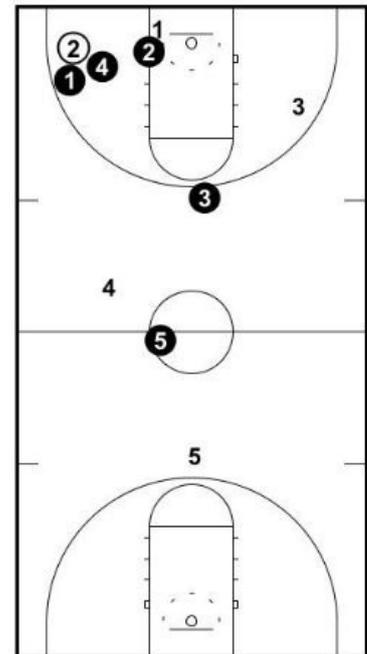
The variation is for the weak-side wing player to deny the pass back to the in-bounder on the trap instead of denying the pass to the middle of the floor.

When running this variation, we have two trappers (X1 and X4), a deny player (X2), and two interceptors (X3 and X5). This is a more aggressive version of the diamond press since it forces the offense to make a forward pass.

While at a disadvantage, X3 and X5 must anticipate and intercept the basketball from the other 3 players. This variation makes it harder on both the offense and defense but can also lead to easier steals and scoring opportunities.

I recommend calling this variation red, and calling the traditional method (not denying the pass to the in-bounder) green so that your players can differentiate during the game without the opposition knowing what you're running.

This can be a very effective variation in youth basketball because it takes advantage of the passers lack of strength to throw the full court pass to 5 and allows both interceptors to play up the court.



Full Court Denial

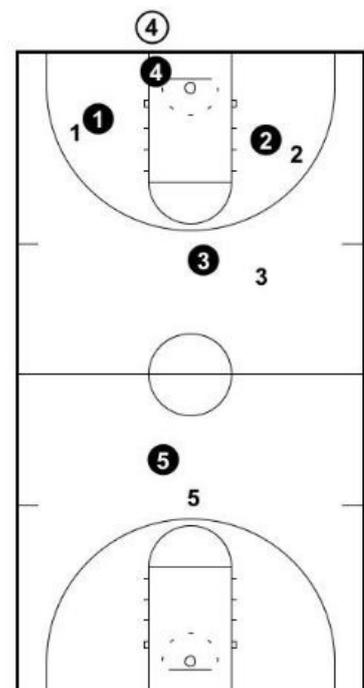
The full court denial variation can be used when you need an immediate steal or simply to give the opposition a different look.

The principles of the full court press stay the same.

X4 starts on the basketball still forcing to the corner as that's a smaller area and we'd prefer to know where the ball is most likely going to be passed to.

X1 and X2 are in full frontal denial. We want the offense to be forced to make a tough pass that the wings have the chance to steal or a lob pass over the top that our interceptor or safety have a chance of stealing.

X3 and X5 play the same as the traditional 1-2-1-1 diamond press. They're close enough to their players that they both can pick off any lob pass that is made to them, yet are still in position to make the in-bounder hesitate to throw a lob pass to either wing player.



Deny a Specific Player

You'll often match up against opponents that have one dominant guard on their team. When this happens, you have the option of denying them the basketball using two players and forcing another player on their team to make a decision and run the offense.

It works like this...

Instead of the two wing players zoning up and taking whomever is in their zone, they match up with the two offensive guards. This allows you to decide which wing player will defend the dominant guard.

The interceptor and safety stay the same. So the formation will usually be relatively the same.

In the diagram the player being denied is O1.

The big difference is that X4 will face-guard the dominant guard, and with X4 and X2 both denying them the ball, the guard should have no chance of receiving the basketball.



Just as in the traditional press, X1 will allow the weaker guard to receive the inbounds pass. When this is made, X4 leaves the dominant guard to come and double team the weaker guard wherever he is on the floor.

X2's role is now to deny the pass back to the dominant guard while X3 and X5 become the interceptors.

Even if the ball does end up back in the dominant guard's hands, this variation will always waste valuable seconds off the shot clock and often pressure the offensive team to avoid the 8 or 10 second violation.

Conclusion

The aggressiveness of the 1-2-1-1 diamond press puts the opposition under immense pressure immediately. This is a great press to run if you want to play fast and make the offense uncomfortable.

I recommend this press because of the amount of variations. This allows you to adjust it to suit your team and make small variations each game depending on the opposition's personnel.

If you've got a team that wants to play aggressively and is willing to hustle, this can be a great press to implement for your team.

1-2-2 Zone Defense *Complete Coaching Guide*



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1-2-2 Zone Defense - Complete Coaching Guide



The 1-2-2 zone defense is a variation of the more commonly used 2-3 zone.

The main difference is that the 1-2-2 zone defense is a great defense against teams that score a majority of their points from the perimeter, whereas the 2-3 zone provides more inside presence.

This is because, in the 1-2-2- zone, all 5 defenders have a responsibility to guard an area on the perimeter.

This allows quick closeouts and the ability to contest every shot taken from the three-point line.

Therefore, the 1-2-2 zone is often used against teams that have strong guards and three-point shooters but aren't strong on the inside.

Strengths

The three biggest strengths of the 1-2-2 zone are:

- 1. Defending Shooters** – The 1-2-2 zone is better at defending against the three-point shot than the 2-3 zone is.
- 2. Fast Break** – With the top player in the middle and two wings, the players are in great positions to transition into the fast break if there is a turnover. Put your point guard on a wing and put a long, athletic player that can finish at the top.
- 3. Trapping Opportunities** – There are great trapping opportunities out of the 1-2-2 zone — especially in the corner.

Weaknesses

The three biggest weaknesses of the 1-2-2 zone are:

- 1. Rebounding** – Since no players have their own player they're on, everyone must find a player to box out when there's a shot.
- 2. The High Post** – The opposition getting the basketball into the high post is what hurts a 1-2-2 zone the most. A good passing team that manages to get the basketball there often can pick your team apart.
- 3. Post Players Must Guard Corners** – This can be a problem if you have post players that don't move quickly, or if you only have a couple of big players that you'd prefer to leave inside the key.

1-2-2 Zone Rules:

- 1. Hands Up at All Times** – Teams must keep the basketball out of the paint and the high post. That's where this defense is most vulnerable.
- 2. Move on Air Time of the Pass** – If players don't move on the air time of the pass, they're going to get to their assignment too late which will allow the offensive player to take an uncontested shot or get in the lane and create for their teammates.
- 3. Prevent Inside Passes** – When running the 1-2-2, we do not deny perimeter passes. Instead, all defenders sag back and prevent the inside pass (similar to the Pack Line defense).
- 4. Rebound** – As with all zones, on each shot attempt, every player must find someone to box out and then go after the rebound.
- 5. Post Players Must Front the Post** – In order to get out to the shooters in the corners quickly, all bigs must be fronting the post when the basketball is on their side of the court.

The Difference Between the 1-2-2 Zone and the 3-2 Zone

Since this question gets asked often and there's a lot of confusion around the answer, I wanted to address it before we get into the core of this article.

The main difference between the 1-2-2 zone and the 3-2 zone is how the top defender plays when the basketball is at the top of the key.

In a 1-2-2 zone, the top defender is on the basketball and the two wings are protecting the free-throw line and allowing the pass to be made to the wing.

In a 3-2 zone, the top defender doesn't pressure the point guard. Instead, they sag back and deny the pass into the high post. (Obviously, this can only be done against a team that can't shoot from the outside.)

By denying the high post with the top defender, the wing defenders can deny the pass around the perimeter.



Roles and Responsibilities

Top Defender

The top defender must be athletic and smart. This player is usually the key to how successful your 1-2-2 will be.

They have two main responsibilities...

1. When the basketball is at the top of the key and advancing over half-way, they should be guiding the offensive player to one side of the court.
2. When the basketball is anywhere else on the court, the top player must deny the basketball getting into the high post since this is the weakest area of the zone.



Wing Defenders

The wing defenders first responsibility is to protect the high post when the basketball is at the top of the key.

When the basketball is on their wing, the wing defender guards the basketball. And when the basketball is in the corner, the wing defender can either trap, deny the reverse pass, or sag into the lane.

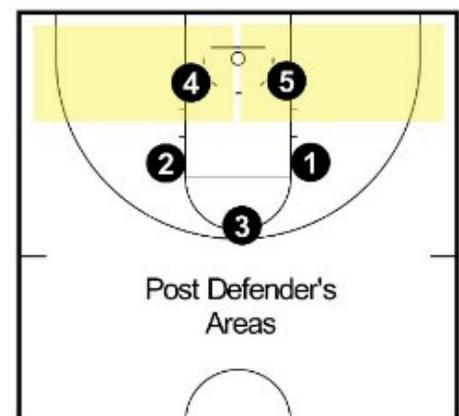


Post Defenders

The post defenders main role is to protect the paint, guard the low-block, and rebound.

What makes this defense different from most others is that they're also required to defend the basketball when it's in the corners.

This requires the post defenders to be able to play both front the post player, and also defend them from behind.



How to Run the 1-2-2 Zone Defense

Basketball Top of the Key

When the basketball being dribbled over half-court it's the top defender's responsibility to pick them up.

The top defender shouldn't do this immediately as they cross because it makes it too easy for the offense to make a quick pass to the wing and then into the high post, they should pick them up when they're about 2 – 3 meters from the three-point line.

When the top defender is pressuring the basketball at the top, the wings must pinch in to the high post and protect the opposition making a pass inside. This means we don't put any pressure on the pass from the top to the wing. In fact, we want the opposition to make this pass. But the wing defenders must be ready to immediately close out to the wing players on the flight of the basketball.

The two post defenders must have a foot inside the key when the basketball is at the top. This way we have presence on the inside but can also close out to the corners if a pass is made there.



Basketball on the Wing

When the basketball is passed to the wing, the wing player on the strong-side must immediately close out on the ball to prevent the open shot.

As this happens, the top defender must drop to the high post and get into denial position.

The weak-side wing player drops down a couple of steps and has one foot in the key. This gives them the opportunity to pick off any skip passes that may be thrown and also provide help inside.

The strong-side post player must get front position on the low post. If the post player is stuck behind, they won't be able to defend the pass to the corner.

And the weak-side post player should be playing split line in the middle of the key. They must be ready for the lob pass to be thrown over the other post player that's fronting their player.



Basketball in the Corner

When the basketball is passed to the corner it's the strong-side low post player's responsibility to close out. They must do this by closing out with high hands and taking away the baseline. If the offensive player drives we want them driving into the middle of our zone.

The top defender continues to deny the pass into the high post.

The weak-side low post must now slide across and defend the strong-side low block if there's an offensive player there but doesn't front.

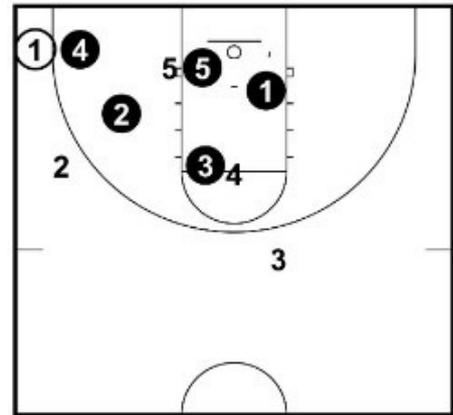
The weak-side wing player drops down and plays the split line.

The strong-side wing player has 3 options...

1. Sag in and prevent the inside pass – By dropping into this space, you'll prevent a pass inside the key to cutters. This option allows the opposition to pass the ball back out to the wing.

2. Hard deny the wing – By denying the pass back out of the corner, it puts a lot of pressure on the player in the corner to make a good pass. The only drawback to this is that we leave a big gap that cutters can get to and get open shots.

3. Trap the corner – I will elaborate further on this in the next section. But keep it in mind!



Basketball in the High Post

The high post is the weakest area in a 1-2-2 zone. So it's super important that your team knows how to defend when the basketball is there.

When the basketball gets to the high post you must bring one of your big men up to guard them. I like to designate this person from the start of the game so the players always know. For this article we'll say the 4 must come up and defend while the 5 stays back to protect the key.

When the basketball is passed into the high post, 4 immediately comes up and defends the the basketball while 5 slides to the middle of the key with their arms out wide to protect from passes inside.

The top defender can dig at the basketball to get the high post player to pass it out to the top but the wing defenders must not pinch in.



The wing defenders must stick to the players on the wings because we don't want to give up an open three-point shot.

When the basketball is in the high post it turns into 'pick your poison' and we'd much rather an opponent shoot a long two-point shot over an outstretched arm of our post player than to give away a wide open three-point shot.

Basketball in the Low Post

Since we front the low-post at all times, there won't be many opportunities for the offense to get a low-post post up.

If they do get the basketball inside, it will most likely come off a pass from the corner since that's the only time the low post won't be fronted by a defender.

When this happens, the low post strong-side player should dig at the basketball while staying close enough to the corner to not allow an open shot, and the low-post weak-side player is tasked with defending the basketball.

The weak-side wing drops down and covers the key while being ready for the skip pass, the strong-side wing denies the pass back out to the wing player, and the top defender is still denying the pass to the high post.



Trapping Options

In a few moments, I'll explain to you the two traps that work well with the 1-2-2 zone.

As with most zones, the best traps are the ones performed in the corners of the court. This is because the sideline and baseline act as extra defenders and limit the passing options of the offense even further.

Because of this, I always trap the corners and recommend you do too if your players are experienced enough.

The trap on the wing should be used as a surprise to the offense on rare occasions. For example, it could be used nearing the end of a close game when your team desperately needs a steal.

Trapping at the Top

Trapping at the top of the key can be used if you need a quick interception opportunity.

It begins with the top defender directing the dribbler to one side of the court as they dribble across the half-way line.

On a signal, the strong-side wing sprints up and the top defender and wing defender set a trap on the ball-handler.

At the exact same time, the strong side low post must sprint high and take away the easy pass the dribbler can make to the wing since this will be the dribbler's first pass opportunity.

It's now up to the trappers to get a deflection and the other two defenders to read the pass and intercept a pass to one of the other three offensive players on the floor.

This is a great trap if you need a quick steal late in the game.



Trapping on the Wing

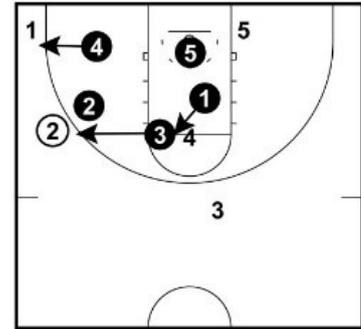
This trap can be performed any time the basketball is on a wing, but I find it works best directly after the basketball has been reversed out of the corner.

If you want this trap to be effective, you must catch the offense by surprise.

As it's being passed out, the strong-side wing and the top defender immediately sprint at the basketball and set a double team.

The strong-side post player gets up in the lane to cut off the pass to the corner player, the weak-side post player stays on split line, and then the weak-side wing player must try and read the eyes of the passer and intercept the pass to one of the two other offensive players on the court.

Similar to the trap at the top, this is a great trap if you need a quick steal but shouldn't be used more than a couple of times each game.



Trapping the Corner

The corner is the best place on the court to trap the basketball because you get the added benefit of the offensive player being restricted by the baseline and sideline, too.

When the basketball is passed from the wing to the corner, both the strong-side post and strong-side wing players close out to the basketball with high hands remembering to avoid fouling.

As this happens, the top defender slides across to deny the pass back out, the weak-side post player anticipates and then half-fronts a player on the strong-side low post if there is one, and the weak-side wing must then attempt to get a deflection or steal from one of the other two players on the court.

This is the best trap out of the 1-2-2 and I recommend that you use it often once your players understand it.



Defending Skip Passes

Defending skip passes in the 1-2-2 zone is reasonably simple since we use all 5 players as perimeter defenders.

Let's go over the three main skip passes and how to defend them in the 1-2-2 zone.

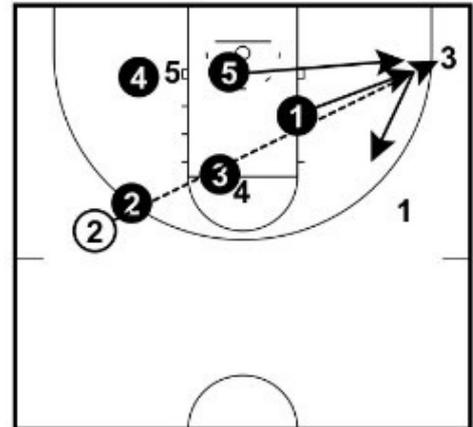
Wing to Corner Skip Pass

If the basketball is skipped from the wing to the corner, the weak-side wing must close out on the high side of the corner player so that there's not a quick reversal pass.

They only hold this position for a second or two as they should be immediately bumped up by the post player who should be sprinting from defending the opposite post to covering the corner.

Depending on how aggressive you want to play the 1-2-2, this can also be a great time to trap the basketball in the corner.

After the bump, everyone should be back to their normal positions.



Corner to Wing Skip Pass

The basketball will be covered by the weak-side wing player if the ball is skipped to either the opposite wing or corner.

Same as the wing to corner pass, if the basketball is skipped corner to corner, the weak-side wing closes out on the high side to prevent the reversal pass and is then bumped up away by the recovering post player.

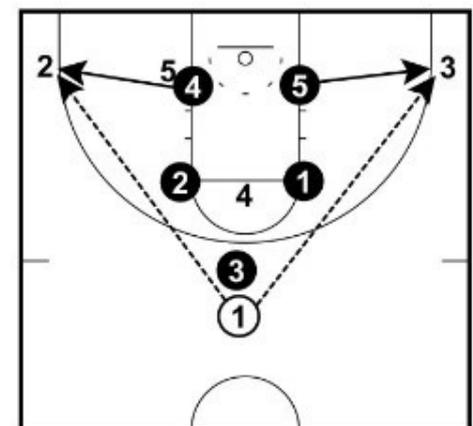


Top to Corner Skip Pass

When the basketball is passed from the top to the corner, the post player must sprint out to contest the outside shot and play defense.

It's imperative that the post players are always fighting for top position so that they have a clear run to the corner.

If the opposition is smart and has good shooters, they'll try to screen the bottom player as the skip pass is being thrown.



Variations

Variation 1 – Two Stay Inside

'Two Stay Inside' is a great variation of the 1-2-2 zone defense that will suit your team if;

1. *The opposition aren't good three-point shooters.*
2. *You have two big men you want to keep on the inside.*

two-stay-inside-areas Basically, instead of all 5 defenders guarding the perimeter like in the traditional 1-2-2 zone, this variation allows you to keep your two biggest players next to the basket and uses the two wing players to guard the corners as well.

This will lead to a lot of scrambling by the wing defenders and will give up more open outside shots, but this won't matter if you're playing against a weak outside shooting team.

Conversely, if the opposition can knock down the corner three-pointer consistently, you won't be able to stay in this zone.

How it Works:

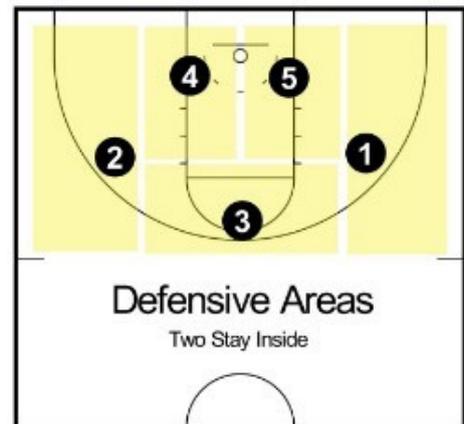
On a pass to the corner, instead of the post player closing out on the corner player, the wing player is required to scramble and close out on the basketball.

This isn't an ideal rotation, but remember, we're only using this variation against teams that aren't great from the perimeter. In fact, sometimes it's not a bad thing to tempt bad shooting teams with open shots!

The other two perimeter defenders rotate around on this pass so that someone is always covering the high post.

Using this variation also means that your post players will never be required to front the post. They should always play behind and be close to the ring.

While this isn't a perfect defense, this variation lets you get to keep your two strong post players protecting the key and the basket and is great against teams that can't shoot well.



Variation 2 – Point Drop Zone

I'll only go over the point drop zone variation quickly as it deserves its own entire post.

The 'Point Drop' zone (also known as the sliding zone) is best used when you have a big, athletic, stand-out defensive player that you want to always keep between the basketball and the ring.

This player will be the top defender.

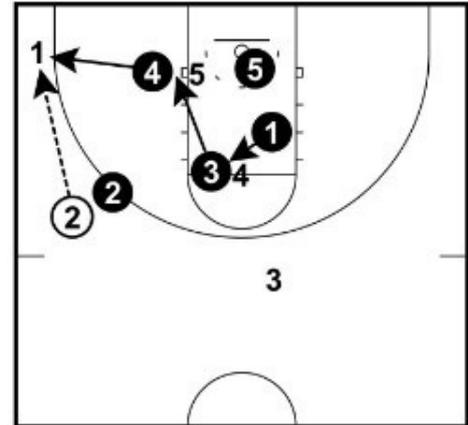
The variation is played the same when the basketball is at the top of the key and on the wings, but changes dramatically when the basketball is passed to the corners.

The big difference is that when the basketball is passed to the corner, the top defender will immediately slide down and front the post. This does a few things...

- 1. It keeps your best, athletic defender between the basketball and the ring.*
- 2. It allows your team to front the post when the basketball is in the corner.*
- 3. There will always be one of your post players on split line instead of the weak-side wing.*

This continues regardless of which side the basketball is on. When the basketball is in the corner, it's the top defender that fronts the post.

It now becomes the responsibility of the weak-side wing player to deny the high post since the top defender is near the low block.



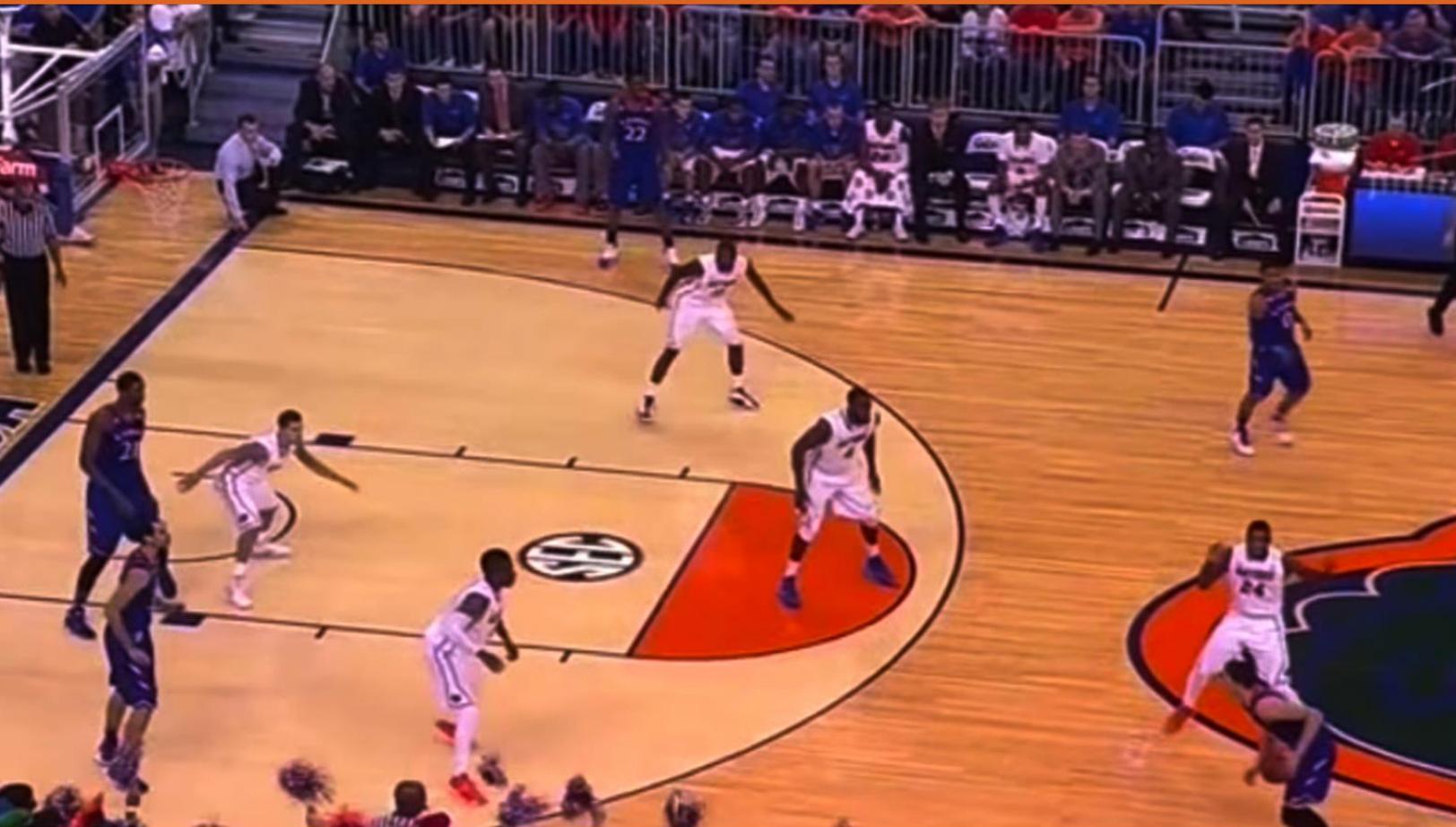
Conclusion

The 1-2-2 zone is a great zone to use against teams that can shoot the basketball at a high rate. By using all 5 players to guard the perimeter, your team won't give up many open three-point shots.

I often recommend this zone option to coaches that have a dominant, athletic player to put at the top defender position.

If you that sounds like your team, this could be a great zone for you to implement.

1-3-1 Zone Defense *Complete Coaching Guide*



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1-3-1 Zone Defense - Complete Coaching Guide



The 1-3-1 zone defense is a unique defense that is run by teams at many different levels.

It's been successfully run by many youth teams all the way up to college basketball where Coach Beilein uses it as his base defense for Michigan.

In this article, we're going to be discussing both the half-court 1-3-1 defense and the three-quarter court 1-3-1 zone defense since both are often implemented simultaneously.

This defense works best if you have long, athletic players; but with a couple of simple adjustments, can easily work of teams with a variety of athletes.

At its core, the 1-3-1 is an aggressive defense that relies on cutting off passing lanes, anticipation, and deflections to create turnovers and fast break opportunities for your team.

If you decide to implement the 1-3-1 defense for your team, it's imperative that you're ready to play fast basketball!

Goal of the Zone

The 1-3-1 zone defense has a very different concept to most defenses.

While in most defenses you always have a player defending directly between the opponent with the basketball and the basket, the 1-3-1 instead cuts off normal passing lanes and forces the offensive team to throw lob passes over the defense, pass slow bounce passes around the defense or attack off the dribble.

This gives the defensive team plenty opportunities to read the pass and get deflections or steals.

Advantages of the 1-3-1 Zone

- 1. The offense has to adjust to your defense** – When running the 1-3-1, it's so unique and different to most defenses that opposition teams can't run their regular offense. They are forced to adjust and play much differently than they're used to.
- 2. Speeds up the game** – Great for teams with athletes that want to play a fast style of basketball.
- 3. Causes mass confusion** – Because of the uniqueness of the defense, players will be confused as to how they should play against it and where it's best to attack the zone.
- 4. Great for transition offense** – When your team does get steals they're in the perfect positions to run the floor and get an easy score. Both wings sprint the sidelines and the chaser will usually be the person in front.
- 5. Easy to prepare for the opposition** – There are only a couple of ways to attack the 1-3-1 defense. Most teams will go to a 2-1-2 offense. Your team will know what to expect and how to defend the limited variations.
- 6. Changes tempo of the game** – This is a fantastic defense to implement mid-game when you want to change the tempo or need a couple of quick steals. The offense won't know what hit them.
- 7. Many variations and adjustments** – As you'll see further on in the article, the 1-3-1 has plenty of variations and adjustments that will allow you to easily adjust to different teams and counteract their strengths.
- 8. It's fun and exciting** – I've found that players love to run this defense and getting them to buy-in to it is easy. Players love that they're encouraged to anticipate and go for steals and deflections, it creates great transition offense, and it's unique!

Disadvantages

- 1. There are a few areas that can be exploited** – The 1-3-1 is weak in a couple of areas. Specifically, the corners and high post.
- 2. Your team will give up easy baskets** – When you're running an aggressive defense like the 1-3-1 and players are diving for deflections all game, you must be okay with giving up easy baskets from time to time. Players will occasionally be caught out of position.
- 3. Size does matter** – Although it's possible to have success using this defense with a small team, it definitely makes it easier if you have tall, long athletes.
- 4. Takes time to learn** – If you're not using the 1-3-1 as your main defense then you have to question whether it's worth the limited practice time to spend teaching it to your team.
- 5. Rebounding** – As with any zone, rebounding is an issue since players aren't on direct opponents to box out. Players must attack the boards and find someone to put a body on.
- 6. Requires a lot of energy** – If your team doesn't go deep on the bench then your players will quickly get fatigued and struggle to run out the game. If you're going to use the 1-3-1 zone, you must be willing to use your bench.

1-3-1 Zone Defense Rules

1. No direct passes – Your defense must not allow any straight-line passes. They must stay in the passing lanes and force the opposition to make high lob passes and slow bounce passes.

2. Move on air-time of the pass – Players must rotate to the next position as the ball is being passed through the air. This requires them to be in stance and anticipating where the next pass will be made to. If your team is too slow, the opposition will get many open shots.

3. Everyone must crash the boards – Since zones are susceptible to offensive rebounds, every player must crash the boards hard when a shot is made and get the rebound.

4. Must stay in defensive stance – If players aren't in defensive stance they'll be too late to react when passes are made. Being late will lead to open shots and breakdowns in the defense. The coach must be constantly reminding the players to get their hands up!

5. Read the passer's eyes – Defenders must always be reading the passer's eyes and anticipating where the next pass will be made to. The 1-3-1 is an aggressive gambling zone and players should be going for deflections when they get a chance.

The Difference Between 3/4 Court and the 1/2 Court 1-3-1 Zone Defense

The first thing we must talk about is the difference between the three-quarter court 1-3-1 zone defense and the half-court 1-3-1 zone defense.

The main difference between the two is that in the three-quarter court zone the defense traps in all four corners of the half court. We call the three-quarter court 1-3-1 zone '23'.

In the half-court zone, the defense traps only in the baseline corners of the half-court. We call the half-court 1-3-1 zone '13'.

The three-quarter court defense is more aggressive while the half-court zone is more conservative.

Initial Setup

As the name suggest, the 1-3-1 zone defense is set up in a 1-3-1 formation.

There are four positions on defense which we'll now walk through.

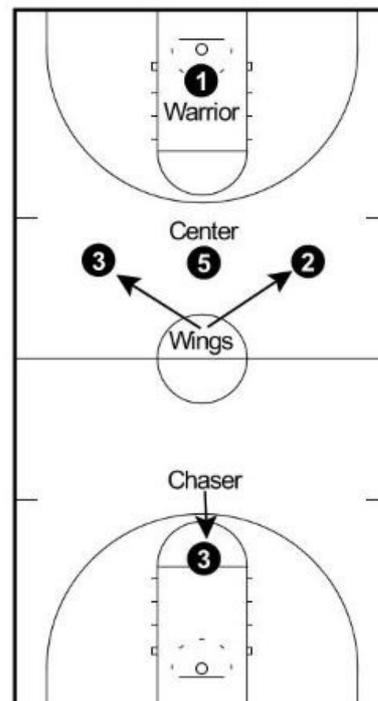
The defender at the top of our zone is called the 'chaser'.

There are three defenders across the middle of the zone. The two on the outsides are called 'wings' and the player in the middle is called the 'center'.

If you decide to push the dribbler to a specific side each time, then your smaller wing should be on the side you're influencing the dribbler to and your bigger wing should be on the weak-side for better rebounding.

At the bottom of the zone, we have the defender we refer to as the 'warrior'.

Now that you know the setup of the zone, let's go through each position's roles and responsibilities...



Roles and Responsibilities

The 1-3-1 zone defense doesn't have specific spots where certain positions must play.

Instead, you must know your athlete's abilities and put them in zone positions that will best suit their strengths on the court.

Before we start, here's something you should keep in mind. This is the order in which I believe you should choose the players to fill each role on defense.

- 1. Pick the chaser first.**
- 2. Pick the center second.**
- 3. Pick the warrior third.**
- 4. Pick the wings last.**



Chaser – Top of the Zone

In my opinion, the chaser is the most important position in the zone.

The player filling this position should be athletic, have great anticipation, and have a big motor since they'll be covering a lot of the court.

The main role of the chaser is to influence the dribbler to one side of the court and then not allow the basketball to be reversed back to the other side of the court by playing up high in the passing lane of the guard-to-guard pass. Their feet should always be facing the sideline.

They should be relentless when going for deflections with their feet or hands whenever a pass is attempted.

When the ball is passed to the corner the chaser is responsible for guarding the ball-side elbow.

The chaser is also required to be a weak-side rebounder whenever shots are taken from the wing or the corner on either side of the court.

Wings – Sides of the Zone

The wings are on the outside of the zone and are responsible for trapping in both corners, defending the ball when it's passed to the wing on their side, and guarding the weak-side low block when the ball is on the weak-side.

An easy way to tell if the wings are in the correct position is that they should always be opposite of each other. If the right wing is up, the left wing should be down. If the left wing is up, the right wing should be down.

If the zone is set up correctly, when the ball is on the opposite side of the court, the wing defender on the low block will be the only weak-side defender. From here they must anticipate and attempt to deflect or steal any skip passes that they can get their hands on.

When the ball is far out from the three-point line the wing player will defend the passing lane to the corner while the chaser defends the reverse pass. If the wing defender catches the ball close to the three-point line the wing defender defends them on the hip closest to the baseline gradually pushes them out while not allowing them to survey the floor.

The wings are crucial when it comes to rebounding since most shots will bounce long. Along with the chaser, they're in charge of getting weak-side rebounds.

Center – Middle of the Zone

The center has two main jobs...

1. Stay between the basketball and the ring at all times.
2. Keep the ball out of the post.

The center position isn't easy. You must have a big player that's willing to battle for position at all times because that's what they'll be doing.

We want the center to front the post at all times. On the high post, on the low post, everywhere.

We want them in front to deny the pass to a vulnerable part of our zone, the high post, and also because they must be in position to help if the offensive guard decides to attempt to penetrate.

So if the basketball gets swung from the wing to the corner the center must quickly battle for front position on the low block. We don't worry about the lob over the top because our weak-side wing is on the weak-side low block and should be able to intercept that pass.

Warrior – Bottom of the Zone

The player that fills the role of the warrior must be exactly that... a warrior.

The warrior will be required to cover both baseline corners which isn't an easy task (they will be sprinting from side-to-side a lot), and they are required to battle for position inside for a majority of each defensive possession.

A lot of teams like to put their quickest, smartest player in this position. More often than not the point guard.

But if you have another smart, athletic player with a big motor (like the chaser), this could be an ideal position for them as well.

The warrior must be smart and must be willing to take charges.

They must always be on the ball-side of the court fronting the low post until the basketball is passed to a corner. When it is they must close out making sure to not allow the corner player to drive baseline.

How to Run the 1-3-1 Defense

Since most teams will run the three-quarter court press and trap in the half-court corners, let's start there...

The team will set up how it was shown under 'initial setup' above. The chaser on the free-throw line, the center, and both wings form a line a couple of feet out from the three-point line, and the warrior begins in the paint.

The Pick-Up Point

The 'pick-up point' is the point at which the chaser will start pressuring the basketball. For the three-quarter court press, we make this the foul line.

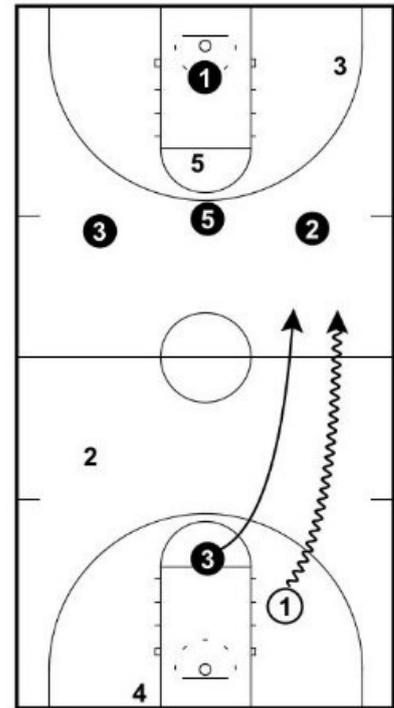
From this point, that chaser will start pressuring the basketball to one side of the court.

They will do this by angling their body so that the dribbler has no choice but to dribble up the sideline.

If they lob the pass over the top to another guard, the chaser must turn and sprint to pressure the other guard in the same way.

The ball must never be dribbled down the middle of the court!

The chaser should be active and bouncy at all times. They want the dribbler to question whether they can throw a lob over the top without them getting a hand on it.



Trapping the Half-Court Corners

As the dribbler crosses the half-court line, the ball-side wing will step up and set a soft trap a couple of feet from the offensive player. The reason we set a soft trap instead of an aggressive hard trap is that we don't want the dribbler to split the trap and beat us.

A great idea here is to have your players 'stunt' at the basketball to try and make the dribbler pick up the basketball.

If this does happen, the chaser should shade over towards the opposite guard, taking away the guard-to-guard pass, the ball-side wing must put pressure on the basketball, and the other three players should be in full deny. If performed correctly, this will usually lead to a steal or deflection.



Whether the offensive player picks up their dribble or not, all we want to force with the soft trap is to force the dribbler to throw a lob pass over the trap that we might be able to deflect or steal.

A couple of tips for the wing player stepping up to trap the basketball with the chaser:

1. No sideline – The wing player must close out at an angle that give the dribbler no chance of beating the trap down the sideline. This is the worst possible outcome. If the dribbler does split the trap, we'd prefer they did it between the defenders where they'll dribble into our center player.

2. Close out with high hands – This means that if the dribbler wants to pass the basketball down the line to the corner or low wing, they'll have to throw a lob pass that our warrior might be able to pick off.



While this is happening the center is establishing front position in the high post. Remember, the center must always be between the basketball and the basket.

The warrior is establishing front position on the ball-side block and is ready to sprint out for a deflection if the ball is lobbed to the corner.

And the weak-side wing player drops back to the weak-side low block.

All three off-ball players are reading the eyes and body of the offensive player with the ball and are ready to anticipate and pick off a lob pass or slow bounce pass.

Once the basketball has been pushed to a sideline we want to do everything we can to keep it on that side of the floor.

This means the chaser must stay in-line with the basketball with 10 toes towards the sideline, playing directly in-between the guard-to-guard pass. They should be active with high hands to make the dribbler question whether their pass will be intercepted.

Alternatives to the half-court corner soft trap

Instead of setting a soft trap (23) there are a number of other ways you can defend in the 1-3-1 as the ball is coming over half-court.

1. No half-court corner trap (13)

If you want to defend more conservatively an option you have is to pull the defenders back closer to the basket and choose not to trap the half-way corners.

The chaser will still stay in-line with the basketball preventing the reversal pass, but instead of the wing player extending out and setting a soft trap, they stay back in the passing lane of the direct pass to the corner.

Everyone else on the court defends the same way.



2. Hard half-court corner trap

The hard trap is a great alternative to use if your team is down towards the end of the game or if you simply want to change the tempo of the game and play more aggressively.

This involves the ball-side wing and the chaser closing in hard for the trap as the ball crosses over half-court.

The other players should be up an extra step in the passing lanes and anticipating a steal.

Hard trapping might lead to a few more easy baskets for the opposition since the defense gambles more, but it can result in more turnovers which has the potential to change a game.



Defending the Ball Reversal

If the opposition does lob a guard-to-guard pass over top of the chaser, the chaser must turn and sprint to get to the player with the basketball.

As usual, they close out with high hands and with 10 toes towards the sidelines, staying directly in the passing lane of the guard-to-guard pass.

The next part of this defense is very important...

The wing that was on the weak-side must now come up and pressure the basketball the same way the other wing just was.

But they don't do this by sprinting a direct line at the player with the basketball...

The wing player must close-out to the ball by making a banana cut so that they first cut off the direct pass to the corner before closing out with high hands to the player with the basketball.

The reason for this is because the 1-3-1 is vulnerable in the corners. The warrior is responsible for the corners and it's incredibly hard for them to sprint corner-to-corner on a ball reversal. So we must prevent the pass down the sidelines, or, at the very least, force them to make a lob pass.

The center has slid across and is fronting the high post so we have help if the offensive player decides to put the ball on the floor.

On the reversal, the warrior must again sprint to the opposite side of the floor (yes, they sprint a lot!) and establish front position on the ball-side low block if the pass hasn't already been made to the corner.

And the opposite wing will fall back to the weak-side low block. Remember, if one wing is up, the other wing is down. They're always opposite each other.



Trapping the Baseline Corners

If the pass is made to the corner and everyone is in the correct positions, the warrior will step out to the ball from the low block making sure not to give up baseline.

The ball-side wing will close out to the corner with high hands and the wing and warrior will set a hard trap in the corner.

(I recommend a hard trap for the baseline corners and soft trap for the half-court corners.)

This trap will be more aggressive than the half-court corner trap.

Players setting the baseline trap must make sure not to foul. They must keep arms out and pressure with their lower body. We don't get steals directly from the players trapping. What we want is for the player with the basketball to be forced to throw a high lob pass that one of our other three players can intercept.

When the ball is in the corner the other three players have different roles they must fill...

In keeping their rule of staying between the ball and the basket, the center will drop down and front the ball-side low block.

The chaser will cut down to the high post and will deny any pass that might be made there and also be prepared to jump out and get a deflection on a pass to the wing if the opportunity arises.

And the weak-side wing player will stay on the weak-side low block.

Often when the basketball is in the corner the offensive team will flash a player to the high post. Since this is often out of sight of the chaser, it's imperative that the weak-side wing is communicating and letting them know if there's anyone cutting through the key.



Alternatives to the baseline corner hard trap

Similar to the three half-court traps we talked about for the half-court corners, there are two other alternatives to the hard corner trap that you can use.

1. Soft baseline corner trap

The soft trap is simply being in the passing lane from the corner to the wing and not allowing an easy pass out of the corner.

The ball-side wing will be up the line denying the pass while the warrior will be pressuring the ball and forcing the corner player to put the ball on the floor and drive towards the middle, or to throw a long lob pass over the defense.

The center will still be fronting the low block, the weak-side wing will be defending the weak-side low block and anticipating a long pass that they can intercept, and the chaser will be guarding the high post.



2. No baseline corner trap

If you decide to not trap the basketball at all in the baseline corner this involves the ball-side wing player taking a step or two back into the line and playing more of a pack line defense.

This discourages the corner player from driving the basketball and can be a good tactic to use if there's a dominant big on the opposition team and you want to keep the ball out of their hands.

It allows the easy pass back out to the wing which isn't necessarily a bad thing if you want the ball to stay on the perimeter.



The center will stay fronting the low block, the weak-side wing will stay on the weak-side low block, and the chaser is still covering the high post.

Defending the Skip Pass

Skip passes are a difficult action for the 1-3-1 defense to cover, but it can be done.

Let's break this down into two different skip passes (it doesn't really matter where the basketball is passed from).

1. Skip passes to the corner.
2. Skip passes to the wing.

On all skip passes it will always be the weak-side wing defender closing out on the basketball... but how they close out will depend on where the basketball is skipped to.

1. Skip passes to the corner

(I understand a corner-to-corner skip pass is rare but I wanted to stay with the movements of the offense I've been using. Usually, a skip pass to the corner will come from the wing. But the rotations are the same.)

On skip passes to the corner the weak-side wing player on the low block will sprint out to corner player making sure to not allow the offensive player to drive baseline.

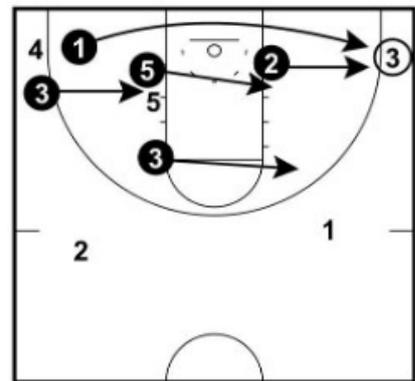
As soon as the skip pass is made, it's crucial that the warrior sprints baseline and gets out to the corner player that the wing is currently defending.

When the warrior gets there, they can bump the wing player back up to their normal position.

The other option is to immediately trap depending on how your team is running the 1-3-1.

Also, after the skip pass, the chaser must help out immediately by being ready to guard the ball-side wing player if it's passed there from the corner.

The center must fight to get across and establish front position on the ball-side and the weak-side wing will drop to the weak-side low block like normal.



2. Skip passes to the wing

Skip passes to the wing are a little harder to defend than skip passes to the corner.

When the skip pass is made to the corner we have the chaser able to help if the quick pass is made to the wing, whereas there is no one to help the warrior defend the corner if the skip pass is made to the wing and then the opposition makes a quick pass to the corner.



That's the danger pass and is one of the vulnerable spots of the 1-3-1 defense.

But there is an answer...

To counteract this action, the wing player must perform the same cut that they make when there's a guard-to-guard ball reversal...

The wing must banana cut.

When the ball is skipped to the weak-side wing, the wing must banana cut out to the wing, taking away the direct pass to the corner, and getting on the hip of the offensive player that's closest to the sideline.

We would rather the opposition drive into the middle of our defense than allow a pass to the corner and an open three-pointer.

As soon as the pass is made, the warrior must sprint the baseline and get to the corner as quick as they can. If the pass has been made there, they must do their best to contest the shot without giving up the baseline drive.

For the other three defenders, the chaser slides across from the high post, the weak-side wing drops to the weak-side low block, and the center battles to get across and establish position in front on the ball-side low block.



Defending the Wing

When the basketball is on the wing we're setting a soft trap with the ball-side wing player and the chaser.

One thing to note is that the 1-3-1 defense doesn't like when the ball is on the wing close to the three-point line. We want to push them out off the three-point line and get the back closer to the half-court line.

We can't allow the offensive player to be comfortable and be able to survey the floor.

The wing defender accomplishes this by pressuring the offensive players' baseline hip and forcing them to retreat dribble towards half court. This also takes away the direct pass to the corner.

The chaser should be a couple of feet away preventing the reversal guard-to-guard pass and being in position to potentially deflect any pass made into the high post.

The warrior will be between the low post and the corner ready to step out if a pass is made to the corner, the center will be fronting up high on the low block, and the weak-side wing will be on the weak-side low block.

It's important that the weak-side wing is ready to get a hand on any lob passes that are made over our fronting center.



Defending Dribble Penetration

Since the 1-3-1 relies on playing directly in passing lanes and forcing lob passes, often we leave gaps that the offensive team may choose to attack through.

We stop dribble penetration with the center stepping out with high hands from the high post and pressuring the player driving the basketball.

This causes one of the rare times where we will end up with three players defending the basketball making it extremely difficult for the player with the ball to find an open passing angle.

When the center steps up to stop dribble penetration, they are no longer responsible for the player they were guarding on the high post or anyone else below them.

The task of defending the paint falls to the weak-side wing player and the warrior who must pinch in and prevent any easy passes into the paint. They must also be ready to sprint out to shooters if the ball is passed to the wing.

Once the ball is passed out, everyone must recover to their 1-3-1 positions.



Defending the High Post

If the basketball is passed into the high post we must get it out of there as soon as possible.

This is a dangerous area against a 1-3-1 zone. The player with the basketball has the opportunity to pass everywhere on the floor from this position.

This means we will double with the chaser and the center player. We allow the pass back out the top of the key.

The warrior and weak-side wing both pinch in and guard the low blocks while the ball-side wing will defend the pass out to their player.

If the basketball is skipped to the opposite side of the court, it's crucial that the weak-side wing player remembers how to guard skip passes by banana cutting out and taking away the direct pass to the corner.

This pass will hurt the 1-3-1.



Defending the Low Post

If we run the 1-3-1 correctly, we should never have to worry about defending the low post. If the offensive team does get it there, it will usually be a quick shot.

But if we do happen to get into the situation of the center playing defense behind on the low block, the warrior must dig at the basketball until it's passed out of there. Making sure to not allow a three-point shot from the corner.

The chaser drops down to the high post, the ball-side wing is defending the pass out to the wing, and the weak-side wing is defending the weak-side low block.



Rebounding

Rebounding should be a massive emphasis when running the 1-3-1 zone defense. As always when running a zone, your team will always be at a disadvantage after a shot since players must find a player to box-out.

Let's refer back to rule #3 – Everyone must crash the boards.

And we really mean everyone.

When a shot goes up, you can't have players leaking out for the fast-break. We need all hands on deck to secure the rebound before we worry about offense.

When a shot is taken, the weak-side wing and the chaser are in charge of rebounding on the weak side. The center must battle for rebounding position on the strong side. Usually, it will be one of the other two players contesting the shot so the other must close in to help out on the rebounds as well.

The chaser must always rebound the weak-side of the zone. As with many teams that run this defense, don't be surprised if this player turns out to be your leading rebounder.



Stopping a Star Player

This defense can work fantastic against a team with one or two great players.

The reason why is because the defense can determine how much pressure to put on each individual and can also determine which players on the court are tightly guarded.

A tactic many coaches have used in the past is to hard trap the opposition's star player and only soft trap the rest of the team.

This forces the star player to pass the basketball but also allows the defense to prevent them from getting the ball back while encouraging their teammates to attack.

Instead of trapping the weaker players, your team can hedge closer to the star player and discourage the pass back to them.

If you use this tactic, your team must be all on the same page and understand what you're doing. And they must talk to each other!



Quick Recap...

If you're going to teach the 1-3-1 defense to your team, I highly recommend that you teach both variations so that you can change over during the game.

This will give you an advantage because your team will dictate the tempo of the game and you'll be able to adjust to the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition

1-3-1 Half-Court Zone – '13'

The half-court zone is called '13' and is the conservative version of the 1-3-1 zone. The biggest difference is that there is no trapping in the half-court corners.

This variation of the 1-3-1 is best suited to a team that isn't incredibly athletic and would rather slow the game down and keep the opponents on the perimeter.

1-3-1 Three-Quarter Court Zone – '23'

The three-quarter court zone is called '23' and is the aggressive version of the 1-3-1 zone. When using this variation, your team will trap in all four corners of the half court.

This variation is best suited to a long, athletic team that wants to play at a fast pace. There will be many more deflection opportunities, but your team will also allow more open shots and easy baskets.

How will your team run the 1-3-1 press?

There are four main questions the coach must decide if choosing to implement the 1-3-1 zone press.

1. Are you going to run the press three-quarter court or just half-court?
2. Will your team trap in both the half-court and baseline corners?
3. What kind of traps are you going to use for each corner?
4. When are you going to use the 1-3-1 zone?

Conclusion

One of the biggest questions I get asked about running the 1-3-1 defense goes something like this...

"But what if our team isn't quick enough to play the 1-3-1 defense?"

For those coaches currently battling the same thought, I want you to check out this quote from one of the greatest coaches basketball has ever had...

"Positioning, anticipation, and technique create quickness. Therefore, you can always get quicker" – Don Meyer

The 1-3-1 zone defense can be adjusted to suit any basketball team that wants to use it. Your players will become better and better as they get used to the positions and improve at anticipating passes.

It's a fun defense, it has many different variations and adjustments, and I highly recommend you consider using it for your team.

2-2-1 Press

Complete Coaching Guide



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2-2-1 PRESS – COMPLETE COACHING GUIDE

The 2-2-1 press is traditionally a 3/4 court press. It gives your team great trapping opportunities while being a good press for containment and not allowing easy scores on the other end of the floor. Like all presses, the 2-2-1 press is best run against teams that lack a true point guard and aren't great dribbling or passing teams. It's also fantastic for getting the ball out of the point guards hands and into the hands of a player less confident dribbling and bringing up the basketball. For better or for worse, the 2-2-1 press is very effective in youth basketball because it takes advantage of most players lack of strength to pass over top of the press. The 2-2-1 floods the front court with 4 players and forces the offense to beat the press with smart cuts and passing (which is hard for most youth players to do). Players running the 2-2-1 press in older age groups have to play smarter in order to not allow the pass over top and easy layup.

GOAL OF THE PRESS



To put it simply, the goal of the press is to keep the ball out of the middle of the court and force the opponent to play down the sidelines.



On the sidelines we set traps and our goal is to force the passer to make a tough pass over top of our trap that we can intercept.

ADVANTAGES OF THE 2-2-1 PRESS



Allows you to disrupt tempo

The 2-2-1 press forces the opponent play at an uncomfortable pace. On one end of the floor they're forced to be slow and deliberate to bring the ball up the court, but once it's been advanced it often leads to the opponent taking tough and rushed shots.

Run down the shot clock

By taking away long passes and forcing the offense to be deliberate with the ball and make smart passes and ball reversals, it's going to wipe a lot of time off the shot clock and potentially force a backcourt violation.



Force turnovers

Since the 2-2-1 has great trapping opportunities, if your players trap correctly it will lead to the opposition turning the ball over.

Your team will play harder

Man-to-man can be seen as an individual defense to some players. When players are in a team press like the 2-2-1, it means you have to trust your teammates and work as a unit. When there's a steal using this press it's because everyone put in the hard work. For what ever reason, I can confidently say that players play much harder when your team is implementing a press.



Fatigue the opponent

It's physically and mentally tough to play against a press. When your team is running a press the opposition never has time to relax. Both teams must be willing to play their bench a large amount of minutes.

2-2-1 PRESS RULES



No middle

Once the ball makes it to the middle of the floor it becomes very hard for the press.



Don't foul on the trap

Our steals don't come from the trap, they come from the trap forcing the player with the ball to throw a lob pass to the teammate that gets picked off. Never foul on a trap! Defenders trapping must move their feet into position and not reach or slap at the ball with their hands as this will often result in a foul.



If the press is beat, sprint back.

What you do when the press is beaten will depend on the age and experience level of the team you coach. For older players, the closest player should stop the basketball while the other four defenders find a player. For younger players, my rule is the closest player attempts to stop the ball and the other four must first get to the key before finding their player. We do this because we don't want to allow any layups. We would much prefer an opposition player get a wide-open outside shot than an uncontested layup.

INITIAL 2-2-1 SETUP

I'll give you a brief overview of how the 2-2-1 press is set up and the order in which you should choose the positions in the press before discussing the roles and responsibilities of each position.

Front Line

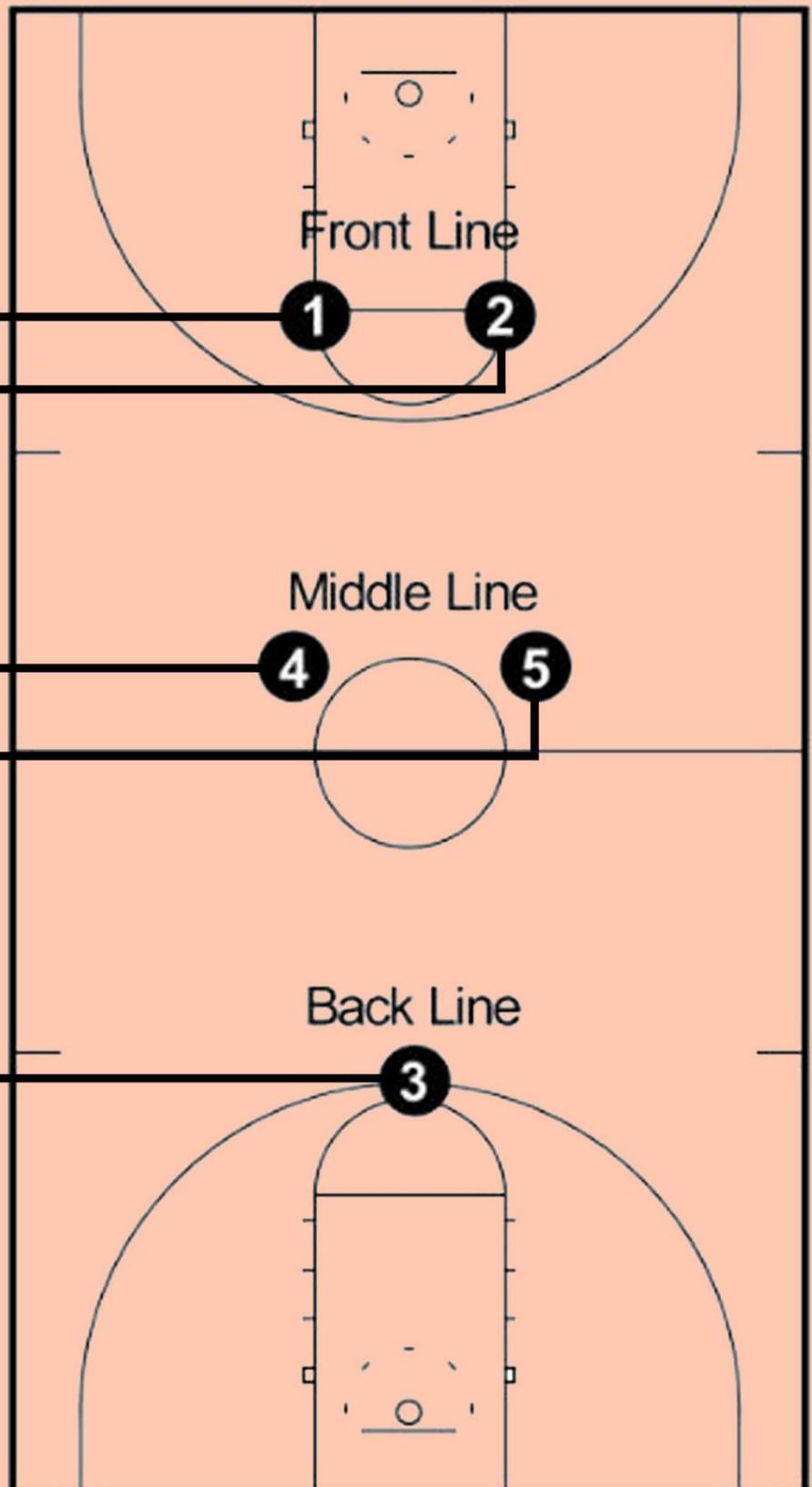
X1 and X2 are usually the two guards on the team and make up the front line of our defense. They will both start on the elbows.

Middle Line

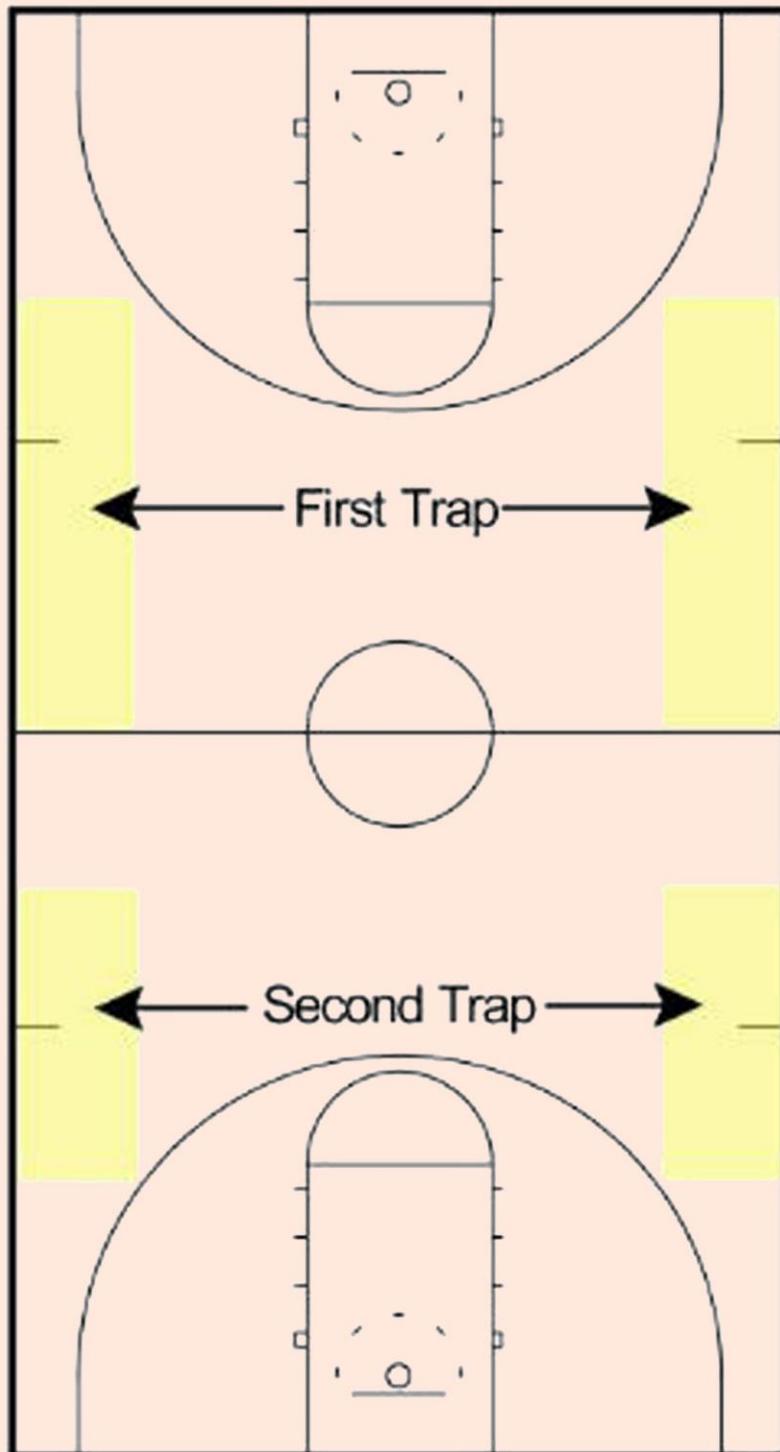
The middle line is made up of the other two players on the team. Usually two big players since these players will be the ones protecting the ring. For this example we'll assume it's X4 and X5. These players start a step or two inside of half court.

Back Line

Out of the other three players, you need to decide which one is best at reading the play and intercepting the basketball. That player should be in the back line since this is where most of the steals will come from. For this example we'll assume it's X3. This player's starting position will depend on how quick they are and their ability to know when to gamble for steals but will usually start at about the three-point line.



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



Front Line

The responsibility of the front line player on ball-side is to pressure the dribbler after the catch and force them down the sideline where we can trap the ball.

The responsibility of the weak-side front line player is to be in help position where they can assist if the on-ball defender is beaten down the middle off the dribble, and also to prevent direct passes down the middle of the press. Once the trap is set by the ball-side front line player, the weak-side front line player becomes one of the two interceptors in the press and must move to the middle of the floor. It's imperative that these players are able to put pressure on the basketball and channel the ball-handler down the sideline without getting beaten off the dribble. This containment is the most crucial part of the press. The key is to keep a bit over an arms-length distance away from the offensive player and force them to play slow and methodical.

Full court one on one drills like this drill from Breakthrough Basketball and this drill from Stack one are great for practicing and teaching this. The reason we pressure the player with the ball is that if the front-line players stand off the offensive player with the ball it becomes too easy for them to survey the floor and make passes through the middle of the press. Whereas if they move up and pressure the ball when it's inbounded, it will make it much harder for the point guard to make smart decisions.

Middle Line

The ball-side second line is responsible for trapping the basketball and forcing the opposition to make a lob pass over the top that can be intercepted.

The weak-side second line player is responsible for falling back and protecting the ring.

Back Line

The single person in the back line's primary responsibility is to intercept the basketball. They will always be an interceptor in the press along with the weak-side front line player.

As talked about in the initial setup, this position should be the best player on your team at reading the play and intercepting the ball since they will get plenty of opportunities to do so.

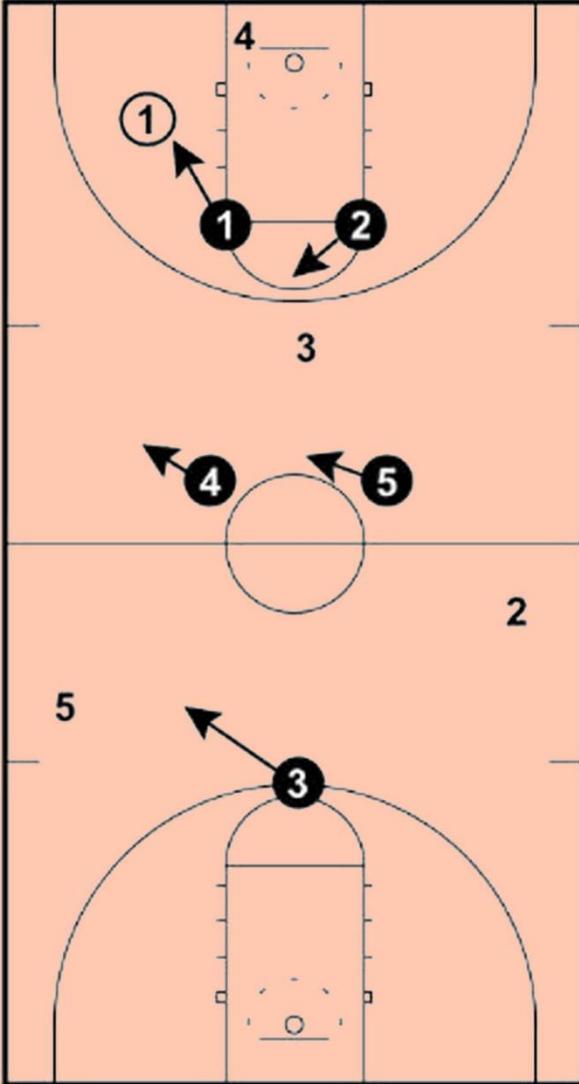
They will also be the main communicator during the 2-2-1 since they have vision of the entire floor.

Inbounding/Advancing

Traditionally, we do not deny the inbounds pass in the 2-2-1 press. Instead, we start the two front line defenders (X1 and X2) on the high posts and wait until the ball has been passed in before picking up the player with the basketball. This plays to our advantage in slowing the ball down and potentially getting a backcourt violation.

When the ball is inbounded the closest guard (X1) must put pressure on the ball. We don't want to allow their point guard to survey the floor and make easy reads as to where they should pass it to.

When the closest guard closes to defend the ball-handler, they must position their body in a stance that forces the offensive player towards the sideline (where our traps will occur).



The player on the front line weak side (X2) slides across to the middle of the floor and denies the pass to any offensive player in the middle of the floor.

We try to never allow the offensive player back to the middle of the floor. If they do dribble middle past the on-ball defense, it's the weak side front line players job to come across and help and make them pass back to the sideline.

The player strong-side in the second line (X4) must move across to be in-line with the basketball and the weak-side second-line player (X5) must move across and guard the middle of the court.

The last man back (X3) should always be in-line with the basketball and be ready to pick off any long passes made over the top.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE BALL IS REVERSED?

If the ball is reversed back to the middle of the floor all players should be back to the original 2-2-1 press positions. The front line should be on the high posts with hands high to discourage vision and a pass down the middle of the floor. We don't mind the ball reversal because they're not making progress as the clock gets closer and closer to a back-court violation. The goal is to get the ball back on one of the sidelines. When a pass is made to the sideline, the closest front-line player picks up the ball and once again forces it down the sideline.

FIRST TRAP

Once the offensive player is forced to the sideline it's time for the middle-line to help and trap the ball. As the dribbler nears the second-line, the strong-side second-line player (X4) moves up to set the trap with the on-ball defender (X1).

It's imperative that the second-line player coming to trap doesn't allow the offensive player to get around and break the trap or else the defense will now be at a huge disadvantage.

The trap can be made anywhere between the free-throw line and half court.

On the trap the two defenders must not foul. I can't stress this point enough... Never foul on the trap. The goal of the trap is not to steal the basketball but to force the player with the ball to make a lob pass over the top that can be intercepted. If your players reach in and try to steal the ball it will more often than not result in a foul call.

Instead, on the trap players should be yelling out "Ball! Ball! Ball!" or "Trap! Trap! Trap!". This will keep the energy of the team up while also further distracting the offensive player that is being trapped.

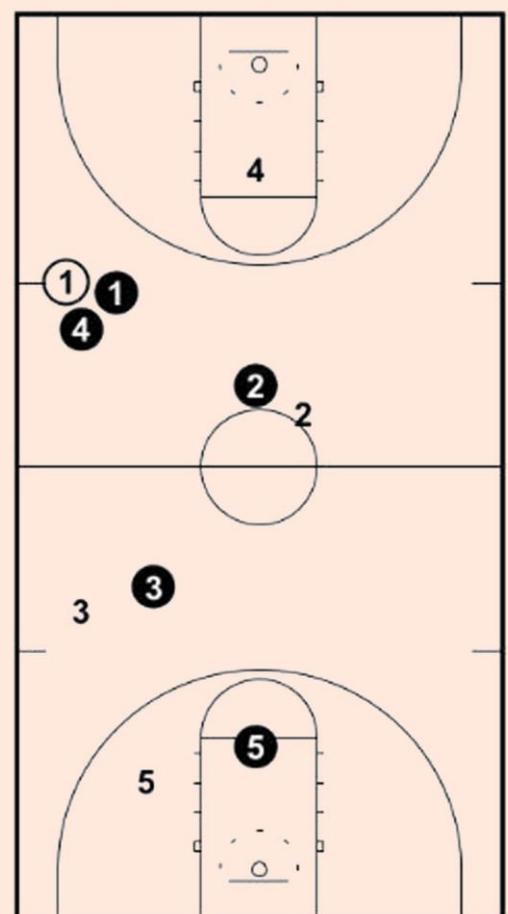
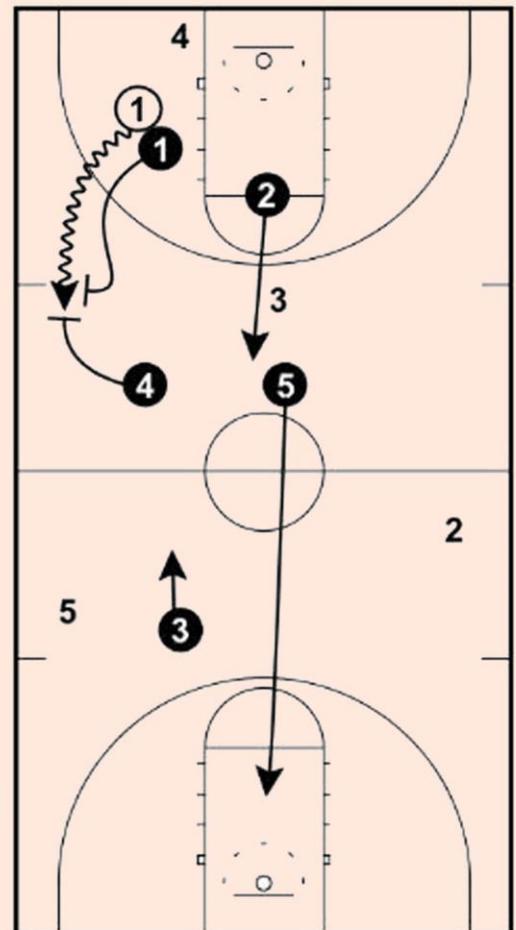
When the trap happens the weak-side front-line player (X2) must immediately move into the middle of the floor and become an interceptor.

The back line player (X3) is now the main interceptor and is in position to pick off any lob passes over the trap.

The weak-side second line player (X5) now falls back and protects the basket from easy layups.

This is the main stealing opportunity of the press where we want either interceptor to get a steal.

A lot of teams will fall back into a man-to-man after the opposition beats this trap but there is an advanced and very effective second trap your team can implement once your team has mastered the first trap.



SECOND TRAP

The second trap can be very effective if your players are smart enough to transition from the first trap to the second trap quickly enough.

The second trap only occurs when the ball is lobbed straight down the line over the second line into the front court. This can only be used against the sideline on a straight line pass.

It involves the back line player (X3) stopping the ball on the sideline and then a double team coming immediately from the ball-side second line player (X4).

There are a few reasons why this is a great opportunity to trap...

1. Since the main ball-handlers bring the ball down the court and have thrown the lob pass to this player, it will often end up in the hands of a big player that isn't used to passing or dribbling under pressure.

2. The opposition won't be expecting it. Most 2-2-1 presses end after the first trap and use this lob pass over the top to break the press before the point guard comes and receives the easy pass before setting up their half-court offense. We don't allow that by trapping again and keeping constant pressure.

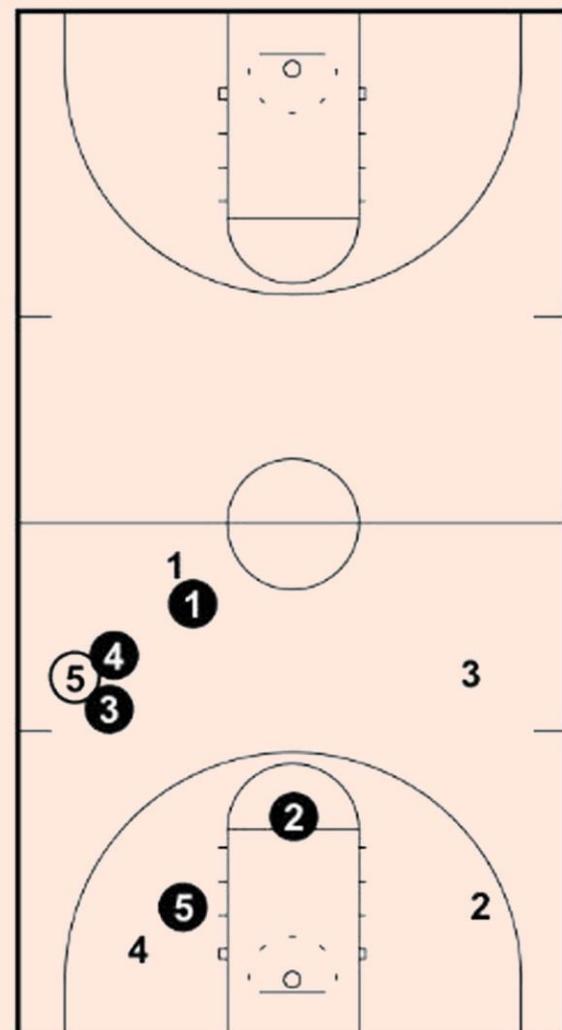
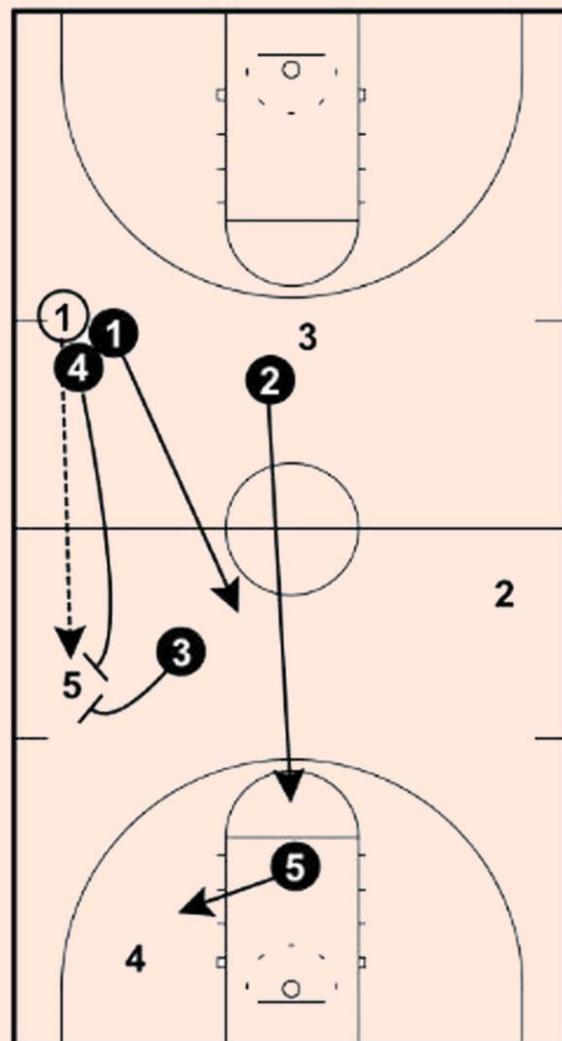
Regardless of whether the ball is passed before the first trap or during the first trap, as soon as the ball is passed straight down the line it's an immediate trap from the back line player and the ball-side second line player.

The weak-side second line player (X5) is still protecting the basket or the ball-side baseline player if there is one there.

The ball-side front line player (X1) should try and take away the easy pass to the closest guard.

And then it's the role of the front-line weak side player (X2) to try and intercept a lob pass to the other two players on the floor.

This is a very effective trap once it has been drilled to your team and is fantastic and continuing to disrupt the tempo of the opposition.



WHAT IF THE PRESS IS BROKEN?

If the ball is dribbled or passed into the middle of the press, that's our trigger that the press has been beaten.

There are a few options if the offense gets to the middle and beats your press:



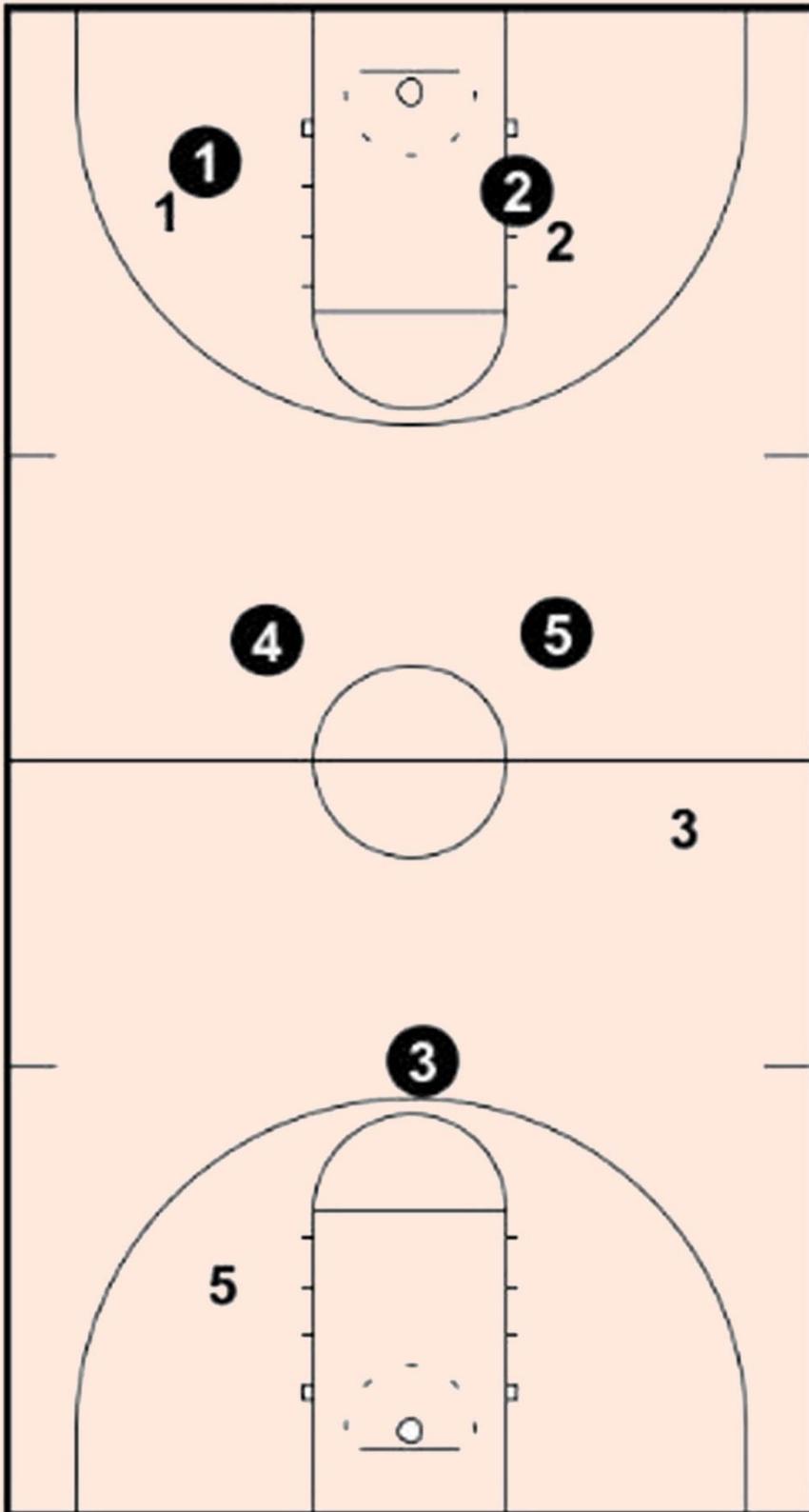
If the press is beaten in the front court, X1 and X2 can look to double the ball or get a tap from behind. If they double the ball X4 and X5 become the interceptors while X3 stays back and protects the ring. Once the ball makes it to the middle of the floor it becomes very hard for the press.



Closest player contains and slows down the ball while everyone else hustles back and communicates so that everyone has a player and we can set up our man-to-man half court defense. I've found trapping with the two guards to be complicated and ineffective. I prefer my teams to go with option two which is much simpler for youth players and allows us to set up our half court defense and play from there.

VARIATIONS

④



To Deny or Not to Deny?

A variation you can use for the 2-2-1 is to deny the inbounds pass instead of allowing the opposition to enter the ball uncontested.

By denying the inbounds pass the 2-2-1 becomes a full-court press.

Instead of waiting on the elbows, X1 and X2 face-guard their opposition players while the other three players stay in their normal roles in the press.

Denying the inbounds pass does a couple of things...

- It allows for more stealing opportunities

By face-guarding there's a chance the front line players will get a deflection or the in-bounder will try to lob the basketball over top and the middle line (X4 and X5) can anticipate the steal.

- It can confuse the offensive team

Denying the ball in a 2-2-1 press will confuse the offensive team because it look like a full-court man-to-man.

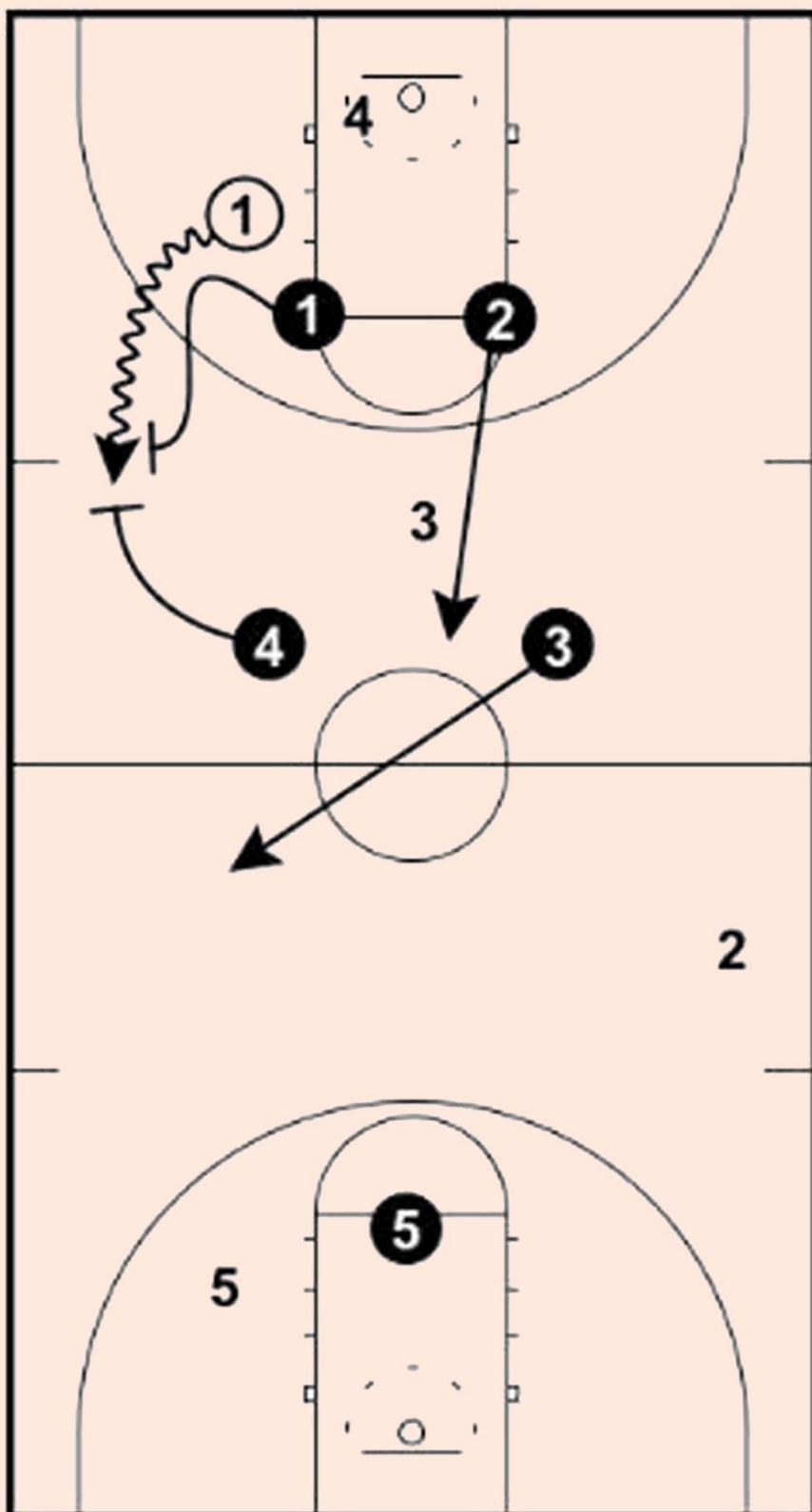
As soon as the ball has been inbounded the on-ball defender takes a step off and resumes channeling the basketball down the sideline, while the weak side front-line player sprints to their position as interceptor/help defender in the middle of the floor.

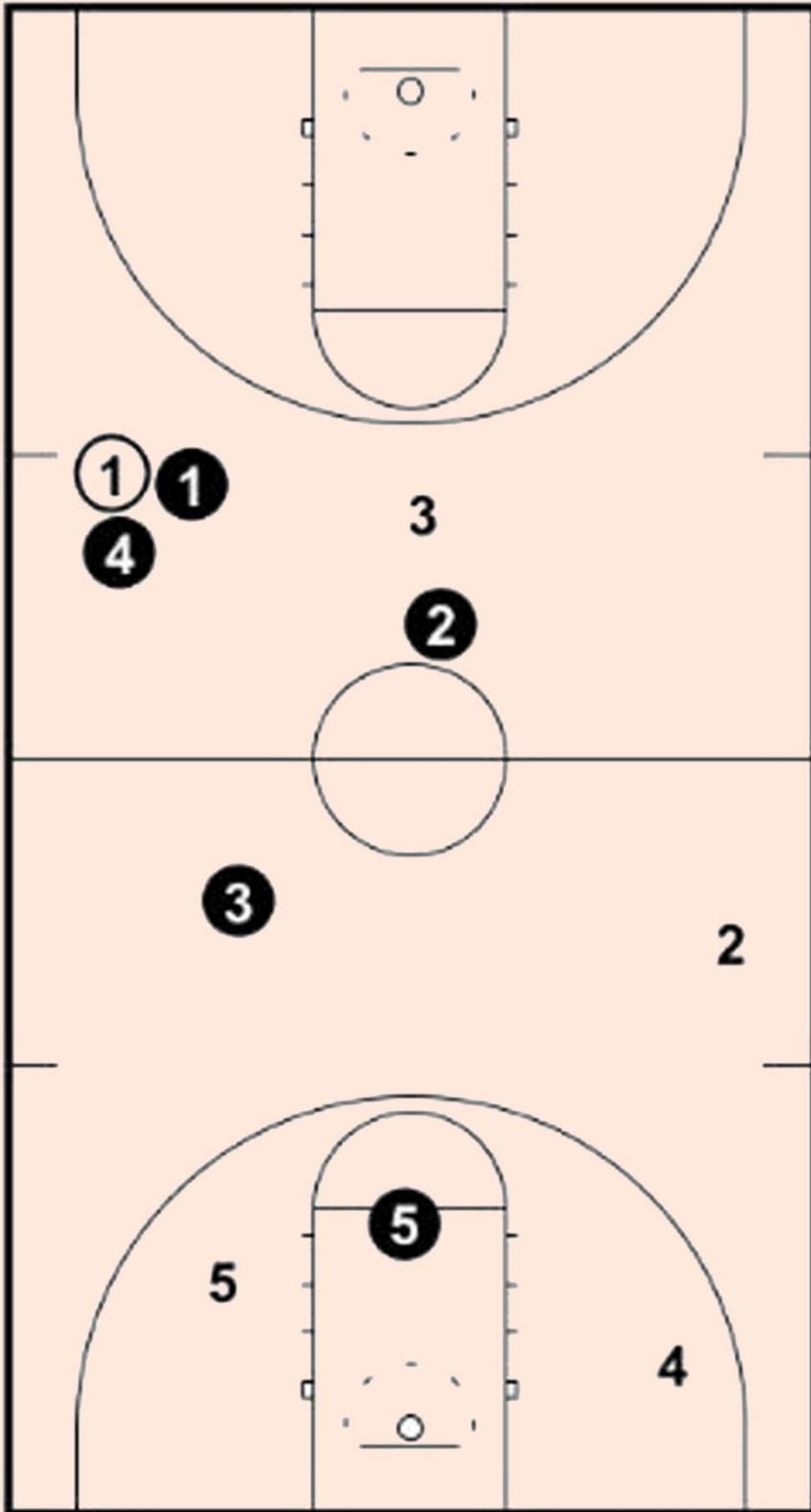
Conservative 2-2-1 Press

The conservative 2-2-1 press is a variation of the 2-2-1 that I've used when the team I'm coaching has one big and fairly unathletic player that I would rather have stay back and defend the ring at all times.

Many coaches use this version without considering the original 2-2-1 because they assume the biggest player on the team should always be all the way back.

The main difference with this variation is instead of the main interceptor being the back line player (X5) it now becomes the weak-side middle line player (X3) who must sprint laterally across the court looking to make an interception instead of falling back to protect the ring.





This allows the back line player to stay back and protect the ring without coming up and gambling for interceptions.

The two front line players (X1 and X2) still play exactly the same role as well as the middle line player that traps the basketball (X4).

The only other big difference using this version of the press is it's much harder to create the second trap effectively so I usually take it out of the 2-2-1 press all together.

I find this variation to be less effective at stealing the ball compared to the back line player being the main interceptor, but if you have the right personnel, it's great to be able to still run the press while still guarding the ring with your big player.

CONCLUSION



The 2-2-1 press is very effective at disrupting the tempo of the opposition. By forcing them to play fast and slow at the same time, the opposition will find it incredibly hard to ever get into rhythm on offense which is exactly what the 2-2-1 press sets out to achieve.



If you're willing to prioritize some time in your practice to work on the press, and if your players are willing to work hard when they're on the floor, the 2-2-1 can be very effective for your team.

2-3 Zone Defense *Complete Coaching Guide*



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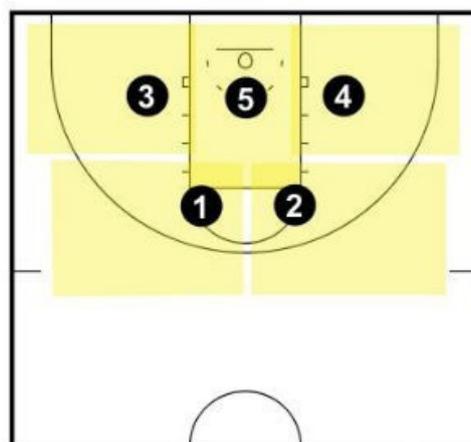
The 2-3 zone is by far the most common zone in basketball and is more than likely the specific formation that will come to a coaches mind when they hear the term 'zone' relating to basketball.

The 2-3 zone defense involves two players across the top of the zone near each high post; these players are referred to as the 'guards' (1 and 2), two players a step outside of each block; known as the 'forwards' (3 and 4), and a player in the middle of the key referred to as the 'center' (5).

The biggest difference between a man-to-man and a zone defense is that instead of being responsible for a certain offensive player, **all defensive players are instead responsible for an area of the court.** The image shows the main areas each position is responsible for but keep in mind that they definitely do overlap at times depending on where the ball is on the court.

Make no mistake, a 2-3 zone doesn't allow your team to rest on defense. **A great 2-3 zone requires just as much effort as a great man-to-man defense.**

Jim Boeheim at Syracuse has won nearly 1,000 games and made a career primarily out of teaching and running the 2-3 zone.



While I don't recommend using this as your primary defense, the 2-3 zone is a fantastic change-up defense to throw a different look at your opponent and see how they respond to it.

Advantages of a 2-3 Zone

- 1. Protects the Paint** – The 2-3 zone is a great defense to keep the ball as far away from the hoop as possible. This is accomplished by the center basically never leaving the paint and always having help very close.
- 2. Teams Aren't Prepared for a Zone** – Every team prides themselves on their man-to-man offense and set plays. How often do most coaches practice their zone offense or set plays against a zone? Barely ever. Most coaches will only have a couple of practices to prepare themselves for your 2-3 zone.
- 3. Will Limit Fouling** – Due to a combination of factors, players simply don't foul as much while playing in a zone defense.
- 4. Teams Aren't Patient** – The number one way to beat a zone is with smart passing and being patient until you get a good shot. Well I have good news, not many teams are patient. You'll find most teams rush and will often take contested shots, or they'll turn the ball over trying to make fancy passes against the zone.
- 5. Tempo Control** – A good zone defense can dictate how fast the game is played. Want a faster tempo? Play a more aggressive trapping zone. Want to slow the game down? Play a patient zone with minimal traps.
- 6. Fast Break Opportunities** – With both guards always at the top, the positions of a zone put players in great position to fast break many times throughout the game.

Weaknesses of a 2-3 Zone

- 1. Great Outside Shooting** – The biggest disadvantage of a 2-3 zone defense is that it can struggle against great outside shooting teams. It's the trade-off this defense makes in order to pack the paint so well.
- 2. Rebounding** – In a zone players don't have specific match ups, they guard areas. This can make rebounding a problem at times.
- 3. Offense Chooses Matchups** – Though there will always be great help if they get beaten off the dribble, if the offense want to match their best player up against your worst player every time down the floor, they can.
- 4. Playing from Behind** – If you're playing from behind teams can use up all of the shot clock on each possession. If there's is no shot clock, well, it looks like you can't play zone anymore.
- 5. A Loose Link** – The zone relies heavily on the team working together as a unit. If any player doesn't fulfil their role, other defenders will have to compensate and it will lead to open gaps and usually easy scores for the other team.

Who Should Use a 2-3 Zone?

Let's get this myth out of the way early. Too often I hear coaches voice that *"a 2-3 zone should ONLY used by big and slow teams"*. **This is stupid, and definitely not true.**

The coach just has to make a few tweaks to the defense depending on the personnel you have on your team.

For example, if you do have a big and slow team, the most effective way to use a 2-3 zone may be to play a patiently, limit trapping, and force the offense to move the ball around until they can find a gap or an open shot.

On the other hand, if you have a small and fast team, the most effective way to use a 2-3 zone may be to trap often, force the offense to take quick shots and make rushed decisions, look for steals, and keep the tempo of the game as fast as possible.

Any team can use the 2-3 zone, you just have to adjust how you run the zone to best suit your personnel which we'll talk about later on in the article.

The 4 Most Important Rules of a 2-3 Zone

Before we get into the particulars of the zone, I want to share with you the four crucial aspects of an effective zone. Keep these in mind while you're reading through the rest of the article.

1. Everyone must have active hands and be in stance

Great passing is one of the weaknesses of the zone. If teams are able to effectively make passes inside the zone the whole floor opens up for the offensive team. The defense must keep their hands up and active at all times to discourage passes inside and get deflections. Being in stance makes it quicker to react when a pass is made or a potential steal opportunity arises.

2. Everyone must move on the flight of the ball

Everyone must move on the flight of the ball and not on the catch. Moving on the flight of the ball means we're in defensive position when the offensive player receives the basketball. The quicker your team can get to the player with the ball the better your defense will be.

3. Everyone must communicate

Communication is critical to every defense and that includes the 2-3 zone. Players must communicate screens, cutters, bumping, who's got the player with the basketball, etc. All great zones have great communication.

4. No layups

This point may seem like the odd one out but it must be included. Do not allow layups against your zone. Players must not make it easy for the offensive team inside.

Positions of a 2-3 Zone

Now we're going to go through where your players should be positioned depending on where the ball is on the floor.

There are 6 main spots on the court the offensive team will have the ball against a 2-3 zone:

1. The top
2. The wing
3. The corner
4. High post
5. Low post
6. Short corner

Let's discuss each of them in detail...

Positions – Top of the Key

When the ball is at the top is when we see the basic 2-3 zone structure. Two guards are at the top of the zone (1 and 2), two forwards a few steps out from the block (3 and 4), and the center in the middle of the key (5).

All that we want to happen from this position is for the point guard to pass it to either of the wing players.

We DO NOT want the ball to go from this position in to the high post area. That can happen by the point guard attacking through the middle of the guards or passing to a player in the high post.

We discourage both of those options by making sure the guards are close enough that they are nearly able to touch hands.

Note that in a 2-3 zone we don't actively deny the pass to the wing players. Instead, we rely upon players moving on the air time of the pass and a tactic we call 'bumping' (I'll discuss this in detail a bit later in the article) that involves the forward on the ball-side quickly closing out on the wing player before getting bumped by the guard who quickly recovers to the wing.

If the point guard at the top of the key is a good shooter and within shooting distance we must respect the shot by one of the guards playing them. Whichever guard is closest to the ball handler must call out 'Ball!' or 'Mine!' to prevent confusion.

When this happens the other guard is now in charge of denying the high post while the on-ball defender puts pressure on the point guard. The same rules apply on the wings, on any pass to the wing player the forward must help out and then be bumped back by the guard.

As for the low players, notice that the forwards are a little higher than usual. This is to make the close out to the wing player quicker because it's a shorter distance.



Positions – Ball on the Wing

After the ball has been passed to the wing player and the forward has been bumped down this is how we should be set up.

- The on-ball guard (2) should be in either a neutral stance or forcing the ball towards the baseline depending on the coaches preference. I prefer to channel the ball towards the baseline as this makes it harder to pass to the high post and forces the offensive player towards our bigger defenders.
- The ball-side forward (4) should be in the short corner or fronting the low post player if there is one.
- The weak-side guard (1) should be near the closest elbow if there's no player in the high post, or denying the pass to the player in the post from the high side.
- The center (5) is behind to half-fronting the post player.
- The weak-side forward (3) should be a few steps up the lane preparing to pick off any skip passes the player with the ball might make.



Positions – Ball in the Corner

The image shows the normal positions for when the ball is in the corner.

- The ball-side forward steps out and pressures the ball. The center fronts the post.
- The ball-side guard is sagging into the lane to prevent a pass inside and to discourage the drive.
- The weak-side guard is denying the high post.
- The weak-side forward is up the lane getting ready to pick off the skip pass.



If you're not trapping (which we'll talk about soon), the two main options you have to decide on is in regard to the ball-side guard. They are:

1. You can choose for the guard to sag into the lane, allowing the simple pass from the corner to the wing while preventing the pass inside or dribble penetration.
2. You can get the guard to completely deny the pass back outside and force the corner player to make a decision and be aggressive.

If you have an experienced team, you could use the second option against certain weak players on the other team and force them to make a decision.

Positions – Ball in the High Post

When the ball makes it into the high post we're now in a very vulnerable position. If the offensive team have put a good passer in the high post (a wise decision), every other offensive player on the floor is now only a short pass away and a threat for a quick catch-and-shoot. **That's why we need to keep it out of there!**



- The center (5) immediately sprints up to play the ball.
- The two forwards (3 and 4) must immediately **'pinch' in and take the closest player on their side of the basket.** When the ball is at the high post we're in a vulnerable position for a high-low pass for an easy layup. We must not allow this pass! But at the same time the forwards must be prepared to sprint out to the corner to defend the three-point shot if the pass is made to there.
- The two guards (1 and 2) must close in to the ball and try and force the high-post player to pass the ball out, but be ready to sprint out and defend the wings if the pass is made to either one.

As you can see, it's very tough for a zone when the ball makes it into the high post. **The best way to defend it is to not let it get there in the first place!**

Bumping

As referred to earlier in the article, **bumping effectively is absolutely crucial to running a great 2-3 zone defense.**

You see, the problem with a 2-3 zone is that the two guards at the top are responsible for guarding three positions around the perimeter; the top of the key, and the two wings.

We run into problems on passes to the wing, skip passes, and ball reversals, where the offensive wing players may be left open while the guard quickly recovers to them; long enough that they'd be able to take an open shot.

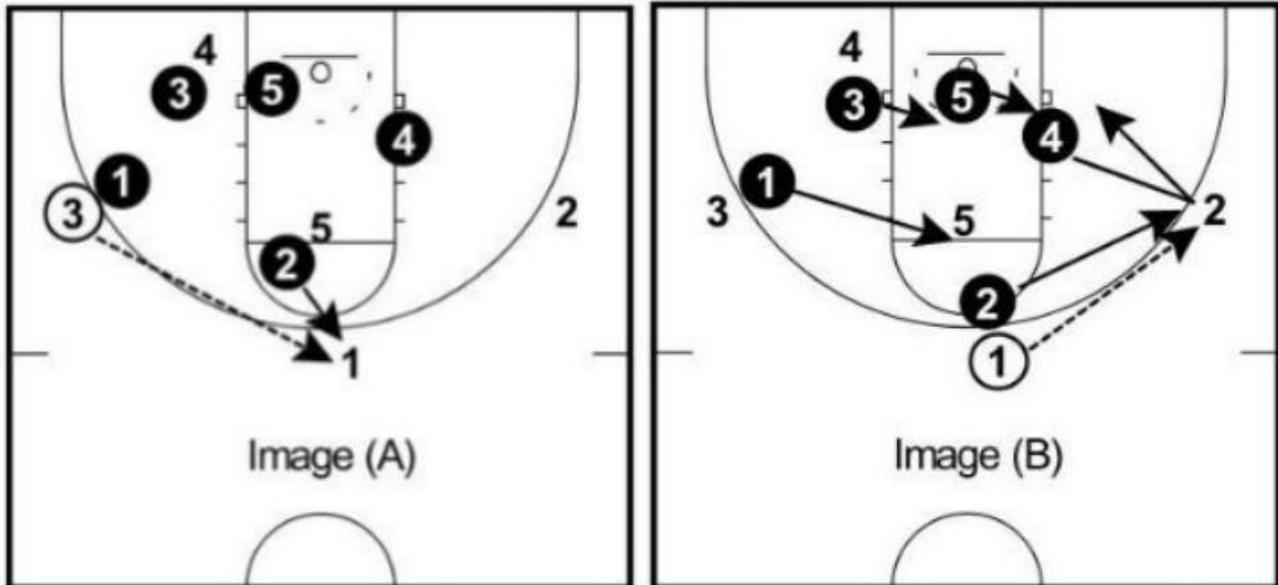
To combat this, we have the closest forward help out by closing out on the wing player to prevent the shot, before getting bumped back down to their normal position when the guard responsible for that area arrives.

This help from the forwards allows two guards to play against three offensive players on the perimeter.

Here are two examples...

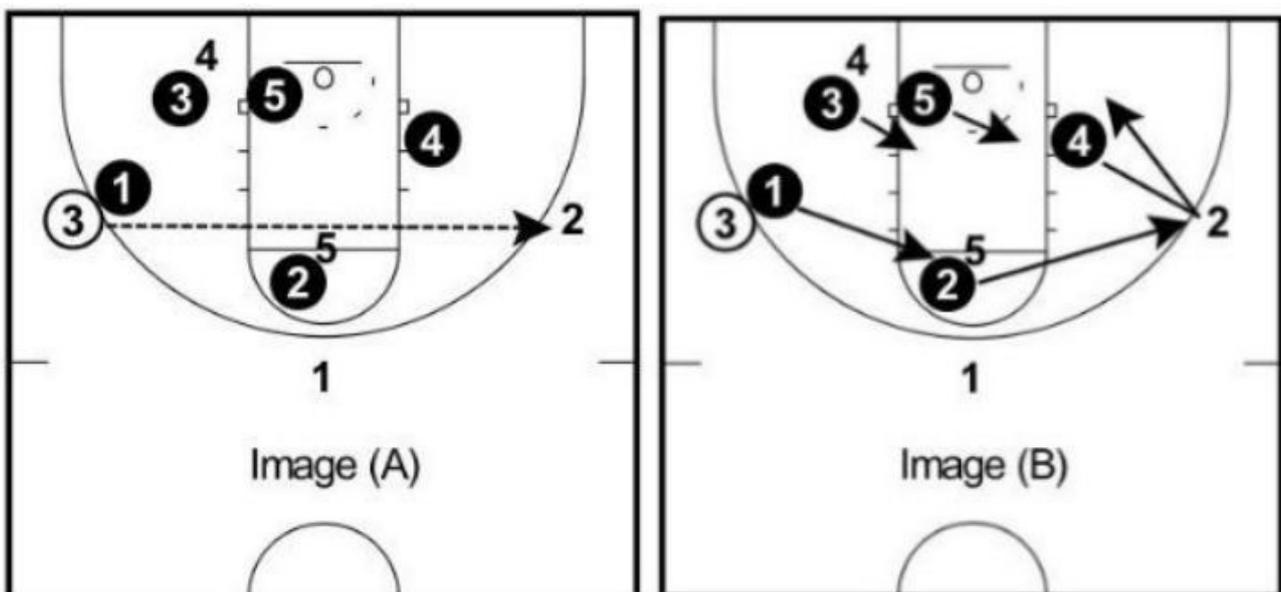
1. A ball reversal

Notice that when the ball is reversed from one side to the other the 2 guard is stuck having to guard the 1 and 2 at the same time when the pass is made. He is helped by 'bumping' of the 4 who temporarily helps out while 2 sprints recovers to the offensive 2 guard.



2. A skip pass

It's the same situation if there is a skip pass from wing to wing. Since the weak-side guard is denying the high post, it's a long way to recover if there is a skip pass thrown. To help this, the ball-side forward helps out until the 2 guard can bump them back down.



Rebounding

Rebounding must be a constant emphasis when coaching a 2-3 zone. Since your players are guarding an area and don't all have specific players, your team is at a distinct disadvantage compared to a man-to-man each time a shot is put up.

Rebounding is an area that you must judge differently on each team you coach and there's not one correct answer.

If you have a bigger team, then you may only need your forwards and center to rebound and your guards can leak out for fast break opportunities. Although, if you have a smaller team, you might require everyone to crash the boards.



You have to decide on your own philosophy regarding rebounding depending on the personnel of your team.

Either way, there will always be gaps and a zone will allow more offensive opportunities than a man-to-man. This can lead to easy put-back shots or the kick outside to open shooters. All we can ask is that our players box out, are relentless pursuing rebounds, and do their best to secure the basketball.

Trapping in a 2-3 Zone

Trapping is very effective for a zone defense. Here we're going to discuss the different types of traps you can use in a 2-3 zone and I'll also include how often I think you should use each one.

Depending on the amount of traps you use and where they are will play a big factor in the tempo of the game.

It's important that the players don't foul on the trap and they force the offensive player to throw the ball high over the trap to give your other players a chance to steal the ball.

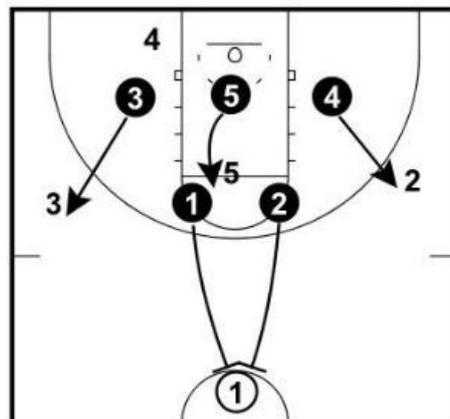
Stress to your players that the steal doesn't often come directly from the trapping players, it comes from the interception by the other defenders.

Trapping – Top of the Key

The first trap you can use is on the point guard right as they come across the half-court line.

This is a **surprise trap** and should only be used a couple of times per game. Usually out of a time-out or in a late game situation when you desperately need a steal. You can also use this trap against weak or unconfident ball-handlers.

As soon as the ball-handler crosses half court everyone must act at exactly the same time. This is crucial to running this trap effectively. We don't want to give away what we're doing or give them an easy pass out of it.



- The top two guards (1 and 2) must sprint at the ball-handler with high hands to prevent easy passes over the top and then trap him aggressively.
- The two forwards (3 and 4) immediately sprint out to deny the wing players as this is where the point guard will often look to pass first.
- The center (5) is left guarding two players. Most likely one in the high post and one in the short corner or the corner. The center has the toughest job and must try and predict where the pass will be made and play the ball accordingly.

Be aware that you may get burned when running this trap. The offensive team could end up with an easy layup. But I've found if used at the right time and against the right player, this trap can be very successful.

BFC Recommendation: Use this trap two to three times per game

Trapping – On the Wing

The trap on a wing from a 2-3 zone involves the ball-side forward and the ball-side guard.

- Instead of bumping like usual, the forward (4) doesn't retreat and we aggressively trap the wing player with the forward and the ball-side guard (2).
- The center (5) fronts the post and is ready to sprint out and pick off or defend the player in the corner temporarily.
- The weak-side guard (1) denies the closest pass to the wing player, usually the point guard.
- And the weak-side forward (3) is trying to read the other players and pick off any skip pass that may be thrown.



I'm not a big fan of trapping on the wing as I find the offensive player usually has enough options to make an easy pass out of it and then you'll find your team in bad positions.

But it might be something you might want to throw in randomly and catch the other team by surprise!

BFC Recommendation: Use very rarely. Occasionally as a surprise if needed.

Trapping – In the Corner

The corner trap in a 2-3 zone is by far the most effective trap you can use in a 2-3 zone.

The offensive player with the ball is forced to make a very long and high pass in order to get the ball to a teammate if the trap is performed correctly.

- When the pass from the wing is made to the player in the corner, the ball-side guard (2) immediately follows the pass and will trap the player with the forward (4) that is closing out.
- The center (5) must front on post when the ball is in the corner.
- The weak-side guard (1) sprints all the way across the court to deny the easy pass back to the guard.
- And now it's up to the weak-side forward (3) to keep his eyes on the two other players and anticipate the high pass that will be made. He must be in line with the lowest of the two players to prevent a lob or back-door pass.



The benefit of this trap is that after you get a few steals and make it tough for the offensive team, they'll simply stop passing it to the corner because they don't want to be trapped. This makes it much easier to play a 2-3 zone.

BFC Recommendation: Trap the corner every time if you have a team that can.

Trapping – Short Corner/Post

You might have noticed that we skipped the short corner/post section when we were going over general positions. That's because we **ALWAYS trap the short corner and post**. So I saved explaining it until we got to the section on traps.

In a 2-3 zone we always want to keep the ball as far away from the basket as possible. For that reason, when the ball is passed into the post or short corner, we must immediately double and get the ball out of there! This trap also occurs on all baseline drives to the ring.



- When the ball gets into the short corner or the post it must be immediately doubled by the center (5) and the closest ball-side forward (3).
- The weak-side forward (4) must now look after the paint. The player does this by coming across and making sure there isn't anyone flashing down from the high post (a common pass).
- The ball-side guard (1) denies the easy outlet pass to the guard on the perimeter.
- The weak-side guard (2) is now playing the interceptor with the other two players and should back down as far as he needs to in order to see both players.

The main goal we want out of this trap is for them to pass the ball out and we can set up our defense again.

BFC Recommendation: Trap the short corner/post every time.

A Few Random 2-3 Zone Thoughts

1. Ball Pressure – Ball pressure will depend on how aggressive of a zone your team is playing. Don't be afraid to get right up on players and force them to drive or make a lobbed pass that may be picked off.

2. Disguising a 2-3 Zone – You can disguise a 2-3 zone by having your point guard play full court defense while your other guard plays in the high post. The second guard takes the first pass using bump help from the forwards and then the point guard falls back into their position. This is a great way to disguise a 2-3 zone or force the ball to a particular player or side of the court.

3. Run Shooters off the 3-point Line – As we're stuck closing out often in a 2-3 zone, if you line up against a great 3-point shooting team, run the shooters off the three-point line and make them put the ball on the floor. The strength of the zone is in the key so there will be help.

4. Scouting Other Players – The more advanced your team, the more you should look at scouting the opposition and making adjustments depending on certain players. Who's the shooters? Should you deny the ball to a certain player? Should you immediately trap a certain player every time they touch the ball?

Should You Use a 2-3 Zone in Youth Basketball?

No.

I could argue for hours the reasons you shouldn't use a zone defense in youth basketball (and have had to many times, unfortunately)...

Just don't do it.

Yes, it's very effective in youth basketball.

Yes, you'll win more games in youth basketball.

No, you still shouldn't do it.

I'm not going to get into depth on the topic in this article (I'll save that for a later post), instead, if you want to read further on the subject, read this article from Breakthrough Basketball and make sure to watch the video by Stan Van Gundy.

Adapting a 2-3 Zone to Fit Your Team

If you're looking to add this defense to your teams arsenal, there are three things you must decide on before implementing the 2-3 zone with your team.

- 1. Decide how often and where you'll trap.**
- 2. Decide how aggressive your players will be on the ball.**
- 3. Decide how many players will crash the boards.**

These answers to these three questions will decide at **which tempo you play the game.**

If you have an athletic and quick team you should be trapping often and being aggressive on the ball. If you have a slower team you can trap less and be patient until the other team takes a silly shot.

Conclusion

Congratulations, you've made it through a 4,000+ word article on the 2-3 zone defense and should now have a thorough understanding on how it works.

As stated earlier in the article, I don't recommend you use this as your primary defense, but it's a great defense to throw at your opponent and see how they respond to it. If it works, keep using it.

It's not a lazy defense if played correctly and will definitely challenge your players mentally and physically, but the benefits can be enormous.

Some teams simply can't play against a 2-3 zone, so use it!

3 Absolute Musts for Every Basketball Workout (Hardly Anyone Does Them)

 basketballforcoaches.com/musts-for-every-workout/



Photo Credit: [jkwongrocketman](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

I've got a couple of big problems...

- a). I've got a big problem with players that say they want to be great basketball players, but don't properly put the work in to make it a reality.
- b). I've got a big problem with coaches that don't teach their players how to work out properly on their own.

I'm going to try and kill two birds with one stone throughout this post...

I want to begin by pointing out that poorly working out is not always the player's fault. Many simply haven't been taught the right way to do it. When they go down to the gym and lazily chuck up a few shots while chatting with their friends, a lot of them truly believe they're working on their game... they just don't know any better.

And I'm here today to tell you that we need to do something about it. We need to teach players how to properly work out. Most of our players are young and it's up to us to guide them in the right direction when it comes to working out on their own.

I'm going to share with you three tactics that are imperative to a perfect basketball workout.

1. You **MUST** Have a Plan

Any player I've coached or trained knows I hate it when players arrive at the gym without a workout plan.

How much can you expect to improve if you're not working on the right things? If you're not working on your weaknesses? If you're only doing all the fun and easy drills?

Exactly. Not much. Not much at all.

You need a plan if you're going to workout. Don't have one? If you're looking to improve your shooting check out my ['Shooting Workouts' page](#) where you can find many free shooting workouts.

2. You MUST Workout at Game Pace

In order to work out effectively and improve your basketball game you need to be taking game shots, from game spots, at game speed.

Let me say that again because it's very important... **The only way to get better is to take game shots, from game spots, at game speed.**

You can't walk or jog through your workout. You don't do that in games (well you better not be doing that in games). You have to make your workout as game-like as possible.

This means sprinting during drills, exploding into your shot, getting low on your dribble moves. If you finish your workout and you're not drenched in sweat, you didn't work hard enough.

3. You MUST Track Your Shots

Tracking your shots has many benefits that I've listed in the blog post ['The Method Used Only By The Worlds Best Shooter'](#). An article on the great Dave Hopla.

If you want to read further into the topic, click on the article link above, but I'll quickly list 5 reasons why recording your shots will make you a great shooter...

1. You cannot improve what you don't measure.
2. It makes every shot important.
3. You can set goals.
4. You will see improvements.
5. You will see your weak areas.

Conclusion

So here's the saddest part about this whole blog post...

I hardly see any players with a workout plan.

I hardly see any players working out at game pace.

I hardly see any players tracking their shots.

All three of the most crucial ingredients to a perfect workout and I barely see anyone doing them!

You must encourage and enforce that all of your players are doing these. That's how you're going to set your team apart from the competition and develop your athletes into much better basketball players than their opposition.

In parting, these are the three things you **MUST** learn from this article...

1. You must have a plan.
2. All workouts must be at game pace.
3. You must track your shots.

Are your players doing all three when they're working out in the gym?

3-2 Zone Defense – Complete Coaching Guide

 basketballforcoaches.com/3-2-zone-defense/



Basketball in High Post

Since the high post is a vulnerable position in the 3-2 zone defense, the defense's #1 goal when the basketball enters this area is to force the opposition to pass out.

The rover will always be the defender to guard the basketball in this position. This requires them to establish position between the opponent and the basketball on the flight of the pass into the high post.

The two post players will immediately pinch in to prevent any passes inside the key or close to the low blocks.

Finally, we want both wing defenders to drop to the midrange area in the middle of the high post and the corner. This will prevent any direct passes to the corners while also positioning the defenders to quickly closeout on any pass to the wing.

As usual in the 3-2 zone defense, we choose to leave the top of the key open.



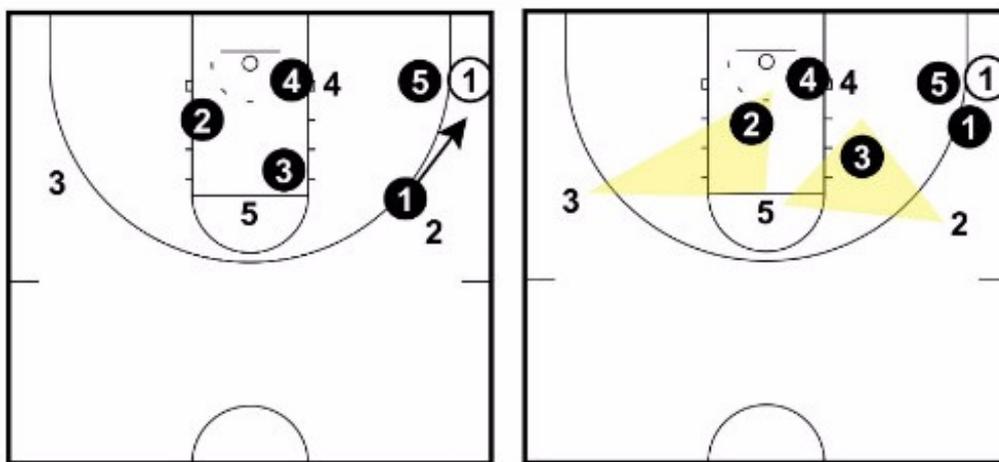
Trapping in the 3-2 Zone Defense

By far the best place to trap when running the 3-2 zone is in the corners.

Why?

Because the rotations are simple and there is very little risk that this trap will lead to an easy layup opportunity for the opposition.

Here's how it works:



When the basketball is passed to the corner, the strong-side post will closeout on the basketball as usual. When trapping, the strong-side wing will also sprint and closeout on the basketball with high hands.

Both players making sure not to foul the opposition player by reaching in. The goal is to deflect a pass or force the opponent to make a lob pass that can be picked off by a teammate.

The weak-side post player should already be defending the ball-side low post. If there's an opposition player in the post, ensuring they play behind unless an easy steal opportunity arises.

The weak-side wing drops and is responsible for picking off or closing out on any lob passes thrown across court.

Finally, the Rover is in charge of reading the eyes of the player with the basketball and covering the outlet pass to the wing as well as the high post.

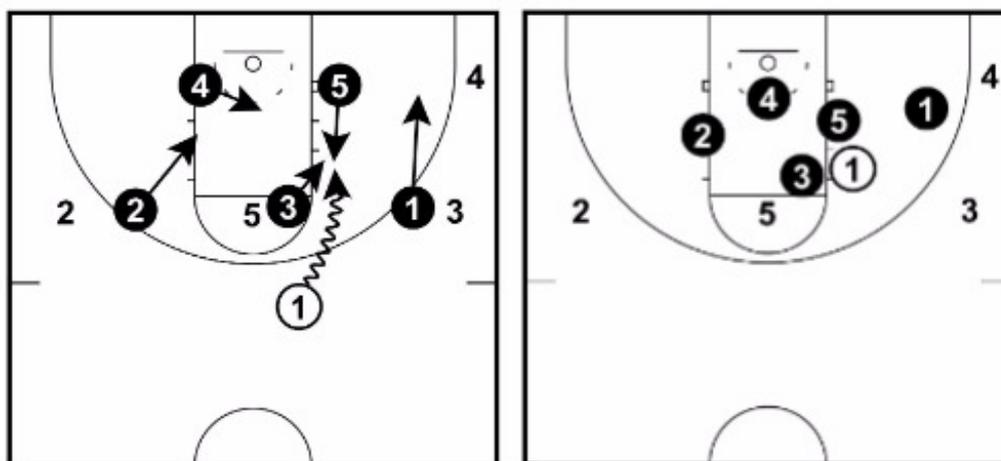
Defending Dribble Penetration

While running the 3-2 zone defense, we want to prevent any dribble penetration as much as possible.

Playing only two defenders along the bottom line of the zone can make helping and rotating very difficult for this defense.

Here's what I recommend:

Drive from the Top



If an offensive player is able to split between the rover and a wing defender to attack the key, you must help by stepping up the ball-side low post.

When this happens, it's imperative that the ball-side wing defender drops down and takes away the corner three-point shot. This is one of the reasons why the drive-and-kick can be devastating against the 3-2 zone defense.

If the pass is made to the corner, the wing defender should close out close on the high side of the opponent to force them baseline and prevent an easy pass to the wing.

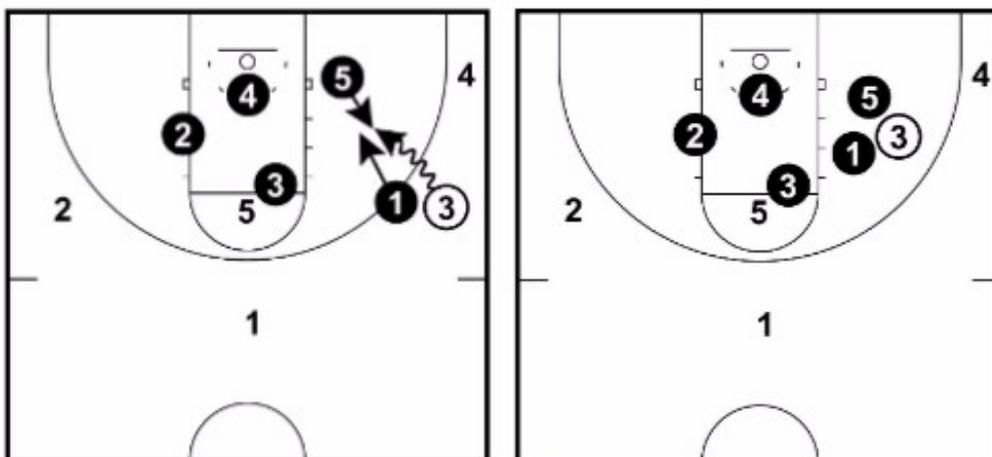
The weak-side low post role is to clog up the middle of the key. When penetration occurs it's common for the player in the high post to dive or for there to be offensive players waiting to receive a pass along the baseline. The weak-side post must be there to prevent these easy scores in the paint.

The weak-side wing also drops down and is ready to close out on any skip pass made to the opposite corner or wing.

Finally, the rover will usually be on the ball-handler's hip at this point as it was their role to keep them out of the paint.

They trap the basketball with the post player who helped keeping their hands high and attempting to force the offensive player to pass back out to the top of the key.

Drive from the Wing



If an offensive player penetrates below the wing defender, the ball-side low post must step up to help.

Since the low post defender should be on the block, we aim to impede and stop this dribble penetration a couple of feet outside the paint.

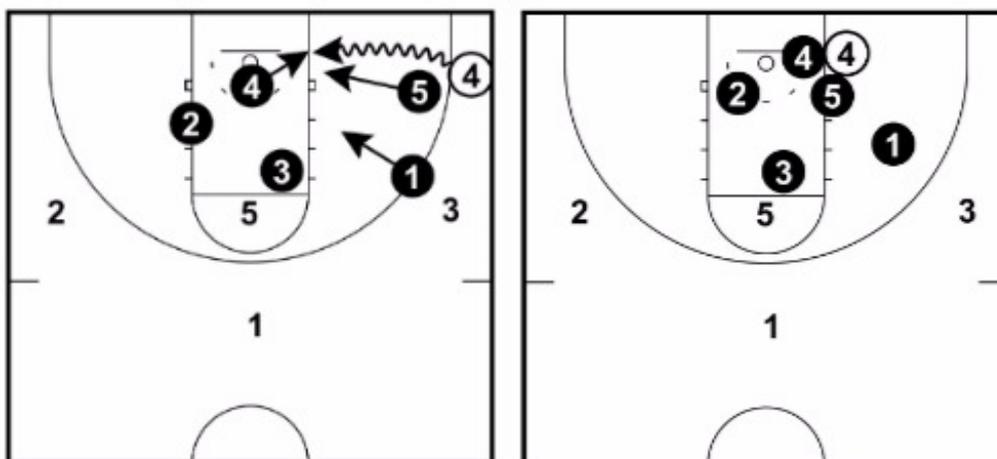
When this happens, you'll find the offense will often have the opportunity to pass to the corner for an open three-point attempt. That's why it's crucially important that the low post defender helps from the low side and is ready to sprint out and challenge the corner three-pointer.

The weak-side low post clogs up the middle of the paint and prevents any easy scores around the basket.

The rover also drops to the middle of the key to take up space and prevent any pass to an opponent diving to the rim off the high post.

And the weak-side wing drops to outside of the lane line and is ready to close out on any skip passes made from the corner to the wing.

Drive along the Baseline



The final dribble penetration to mention is the baseline drive. When an opponent attacks between the baseline and the low post defender.

First, this should never happen. The low post defender should be closing out to the corner by forcing their opponent towards the middle of the key.

But if it does happen...

The weak-side low post must step across and trap the basketball with the other post defender just outside the paint.

The rover immediately drops down to the middle of the key to prevent any passes inside and deny any opponent diving from the high post.

The weak-side wing also drops to the key and is ready to close out on any skip pass made to the opposite corner or wing.

The ball-side wing also drops towards the basket and is ready to close out on any reverse passes made to the same side of the court.

Defending Skip Passes

Skip passes are a fantastic way to shift and confuse the defenders when attacking a zone defense.

That's why it's incredibly important that your players understand the correct movements and rotations when you're teaching a zone defense.

Here are the most common skip passes and how to defend them.

Skip Pass to the Corner



On any skip pass made across the court to the corner, the weak-side wing defender must close out on the basketball before being 'bumped' off by the low post defender.

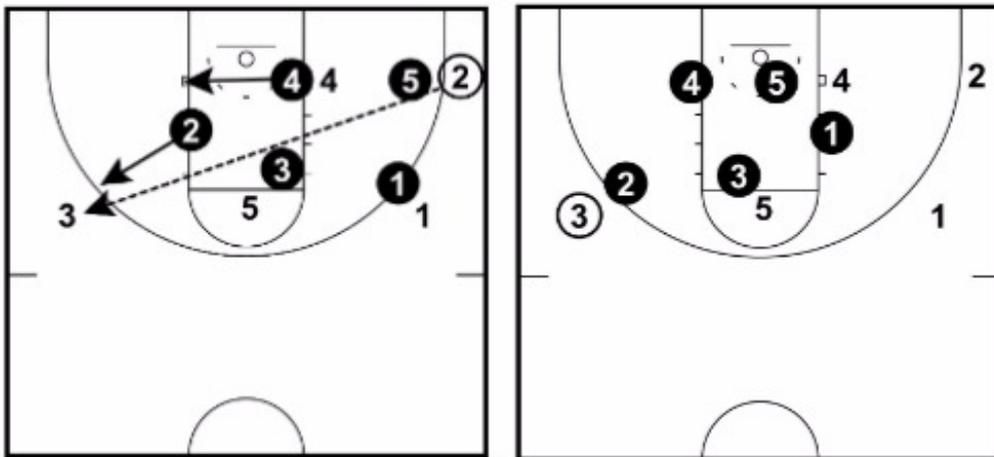
The reason for this is because it's too far for the weak-side low post defender to close out as they will currently be on split-line or behind an opponent in the low post when the pass is thrown.

The weak-side wing defender closes out on the high side to prevent a quick pass to the wing and also to direct the opponent towards the low post defender who will be closing out.

This can result in a great trapping opportunity.

If you choose to not trap in the corner, when the low post defender arrives the wing defender is bumped back to their position on the wing.

Skip Pass to the Wing

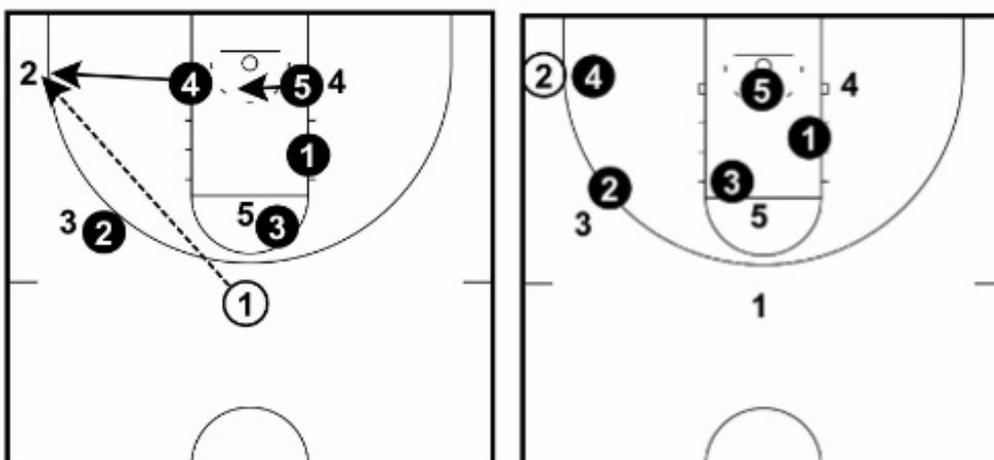


When the skip pass is made to the wing from the opposite corner or wing, it's the weak-side wing player who must close out once again.

There are no fancy actions or complex rotations required by the defense on this pass, the most important thing is that everyone changes sides of the court as quickly as possible.

The low post must sprint across to take away the corner three-point shot, the rover must switch denial positions on the air time of the pass, and the two other defenders must establish help position as soon as possible.

Skip Pass from the Top to Corner



The other pass worth mentioning is the skip pass from the top of the key to either of the corners.

When you run a 3-2 zone defense, a lot of teams will attempt to screen the outside of the low post defenders to create open shots in the corner.

That's why it's crucial that your low post defenders are always fighting for position and ensuring they have a clear path to the corner when the basketball is at the top of the key.

When this pass is made, the ball-side low post closes out on the basketball (forcing middle) to prevent the corner three-pointer while the weak-side low post immediately establishes help position on the ball-side low block.

Rebounding

Most coaches and players don't realise this, but the 3-2 zone defense puts teams in great positions to rebound at a high level.

Regardless of where the shot is taken from the perimeter, a 'rebounding triangle' is always formed which places players in ideal positions.

Let's take a look at a few examples:

Shot from the Corner

When a shot is taken from the corner, the three defenders in the rebounding triangle are:

The weak-side low post covers ball-side low.

The rover covers the top.

The weak-side wing covers weak-side low.



Shot from the Wing

When a shot is taken from the wing, there will still be three defenders forming a rebounding triangle but they will have the additional help of the strong-side post player.

The weak-side low post takes ball-side low

The ball-side low post battles for front position to help the other rebounders.

The rover covers the top.

The weak-side wing covers weak-side low.



Shot from the Top

When a shot is taken from the top, the three defenders in the rebounding triangle are:

The two low post players take the low position on their side.

The rover covers the top.



Conclusion

The biggest benefit of the traditional 3-2 zone defense is that it will force the opposition out of their regular offense and force them to create a new game-plan.

This is very similar to the disruptive nature of the 1-3-1 zone defense (In fact, these two defenses are very similar when you dig down into the details).

Don't overlook how beneficial this is to your team.

Also, if you're competing against teams with poor outside shooting ability, this is a great zone to lock down the paint and ensure they don't get easy shots inside.

Just make sure your team is able to stop dribble penetration!

3-Out 2-In Motion Offense – Complete Coaching Guide



The 3-out 2-in motion offense is a great option for youth basketball coaches who want to get the basketball close to the rim and then attack.

It involves 3 players positioned around the perimeter and 2 players roaming around the key in the heart of the defense.

All positions are interchangeable depending on personnel and mismatches.

Like the 5-out motion and the 4-out 1-in motion, this offense gives players the chance to read the defense and then make decisions which is crucial to developing players with high basketball IQ.

The Goal of the 3-Out 2-In Motion Offense:

The goal of the 3-out 2-in motion is to get the basketball inside.

The closer the basketball is to the rim, the better the chances are that your team will score or at least get a quality shot.

But this doesn't necessarily mean the two post players who catch inside will do all the scoring...

If you have smart low post players who can pass, this is a great offense to create scoring opportunities for perimeter players as well.

There will be many scoring opportunities for perimeter players who are properly spaced and understand when and how to move without the basketball in this offense.

Who Should Run the 3-Out 2-In Motion Offense:

The 3-out 2-in motion offense is most effective when you have two players who are comfortable and make good decisions in the low post.

That doesn't necessarily mean they need to be great low post scorers (although this certainly helps)...

It means you have players who are active in the post, know how to cut and move without the ball, and can make smart passes.

This isn't a great offense for teams who rely on dribble penetration as there is so much activity in the paint by having two post players.

Having high IQ players is a necessity when running the 3-out 2-in motion.

If your players can't read the game, they'll constantly be in each other's way and the offense won't have the spacing or timing to make this offense a success.

Strengths:

Develops Basketball IQ - As with all offenses that give players decision making opportunities, the 3-out 2-in motion offense allows players to read the defense, make decisions, and then learn from their success or mistakes.

Takes Advantage of Mismatches - This offense gives players great one-on-one opportunities close to the hoop. Any time you have a size or skill mismatch, you can put them on the low block and attack.

Offensive Rebounding - With two post players close to the basket, you're guaranteed to have players in good position for offensive rebounding opportunities.

Weaknesses:

Fewer Driving Opportunities - With two offensive and defensive players roaming the post areas, there won't be many large gaps inside for perimeter players to attack.

Must Have Low Post Scorers - The 3-out 2-in motion offense is run best when you have players who can score one-on-one in the low post. This forces the opposition to double which leads to many other opportunities in the offense.

Long Passes - With only three players around the perimeter, players will be making long passes as they swing the basketball around the three-point line. This can lead to more turnovers, especially at the youth level.

3-Out 2-In Motion Offense Rules:

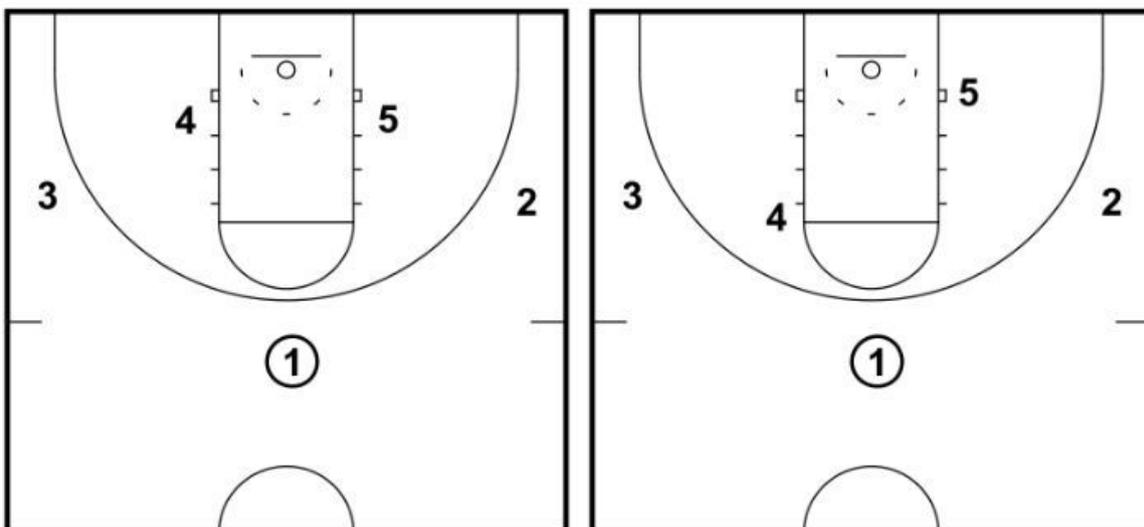
- 1. Keep great spacing** - To run the 3-out 2-in motion offense at a high level, there should be approximately 12-15 feet of space between players at all times. This gives players space to cut and drive and makes it difficult for the defense to help each other.
- 2. Never pass and stand** - After passing, perimeter players can either cut, screen away, or use a screen set by a teammate. In the post, players must be ready to cut to an open space after passing.
- 3. Don't stand for more than 3 seconds** - The less standing and watching players do the better your offense will be. Players can cut and replace or screen for a teammate to ensure the defenders are constantly moving.
- 4. On drives, players must move to open space** - There are specific movements off-ball players must should make if a teammate attacks the rim. Making these cuts will increase the chances they'll get open for a shot and will also ensure the offense keeps good spacing.
- 5. If denied on the perimeter, cut to the basket** - Players must be able to recognise when they're being denied on the perimeter and they need to back-cut. This will keep the offense running smoothly.
- 6. If strong side post is fronted, weak side post flashes to high post** - This is a great opportunity for a high-low pass inside and easy score if your players are alert and execute this action immediately.

3-Out 2-In Motion Offense Setup:

In this offense, there are three perimeter players and two post players.

As a general guide, the spacing between each player should be 12-15 feet when players are in their correct positions.

All of these positions are interchangeable depending on the players you have, mismatches on the court, and the actions you want to include in your offense.



For the perimeter spots, there will be one player at the top of the key (1) and one player on each wing just below the free-throw line extended (2 and 3).

In the post, both players (4 and 5) will start the offense slightly above the low post box on each side of the key. Although they are free to move up and down the lane as long as they stay on the same side of the key.

When catching in the low post, it's important that players catch above the low block. If they're too low, they will have limited scoring options since there is less space.

How to Run the 3-Out 2-In Motion Offense:

Next up, I'll break down the different passes involved in the 3-out 2-in motion offense and the actions that can be run off each pass.

Let's get started...

1. Top to Wing Pass

On a top to wing pass, the player at the top of the key has two options:

a. **Cut through the key and fill weak-side wing position**

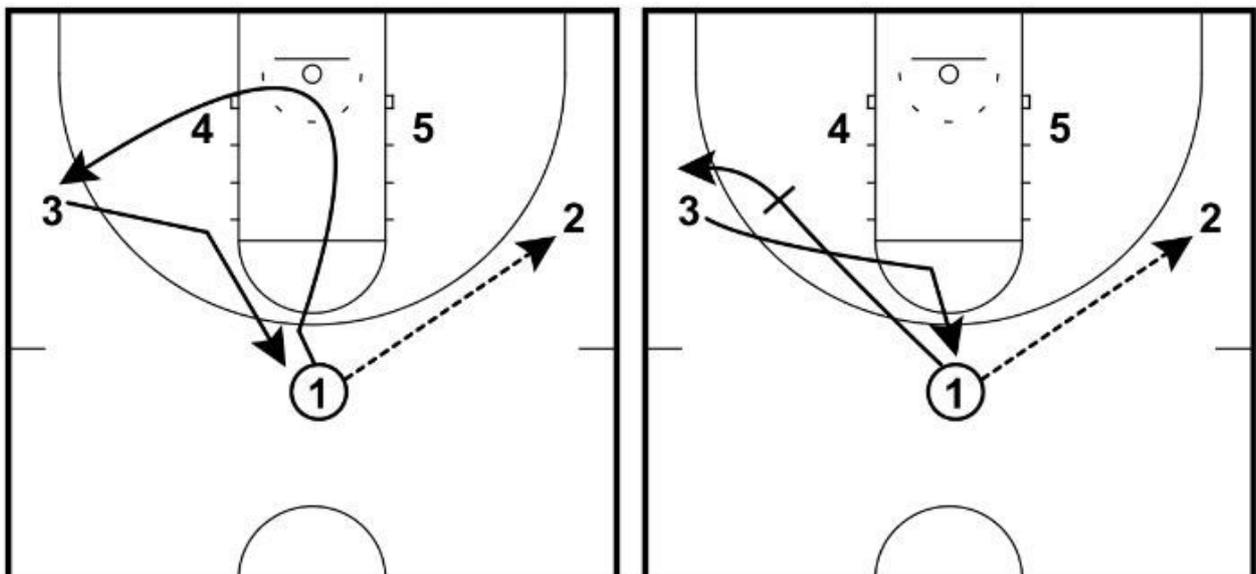
If this happens, the player who was on the weak-side wing cuts to the top of the key and replaces at the top. After cutting, the top player replaces on the wing.

b. **Away screen for the weak-side wing**

After passing, the player at the top of the key sets an off-ball screen for the weak-side wing. They then cut to the top of the key as the screener takes their position on the weak-side wing.

Once either option has been made, the player on the strong-side low block should be looking to post up just above the low block and create a passing angle to receive the ball.

The weak-side post player slides up to the elbow to ensure the two posts are opposite each other.

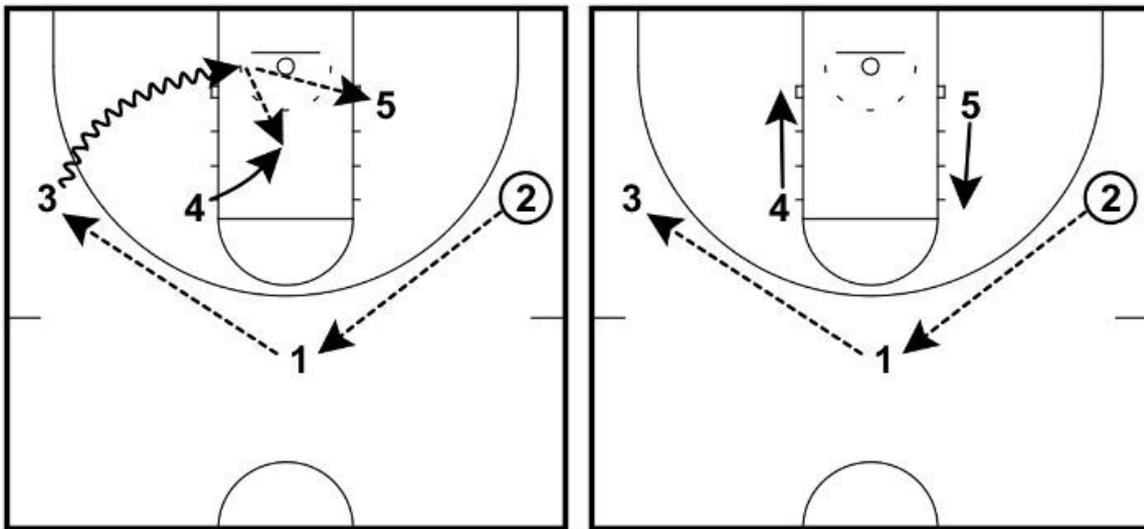


2. Wing to Top Pass

When the pass is made from the wing to the top, there are two main passing options that will now be available if spacing is correct:

a. Top to wing pass

If this quick pass is made, the player in the high post should wait a second to see if the player with the basketball will immediately attack the rim before cutting to the low post.

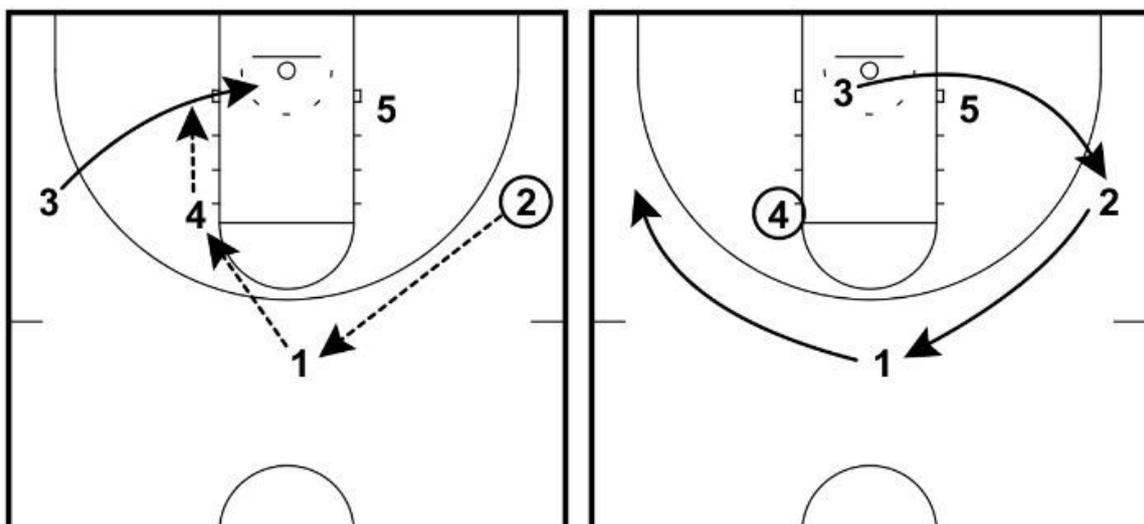


b. Top to high post pass

If the pass is made into the high post, the ball-side wing will immediately backdoor cut looking to receive a pass for the layup.

If they don't receive the pass, they must clear out to the weak-side wing as all perimeter players fill around.

This is a good opportunity for the high post player to attack one-on-one if they have a favourable matchup.



3. Wing to Wing Skip Pass

This is a difficult pass to make as it requires the passer to skip both weak-side post players too, but it does happen.

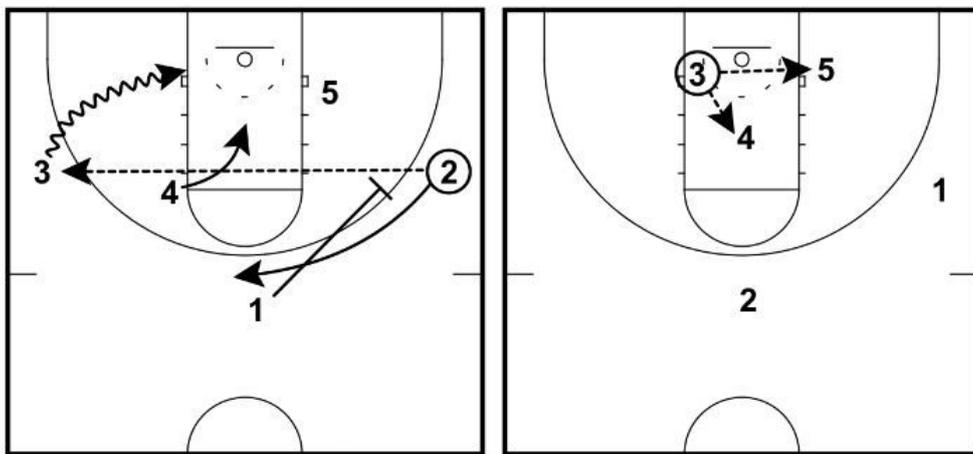
When it does, the player at the top of the key will always down-screen for the passer and then they replace each other.

There are a few options on the catch:

a. Catch and drive baseline

On the skip pass catch, the player on the wing should be looking for the immediate shot or an opportunity to attack the rim.

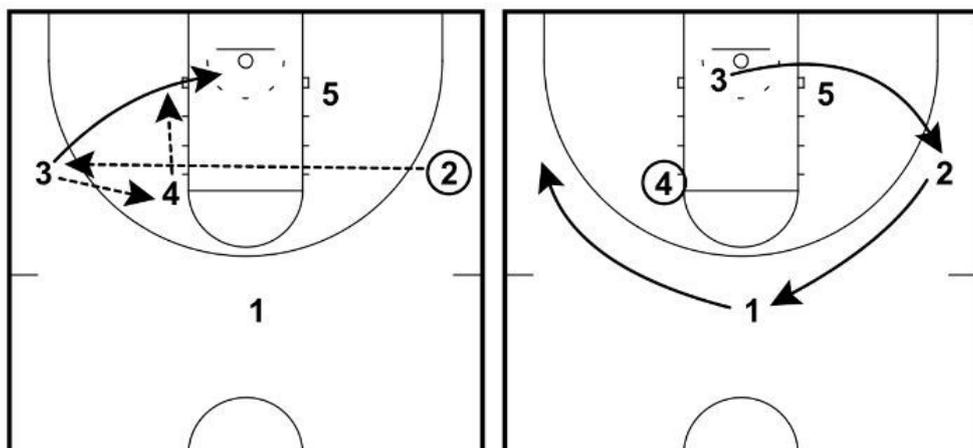
The ball-side post player must step in to the middle of the key so that there are two good options for inside passes leading to open layups.



b. Pass to high post and cut

They also have the option of passing into the high post and then back-cutting along the baseline as all perimeter players fill.

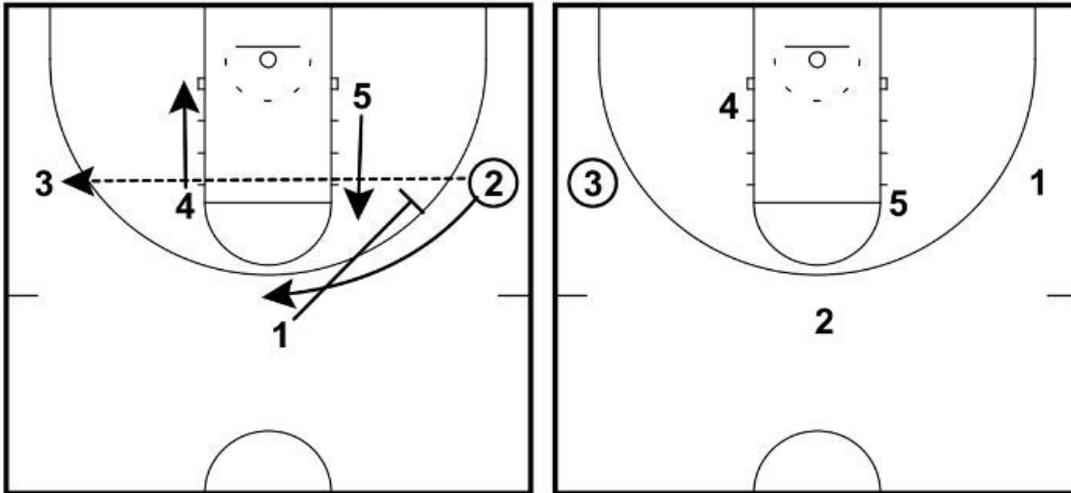
If the pass to the cutter isn't open, the high post player can attack one-on-one or kick it back out to the perimeter and start the offense again.



c. High post slides to low block

If none of these options are available, the player in the high post slides down to the low block as the opposite post player slides up to the high post.

The basketball can then be passed into the low post or the ball can be swung around the perimeter once again.



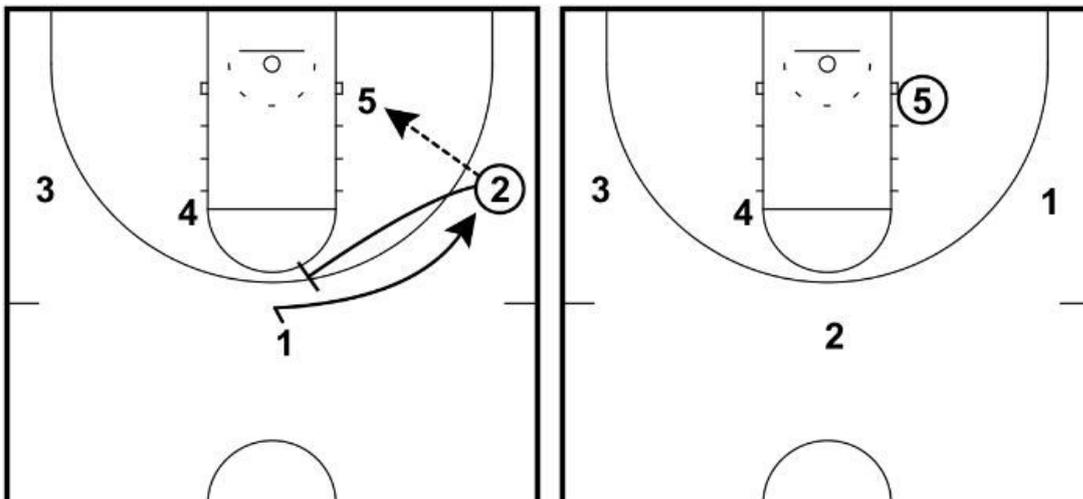
4. Wing to Low Post Pass

When a pass is made into the low post from the wing, the passer has a few different options they can choose from:

a. Screen the top player

Immediately after passing inside, the passer sprints to the top of the key and screens for the top player to cut to the strong-side wing for a shot opportunity. They then fill the position at the top.

This occupies the defense and creates room for the low post player to attack one-on-one.



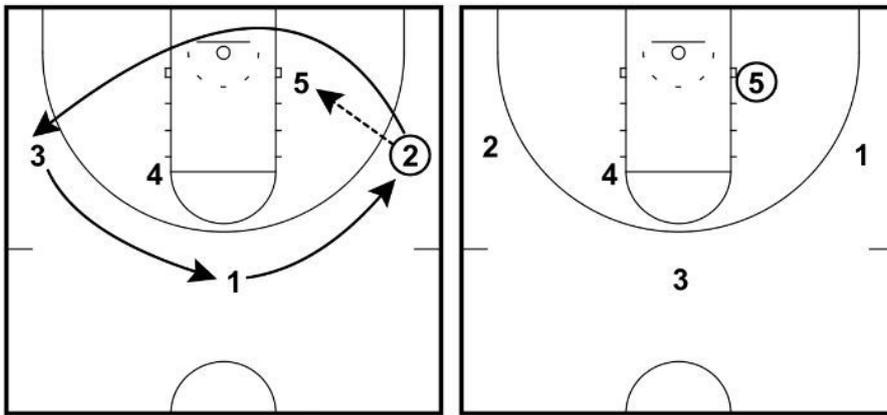
b. Cut along the baseline

The other option they have is to cut baseline and look to receive the pass for a layup (this is why it's important the post player catches it above the low post).

If they don't receive the basketball, they fill the weak-side wing while the two other perimeter players fill around.

While this is happening, the weak-side low post player must cut to the weak-side high post to give the low post space to back down and score.

If the weak-side post's defender attempts to double the ball, they will have an open cut to the hoop where they can receive the basketball for a layup.



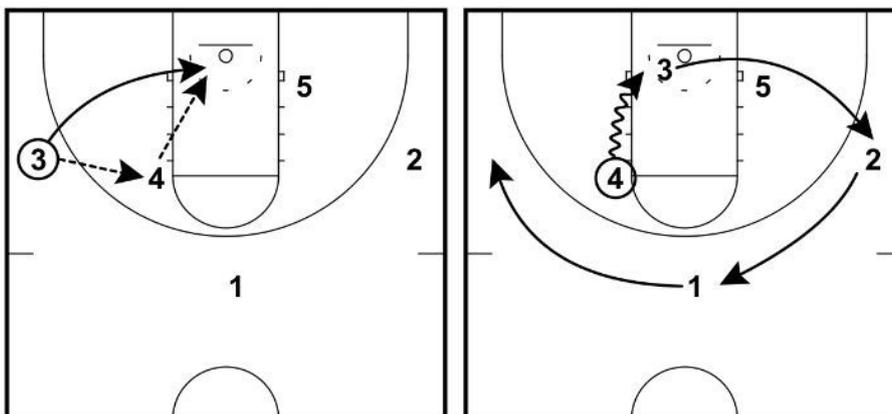
5. Wing to High Post Pass

As discussed when talking about the skip pass, every time a pass is made from the wing to the high post, the wing player who passed the basketball must cut baseline to the opposite wing.

Occasionally the pass back to the cutting wing player will be open leading to an open layup.

When this happens, all perimeter players must fill around the outside. The player cutting from the top to the strong-side wing must make sure to cut wide to make sure the high post player still has space.

From here, the player with the basketball can pass back out and reset the offense or look to attack their defender one-on-one.



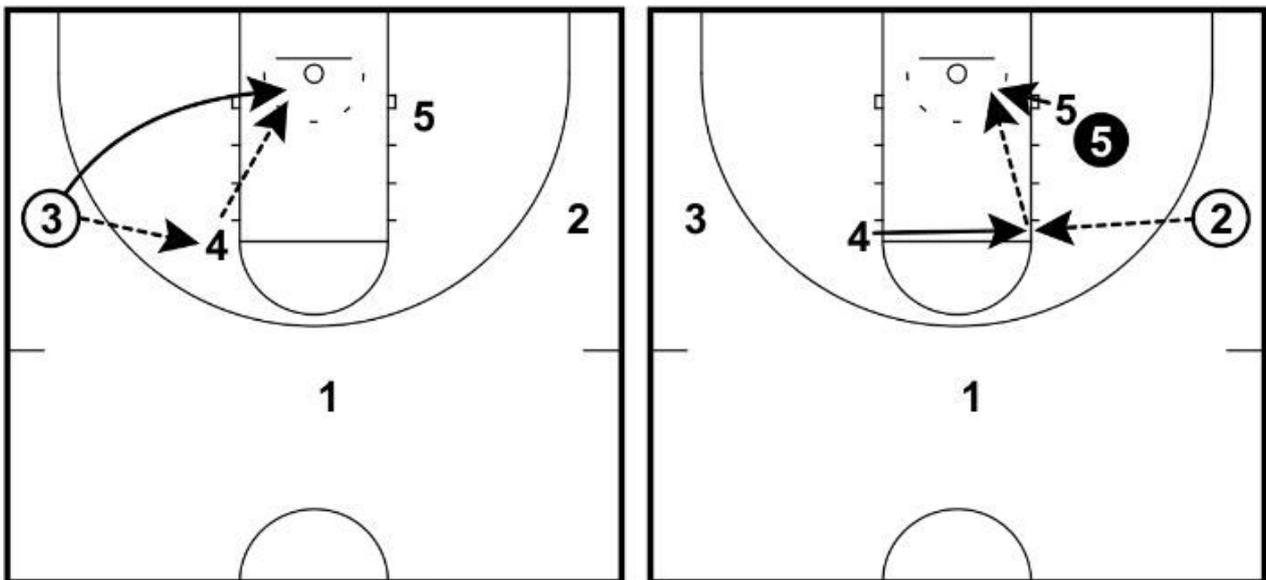
6. High-Low Pass (Advanced)

The only time the two post players should deviate from one player on each side of the key is when the ball-side post player is being fronted.

In this situation, the ball-side low post should allow the defender to get front position and then keep them there.

This triggers the weak-side post to flash to the ball-side high post, receive the pass, and then lob the basketball towards the rim leading the low post player into a layup.

This action relies on good timing and having players who can execute the high-low pass, but it's essential to teach so that your players can counter being fronted in the low post.



Dribble Penetration Movements

Any good offense provides players with opportunities to penetrate and attack the rim...

But this can be a tad confusing in the 3-out 2-in motion offense due to there being so much post activity around the key.

Your post players must be ready to immediately space out and create driving lanes for perimeter players.

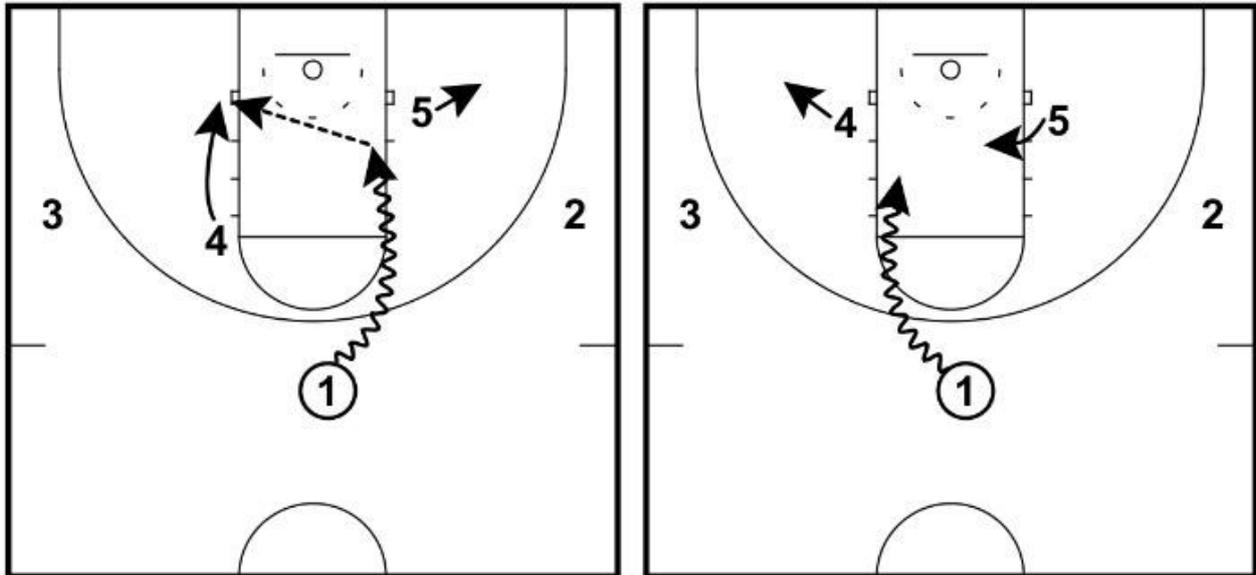
Next let's discuss the on-court movements that should occur on penetration to keep good spacing, create passing angles, and force the defenders to make difficult decisions.

Dribble Penetration from the Top of the Key

Before a player drives from the top of the key, they must look at the position of the two post defenders.

If there is a player in the high post, the player at the top should not drive in that direction.

If both post players are located just above the low post on penetration, the post player on the strong-side must clear out to the short corner while the weak-side low post player can choose to dive towards the rim or step into the paint for a drop off pass.



The two perimeter wing players are free to move up anywhere from the wing to the corner to create a good passing angle.

All players must remember that there is now no one at the top of the key for quick defensive transition...

So they all must get back quickly!

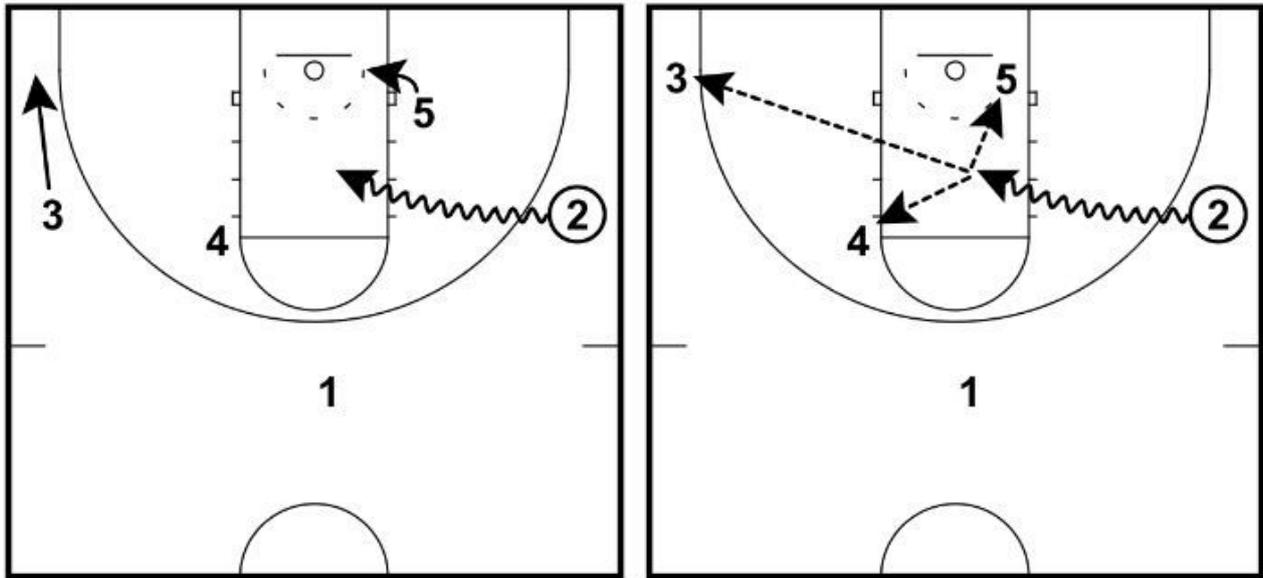
Dribble Penetration from the Wing to the Middle

When a perimeter player drives from the wing towards the middle of the key, the strong-side post player must slide down to the 'dunkers spot' on the baseline.

The weak-side post player should still be on the high post for spacing but can dive towards the rim for a pass if their defender helps on the drive.

As for the two perimeter players, the weak-side wing must read the defense and can move up anywhere from the wing to the corner to get themselves open.

The perimeter player at the top of the key should also move to create a better passing angle but must remember they're the first person back on defense.



Dribble Penetration from the Wing to the Baseline

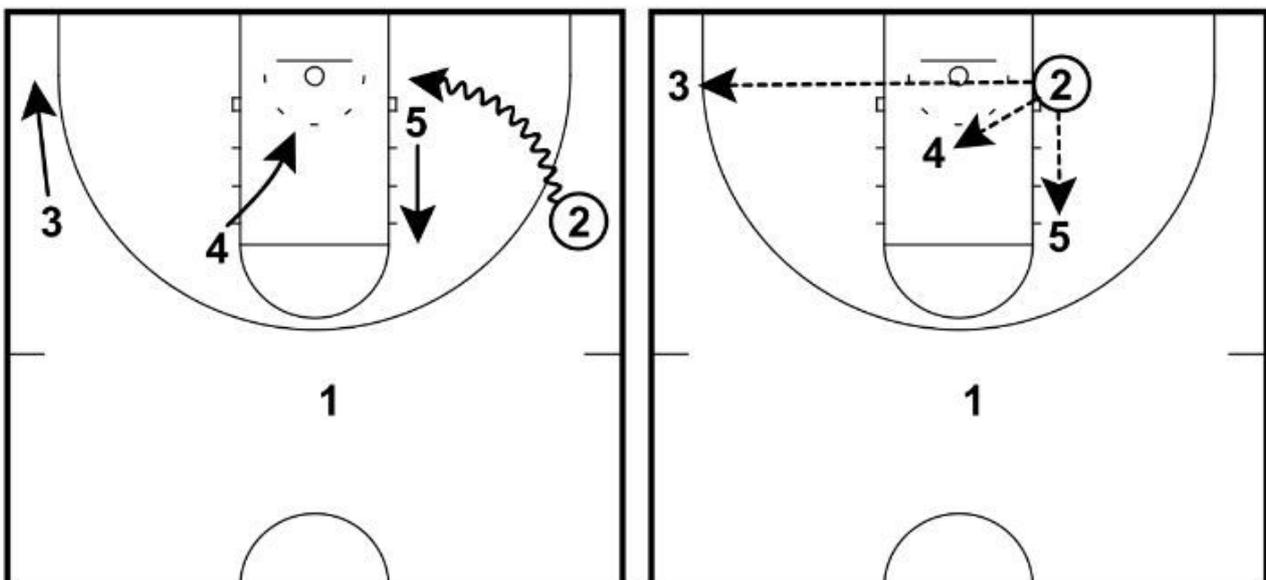
When a perimeter player penetrates from the wing towards the baseline, the player on the strong-side low block needs to slide up to the high post to create space.

If their defender helps, there should be a simple bounce pass to the high post for an elbow jump shot.

The post player on the weak-side should step into the middle of the paint and will be open for a drop off pass if their defender helps.

The perimeter player on the weak-side must slide to the corner and get ready for a catch and shoot.

And the perimeter player at the top should look to create a passing angle while remembering they must be ready to get back in defensive transition.



Conclusion

The 3-out 2-in motion offense is a fantastic option for coaches at any level of basketball.

It's one of the most popular choices for youth coaches, but has also been utilised by elite coaches such as Coach Krzyzewski at Duke University.

If you're looking for an offense that will develop basketball IQ, get you shots close to the rim, and give your team offensive rebounding opportunities, implement this offense.

Four Corners Offense *Complete Coaching Guide*



C O A C H M A C
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Four Corners Offense – Complete Coaching Guide



The four corners offense was invented by John McClendon in the mid-1950's but was made popular to the masses by Dean Smith during his long tenure at North Carolina.

The four corners offense was most commonly used as a delay offense before a 45-second shot clock was introduced in the 1985/1986 season. In fact, offenses like this one are the main reason that the shot clock was introduced to the game of basketball.

The offense involves four players standing on all the four corners of the half-court and one player with the basketball in the middle.

The player in the middle (who we refer to as the chaser) plays one-on-one with their immediate defender looking to break them down and score off the dribble. If another defender helps, then the pass is made to the open offensive player and the offense is reset.

It's a very patient offense that was mostly used in the last few minutes of a game to maintain a lead.

The Biggest Misconception

One of the biggest misconceptions about this offense is that it was only used slow down the game and that scoring opportunities weren't meant to be pursued.

While delaying the game is the most common reason it's implemented, the four corners offense can also be a great offense to score out of as long as the players keep an attacking mindset.

Teams would often use it when their star player significantly outmatched their direct opponent in a one-on-one situation.

The team would continually attack using this strategy in an attempt to get a high-percentage shot every time down the floor.

Dean Smith often went to this offense as a way to create scoring opportunities for his point guard, Phil Ford, during the 70's.

Take a look at the video below and notice the different amount of scoring opportunities Ford is able to create using the four corners offense...

When to Use the Four Corners Offense

Since I don't recommend this as a primary offense, here are the 5 main times throughout a game I'd recommend a coach consider implementing this offense:

1. To Run Time Off the Clock

Coaches would mostly use the four corners offense as a way to delay the game and run time off the clock. This was usually towards the end of a game but could be used at any time.

The theory behind running time off the clock is that the fewer possessions there are in a game, the less opportunity the opposition will have of scoring and reducing the lead.

The reason four corners is so effective at doing this is because the offensive team is spread out so much in the half-court. This gives the offense a lot of space to move which makes it extremely difficult for the defense to double team.

2. To Stop Momentum

If the opposition goes on a quick scoring run, coaches can run the four corners offense to slow the game down and put a stop to the opposition's momentum.

This would calm both the offensive and defensive teams, quieten the opposition crowd, and take away the momentum that the offensive team had.

3. To Bring the Opposition Out of a Zone Defense

As I'll bring up further in the blog post, coaches will often use the four corners offense to get the opposition out of zone by forcing them to play man-to-man and pressure the basketball.

Because if they don't, the offensive team will simply hold the basketball while the time runs out.

4. If Your Best Players Get Into Foul Trouble

If a couple of the star players get into foul trouble, teams can use the four corners offense to slow the game down so that they don't need to be subbed out of the game.

This stops the opposition from taking advantage of your bench players by attacking them while the better players were on the bench.

5. When Playing Against a Team with More Talent

The reason to implement the four corners offense when playing against a better team is to reduce the amount of possessions.

The fewer possessions there are in a game, the more chance the lesser skilled team has of staying competitive.

Roles and Responsibilities

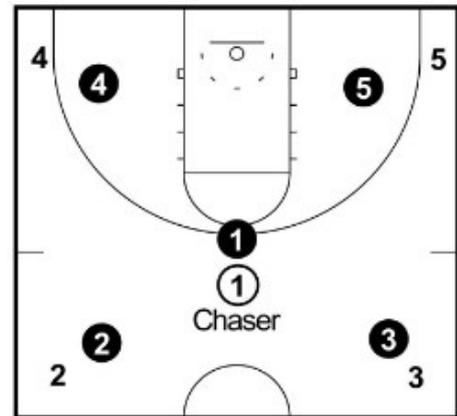
Chaser

The chaser is the player in the middle of the four corners that will have the basketball in their hands most of the time. This is usually the point guard of the team but doesn't have to be.

It is the chaser's role to dominate the basketball by handling most of the dribbling and by creating shots for themselves and others.

This is the most important role on offense.

The players that make the best chasers have high ball-handling skills, are able to break their opponents down in a one-on-one situation, and have great decision-making skills.



Guards

The guards are the two players in the corners of half-court and the sideline. The guards will also rotate through being chasers depending on where passes are made.

The main role of the guards is to space the floor and be in position to receive the pass from the chaser when they're double-teamed.

The best guards have similar attributes to the chaser since they'll have opportunities in that role also throughout the offense.

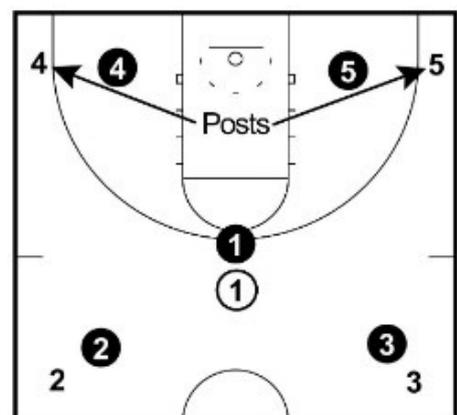


Posts

The posts are the two players in the corners of the baseline and the sideline.

Their main roles are to space the floor for the chaser, finish around the rim on cuts, and also to challenge for the offensive rebounds.

The best posts have a high basketball IQ, are able to shoot from the outside so that the defenders are forced to play them close, and have high-energy.



How to Run the Four Corners Offense

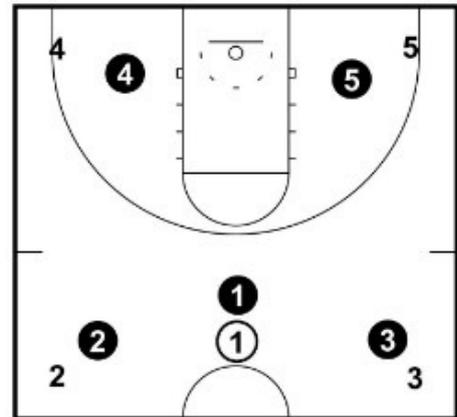
Setting Up

If you want to initiate the offense the same way that Dean Smith did, the four corners offense begins with the coach or point guard raising four fingers in the air as the signal.

On this signal, the two post players move to the baseline corners and the two wings move to the half-court corners.

Each corner player should be a few feet in from the corner so that they have space to move when they need to.

The chaser then has the entire middle of the half-court either attack the ring one-on-one or dribble the basketball to delay the game.



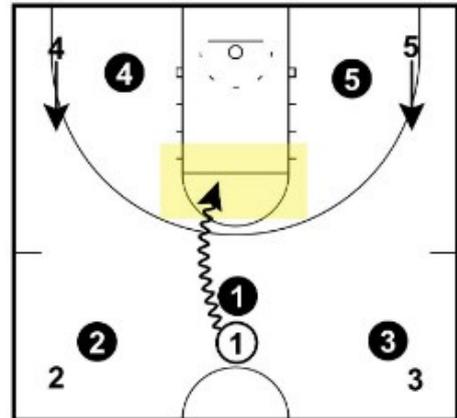
Attacking the Middle

The chaser's main objective is to attack the free-throw line area and then make decisions from there.

This is why the chaser must be highly skilled at dribbling the basketball and attacking their defender one-on-one.

While the chaser is dribbling towards the middle of half-court, the guards must stay in their corners but the posts should take a few steps up the sideline.

The reason the posts do this is to improve the passing angle, drag the post defenders up higher, and also to create space for the back-cut towards the rim.



Once they've dribble to the middle of the court, the chaser has a few options depending on how the defense reacts and the current game situation...

1. Attack the ring.
2. Pass to a guard.
3. Pass to a post.
4. Dribble back out.

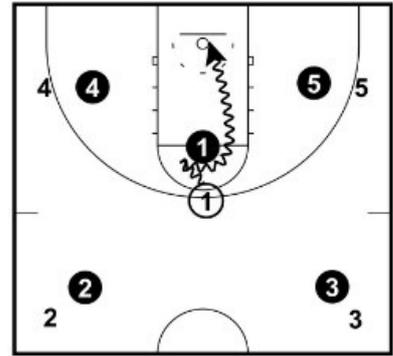
Let's discuss each option in more detail...

Option 1 – Chaser Attacks

This is the first option that must be looked at if the team is looking to score the basketball.

The chaser attacks one-on-one and creates a shot with a high percentage of success.

If the post defenders choose to deny the post players in the corners and not play help defense on the chaser, this will often result in a high-percentage layup as long as you're attacking the right matchup.



Option 2 – Pass to a Guard

If the chaser dribbles to the middle of the floor and finds one of the guard defenders is coming to double them, they must immediately pass out to the open offensive player before the double team arrives.

Once the pass to the open guard has been made, the chaser moves to the center of the half-court so that the guard has space to dribble either left or right.

The guard will wait until their defender closes out on them and then attacks the defender's hip preferably dribbling towards the middle of the court.

When they do this, the chaser curls the opposite way from them to create space and to fill their position so that, once again, there are four corners and a chaser.

As you can see, the chaser will change throughout the offense when passes out are made. What's important is that there are always four corner players and one chaser.



Option 3 – Pass to a Post

When the chaser has dribbled to the middle of the court, they may get doubled by a post defender or may be able to create a play for a score with the post player.

The post player can move up the sideline to get open but must never go higher than the free-throw line.

On a pass to the post player, there are three main options they have:

1. Receive the pass and then immediately pass back to the chaser

The chaser can use the post-player as a pressure release by immediately cutting to space and receiving the basketball back to reset the offense.

After passing the basketball back, the post cuts back to the corner and once again spaces the court.

The chaser then dribbles the basketball back out and begins the offense again.



2. Backdoor cut towards the rim for a layup

When the post players take a few steps up the sideline, often their defender will follow them expecting the outlet pass. They now have the perfect opportunity and space for a quick back-door cut where the chaser can pass to them for an open layup.

If a post player back-door cuts and doesn't receive the basketball, they simply return to the corner that they started in.



3. Receive the pass and then attack one-on-one

one-on-one post attack If you have any agile post players and can get a favorable matchup for them, allowing the post player to attack one-on-one can lead to a lot of success.

Coaches will often use this to single out a defender that's in foul trouble and put pressure on them to receive another one or allow the open layup.

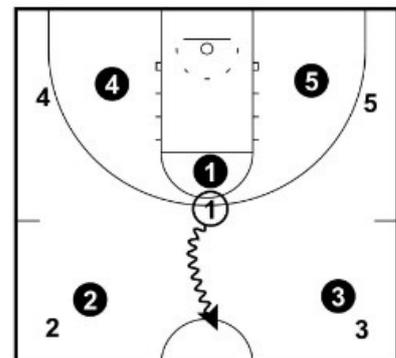


Option 4 – Dribble Back Out

If the chaser drives the basketball to the middle and no defenders come to set the double team and they still have the dribble under control, they can simply retreat dribble back to near half-court to start the offense again.

This is a good option if you have a great one-on-one player with high dribbling ability.

If you watched the video above, you'll see Phil Ford do this often.



The 2 Best Opportunities to Score

The most important thing for players to know when running the four corners offense is that only shots with an extremely high probability of success should be attempted.

There is no shot clock so the offense must be very patient and wait for the right opportunity.

The two main shots you're looking to take when running the four corners offense are:

- 1. High-percentage layups**
- 2. Free throws**

High percentage layups can come from the chaser driving to the hoop, off cuts from the post players, in one-on-one situations, etc.

Traditionally, long-distance shots are never to be taken. We would prefer to hold the basketball and reset the offense rather than shoot an open long-distance shot.

If you're using this as a delay offense to waste the clock, eventually the opposition will be forced to foul and put your team at the foul line. For this reason, it's super important that you have your best free-throw shooters on the court when running this offense.

3 Famous Four Corners Offense Games

1. North Carolina vs Duke – February 24th, 1979

When people first bring up the four corners offense, the game that often immediately springs to mind is a game between North Carolina and Duke.

While usually employed towards the end of the game, Dean Smith decided to use the four corners offense early in this matchup with Duke.

After Duke scored immediately from the tip, North Carolina stalled the game for the next 11 minutes using the four corners offense to bring Duke out of their 2-3 zone.

It didn't work.

After a couple of turnovers and two air-balls, North Carolina ended up going into half-time down 7-0.

2. North Carolina vs Virginia – March 7th, 1982

Another famous 'four corners' game occurred during the ACC championship game of 1982.

Dean Smith, Michael Jordan, and the Tarheels faced Terry Holland, Ralph Sampson, and the rest of the Cavaliers in an intense battle for the first 32 minutes of the game.

With 8 minutes remaining in the game and clinging to a 1-point lead, Dean Smith called a timeout and set the Tarheels up in the four corners offense.

Dean Smith's goal of implementing four corners was to get the Cavaliers out of their zone defense (which featured 7"4' Ralph Sampson in the middle) and force them to play man-to-man defense.

But Terry Holland and the Cavaliers refused to leave their zone defense or extend out.

The Tarheels held the basketball for the next 7 minutes and 6 seconds before the Cavaliers had no choice but to foul and send Doherty to the line for free throws.

North Carolina went on to win the game 47 – 45. When Dean Smith was asked about the four corners offense after the game he said "A coach thinks to win a game under the rules. We were just trying to win, and we did."

Can't argue with that response!

3. North Carolina vs Georgia Tech – 21st of February, 2015

After the passing of Dean Smith on the 21st of February, 2015, the current head coach of North Carolina, Roy Williams, ran the four corners offense on the first possession of a game against the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets.

Just 10 seconds into the game, Roy Williams lifts 4 fingers into the air signaling the four corners offense to begin just like the great Dean Smith had done many times before.

Four North Carolina players spread out to the corners while point guard Marcus Paige handled the basketball in the middle of the floor.

The offense worked perfectly.

Marcus Paige was able to find Brice Johnson on a backdoor cut resulting in an easy layup.

A touching tribute to Dean Smith.

Would I Recommend This Offense for Youth Basketball?

No. I would not recommend the four corners offense for a youth basketball team for a few reasons:

1. It's boring basketball

There's a very good reason why the shot clock was introduced to stop this delay-style of play.

While it is effective when used with the right players, it's not very fun to watch. You won't be making any friends with the spectators of the game if you choose to use this offense.

2. Poor for Player Development

Do you really want your players standing in the corners of the court while one player dribbles around in the middle wasting time off the clock?

It's a good strategy for holding onto a lead, but it won't do much for the future of your players.

This is why I would only ever recommend the four corners offense as a delay offense in the final minutes of a game. Never use it as a primary offense.

Conclusion

The four corners offense is effective but should not be used as your primary offense.

If you don't have a shot clock in the league you coach, there's no reason why you can't implement this offense to use during the last few minutes of a game.

It's simple to learn, creates high percentage shots, frustrates and fatigues the defense (Dean Smith spoke often about 'teasing the defense'), and much more.

4 Simple Steps to Get Youth Basketball Player's Attention – And How to Teach It

 basketballforcoaches.com/getting-attention-youth/

Do you ever find at practice or clinics that your youth basketball players aren't paying attention? You look over and see them mucking around talking with their friends, or simply day dreaming? Paying absolutely no attention to what you're trying to teach?

They can be sneaky about it too. One minute you think they're paying attention and following instructions, then as soon as you turn your back they're off shooting when they're meant to be practicing their ball-handling drills.

As youth basketball coaches, **this is a problem we will always have to face.**

I'm going to give you the 4 steps I've been using for many years to help battle this problem, which I think work very well.



Getting The Player's Attention

Here I'll go over the 4 simple steps I use that you can implement immediately to grab all of your player's attention and get them focusing and listening to you.

But first, you must understand that **getting their attention for the entire season must start on the very first day of practice.**

I always like to use the first practice to lay down some ground rules for the entire season. This will definitely pay off as the season progresses and make your practices much more efficient and productive.

While you can implement these steps mid-season, it's definitely a lot harder, so I don't recommend it. By that time you've probably got your team into a routine that the players are used to and will be used to following.

Anyway, on to the four steps...

But before I tell you them I want to tell you exactly **why** we're using the four steps.

Basically, what we're trying to do is **develop a routine** for the youth basketball players to follow. Children respond incredibly well to routine once it's developed.

So what exactly are the four steps to gaining the attention of my youth basketball players?

Let's get into it...

1. Coach Claps Two or Three Times – The Trigger

You'll be performing a series of loud claps to get all of your players attention (Why you'll be clapping rather than using a whistle I'll get to in a minute).

I recommend clapping two or three times.

This clapping is used as a **trigger** to start the routine.

You may need to perform the series of claps a couple of times until you get everyone's attention if you have a larger group.

2. Players Mimic the Clapping

Immediately upon hearing the coaches claps, the players are required to mimic the coaches clapping. For example... If the coach clapped twice, the players must stop what they're doing immediately and clap twice.

Let me tell you the two reasons why we require the players to mimic the coaches clapping...

1. It immediately stops every player from what ever it is that they were doing and focus on the coach.
2. The players love doing it! ~~For some weird reason.~~
3. We want the youth basketball players to **produce a response**.

Getting a response from your players is the key most coaches miss when it comes to youth basketball.

The response drags the player away from what they were being distracted by and requires there attention.

Now when I say distracted, I don't necessarily mean a bad distraction. A player could be practicing their shooting while another could be chatting to his friend.

The beauty of the clapping technique is that regardless of what the player is doing, it requires their immediate response so they must stop what they're doing.

Whereas if you're using a whistle, you'll find some of the players hear it but for some reason decide not to pay any attention to it... because it doesn't require an immediate response from them.

3. Send them to a Designated Area of the Court

Depending on their age and your preference will determine the next step...

For younger players, once they've clapped I get them to **immediately run to the centre of the court and sit down**.

For players who are a bit older, you can either get them to stay where they currently are and focus their attention on you, meet in the centre of the court, or jog to where ever you

are on the court.

But I highly recommend you get them to meet at the centre of the court. I believe players pay much more attention when you're close to them rather than shouting across the gym.

4. The Two Important Rules

Once the players are in the centre of the court, there are two very, very important rules you should enforce.

1. Complete Silence

2. All Eye-Balls on the Coach

I try to keep it as simple as possible when they're young as to not confuse them. I've seen other coaches give them other rules like 'no fidgeting', but I believe these two simple rules cover everything you need.

The less rules they have to remember the better.

How to Teach your Team this Routine

Alright, I'll admit it. It seems like a big routine and a pretty daunting to teach to a group of youth basketballers...

That's why I'm going to run you through step-by-step exactly how I've done it with every youth basketball group I've ever coached.

Trust me, you'll be glad you did it!

The best day to teach your players this routine is on the very first day. I've always done it then, and I highly recommend you do too.

The first practice is best because everyone is always eager and ready to learn. It's as the season progresses that the players start to slack off, so let's drill our routine into them early.

Here's how I teach it to my players...

1. Get all of your players sitting down around you.
2. Tell the players you have one very important rule for the season.
3. Then proceed to explain to them that 'when ever the coach claps, you have to stop what you are doing and copy the claps he does'.

This can be hard for children to comprehend at first, so I usually say "Let's try that quickly", and then spend a bit of time clapping while they copy me.

Once they've all got it worked out, make sure that you reassure them that they've got it right and to remember it.

4. Then tell your players 'After you've copied my claps, you have to run to the centre of the court and sit down straight away'

5. At this time, I want to test just how much they've been listening.

I'll get all of the players to get up, grab their basketballs, and I make them perform a super easy drill. I usually just get them to dribble in a clockwise direction.

6. After about a minute of this, I'll perform my claps.

7. Everyone usually stops immediately and mimic my claps – good start. Then I've found a bit over half of the players will remember that they need to go to the centre circle and sit. Those that forget will see the others and remember too.

8. Once everyone's in the centre, make sure to give them some positive reinforcement and tell them how good they've done.

But then stress how important it is to come immediately to the centre of the court after they've finished clapping. Don't point out the players that forgot, just say it to the entire group.

9. This is where I tell them the last step of the routine.

I tell them 'There's still two very important rules once you all sit down. Rule 1: Everyone must be looking at me. And Rule 2: Everyone must stay completely silent (I usually say this in a whisper and then gesture of locking my lips).

10. That's it!

Here are a couple of tips to make sure you teach this routine effectively...

- Be sure to perform this routine a lot during the first couple of trainings. That way the routine gets ingrained in their mind while they still remember it well.
- Provide a lot of positive reinforcement! When the players come in and have performed the routine well, let them know how happy you are that they did it.

Now Get Out There And Teach It!

I really hope you got a lot out of this article and implement the steps I've shown you.

I know you'll be back to thank me when you see how well this routine works with youth players!

Do you have any techniques you use to get your players attention?

I'd love to hear your thoughts in the comments.

Good luck!

– Coach Mac

4 Ways Lack of Sleep Kills Basketball Performance

 basketballforcoaches.com/lack-of-sleep/

Why do basketball players spend hundreds of dollars on the latest basketball shoes just for a bit of extra cushioning and ankle support? And why do they spend hundreds more on protein shakes just for a small reduction in recovery time?

The answer is to get an 'edge' over their opponents. Everyone's always looking for that little extra that can give them an advantage.

With many players so similar in ability sometimes a small advantage can make a big difference.

The reason I bring this up is because I see players go to great lengths to get a small edge on their opponents, which is great, but I watch many of them skip over one of the most important and simple things they can do to increase their performance.

Want to know what the secret is?

Get enough sleep.

While it's easy to downplay sleep, multiple clinical studies have shown sleep to be an absolutely essential element of high performance.

Getting enough sleep can speed up your response time, improve your reflexes and raise your physical output.

Proof Lack of Sleep Kills Performance

In a study published in *Sleep*, Stanford researcher Dr. Bill Dement published a study examining the effect of sleep on basketball. The results astounded both researchers and athletes.

Both reaction times and endurance increased. Three point field goal shooting percentage went up by 9.2%. Sprint speed decreased almost 10%. Foul line shooting percentage increased 9%. The list goes on and on.

Alright, so you now understand that lack of sleep definitely decreases performance... but we haven't explained exactly how this occurs...



Photo Credit: [Zahira](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

The 4 Main Ways Lack of Sleep Decreases Performance

1. Reaction Time

Numerous studies have shown that a decrease in sleep correlate with a decrease in reaction time.

As stated at the start of the article, basketball can be a game of inches. How many times do players go for steals around the perimeter and just miss deflecting the ball by an inch? The same can be said for big men going for blocks.

Being well rested can give your players quicker reaction times and they will make up that inch to get the block or a steal.

2. Decision Making

All players on the basketball court must be able to read the play and make the right decision to give the team the best opportunity to score.

With hundreds of different options every time a player gets the ball, deciding which option is in the best interest of the team can be quite a task.

A lack of sleep will impair this decision making. And all it takes is a few incorrect decisions by players to turn the game from an easy win into a loss.

3. Recovery

Lack of sleep will also impair your body's muscle recovery.

During practice and during workouts, muscles get damaged on a microscopic level. The repair of those muscles is what builds new, stronger tissues. If you're not getting enough sleep, this process gets impaired.

That means you won't build muscles as quickly. Your muscles may also not be fully recovered come game time.

4. Reduced Energy

A lack of sleep causes a decrease in glycogen storage.

Glycogen is your body's primary energy source. It's your body's main fuel source during a game. It's the only source of energy in your body that can truly be broken down quickly.

With a slowed and depleted glycogen system due to not being well rested, you'll tire much more quickly.

So, What's the Optimal Amount of Sleep?

There's no right answer to this question. Dr. Van Cauter found that increased performance could be detected by increasing sleep to as much as 10 hours a night. But not everyone has the luxury or time to get that much sleep. Realistically, the "right" amount of sleep varies from person to person.

The best way to detect your ideal sleep amount is to sleep without an alarm clock for a few days. How long do you sleep naturally? That's the amount of sleep you should strive for on a regular basis.

4 Ways to Develop Fantastic Team Chemistry

 basketballforcoaches.com/develop-team-chemistry/

As we continually bring up on Basketball For Coaches, coaching isn't just about the x's and o's. We need to teach more than basketball. There are other things which are necessary to give your team the best possible chance of success.

Team chemistry is one of these crucially important ingredients.

Is fantastic team chemistry absolutely imperative to be a great basketball team? No. A team of highly-skilled players with poor team chemistry will more often than not beat a team of poorly-skilled players with great team chemistry. That's just basketball.

Then why is team chemistry important?

I believe it comes down to two things;

1. It will maximise their talents.

Great team chemistry will enable your players to play at a higher level as a team than their current skill-set would allow. This is due to increased confidence (as a team and as an individual), being willing to work hard for each other (dive on loose balls), making the extra pass to a teammate, holding each other accountable, and a whole lot of other positives for the team.

In essence, on a team with great chemistry, the players will care more about the success of the team than the success they achieve as an individual.

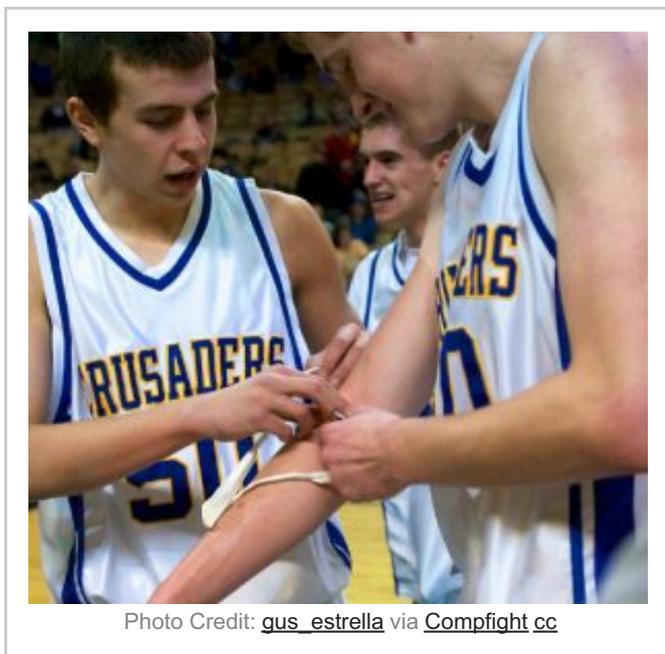
2. It makes for an enjoyable season.

At the end of the day, no one wants to coach a team full of players that hate each other and don't enjoy spending time together, no matter how many W's they put on the board.

Here are 4 things you can do to improve your teams chemistry and become a better overall team:

1. Assign Partners

When running partner drills, take it upon yourself as the coach to put people together who wouldn't usually choose each other. If given the chance, players will always choose the same person to partner up with. That's not what we want.



We want our players to feel comfortable with all of their team-mates. The more interaction they can have with different players, the better the chemistry on the team will be.

This is especially important at the start of the season when bringing new people onto the team. Pair them with a veteran leader of the team.

2. Do Activities Outside of Practice

This won't necessarily make them play better together on the floor. That's what practice is for, learning each other's tendencies and such, but doing things outside of practice will develop relationships between the group and make for a more enjoyable overall season.

Just last season I coached a young player that didn't want to come to practice because he didn't feel comfortable and didn't know anyone. When we started doing things outside of practice he got to know a few of his teammates and started attending training more regularly. This led to better team chemistry for our overall group.

Here are a few ideas of things your team might enjoy doing;

1. Dinner together after a game.
2. Local swimming pool.
3. Watching a movie together.
4. Going paint-balling.
5. Camping

It's all about getting players comfortable with each other.

3. Don't Tolerate Any Kind of Bullying

Bullying or conflict between teammates can tear a team apart. Often it will start out as a small issue between two players, but once it starts, more and more players will become involved and the issue will grow, eventually dividing the team.

The key is to put a stop to the bullying immediately. We can't tolerate that kind of behaviour.

If it's not something you can work out with the two players, get all involved and their parents together and endeavour to solve the problem before it gets any bigger.

4. Define Player Roles

As one of the greatest coaches in the NBA today says...

"We believe in people executing their role and caring about the team more than anything individually – Gregg Popovich"

Defining roles are extremely important when it comes to team chemistry. Players want to know what to expect and what you expect from them. What do you want them to focus on when they're out on the floor?

It's important to acknowledge the importance of all aspects of basketball when defining player roles. Many youth players believe they're not making an impact unless they're scoring which is completely not true.

During games, make sure you're acknowledging aspects other than scoring. I always praise a great pass that set up the score rather than the person that finished the play to encourage more unselfish passing.

Coaches have to make the players that do 'the little things', like get 50-50 balls and rebound, know that they're an important asset to the team.

4 Out 1 In Offense *Complete Coaching Guide*



C O A C H M A C

basketballforcoaches.com

4 Out 1 In Offense – Complete Coaching Guide



The 4 out 1 in offense (also known as '41') is one of the most popular and versatile basketball offenses in today's game at all levels.

As the name suggests, this offense consists of 4 players spaced out behind the three-point line and 1 post player inside.

In this article I will mostly focus on breaking down the version of the zone that keeps the post player on and below the low post as this is the best version for youth basketball as it keeps the lane open for dribble penetration.

Similar to the 5-out motion, the 4-out 1-in motion is run using a set of rules that assist players in making their own decisions while reading the defense.

This allows players to learn how to play the game of basketball (develop basketball IQ) instead of running an offense with predetermined actions that force players to play like robots.

The most recent example of a coach successfully using the 4 out 1 in motion is Jay Wright at Villanova who led the Wildcats to the championship in the 2015 – 2016 season.

Who Should Run the 4-Out 1-In Motion Offense?

The 4 out 1 in offense can be run by any team. It's a fantastic base offense with a lot of different options out of it depending on the skill levels of your players.

I highly recommend this offense for teams with a strong post player as the spacing on the court makes it hard to trap the post.

This spacing also provides your team with many opportunities to drive to the rim and will lead to many open shot opportunities as it's hard to help and recover.

Strengths

Teaches Players How to Play Basketball – This is the most important trait I look for when choosing a youth basketball offense. A decision-making continuity like the 4 out 1 in offense develops basketball IQ and will assist players to be the best they can be in the future.

Perfect Spacing – Many coaches claim that the 4 out 1 in offense has ‘perfect’ spacing. When in the wing and slot spots, the players will be about 18 feet apart. This is close enough that the offensive team can make sharp and direct passes, but far enough away that one defender can’t guard two players.

Can Adjust to Any Skill Level – Due to the progressions of this offense, the 4-out 1-in can be as complex as you want or as simple as you want. It can be a great offense for a youth team simply running cuts, or a great offense for a professional team by utilizing all the different actions and reads.

Can Adjust to Any Team’s Talent – With so many actions available, this offense can be adjusted to suit any team. If you’ve got a tall and athletic team, the offense can focus on curling off screens and back cuts. If you’ve got a quick team that shoots a high percentage, the offense can focus on flare screens and on-ball screens.

Easily Exploits Mismatches – You can exploit mismatches anywhere on the court. It’s difficult for the defenders to help or trap because the offensive players are so far apart.

Open Driving Lanes – Due to the great spacing of the offense, as long as your post player and perimeter players don’t get confused, there will be many opportunities to attack the rim off the dribble.

Difficult to Scout – As this offense relies on players reading the defense and making decisions, it’s difficult for the opposition to predict what your team is going to do.

Weaknesses

Can Be Difficult to Learn – This has always been the biggest criticism coaches have about the 4 out 1 in offense. But by using the progressions in this blog post, I don’t think it’s difficult for any team to learn!

Reading Others on the Court – While I believe it is easy to learn if taught correctly, it can be difficult for young players to execute during games because the offense relies on players reading the other 9 players on the court and making decisions.

Can Be Difficult If Your Players Can’t Shoot – As with any offense, if you’re competing against an experienced coach and one of your players can’t shoot well, the opposition will often sag a defender in the lane which cuts off dribbling, cutting, and passing lanes as well as makes it difficult for players to post up. Fortunately, not many youth coaches will do this.

4-Out 1-In Motion General Rules

- 1. Keep Great Spacing** – This is the most important rule of the offense. Perimeter players should always be about 18 feet away from each other.
- 2. Cut With a Purpose on Every Cut** – Players must look like they're going to receive the basketball on every cut towards the hoop. This involves showing target hands and calling for the basketball.
- 3. Never Pass and Stand** – After a perimeter player makes a pass, they should never stay in the same place. What action they make will depend on what progression you're up to and the actions you choose to use.
- 4. Watch the Cutters!** – I'm not a fan of players holding the basketball for too long, but since this offense relies so much on cutters and off-ball screens, it's important that the player with the basketball see the cutters and is ready to make the pass if it's open.
- 5. Always Catch Looking to Shoot** – Players must keep the defense honest throughout the entire possession. Always catch the basketball ready to shoot if the defense isn't quick enough.
- 6. No Excess Dribbling** – Don't allow players to catch and put the basketball on the floor without thinking. Save the dribble. Only dribble when penetrating to the rim, using an on-ball screen, or improving a passing angle.

Figuring Out How Your Team Will Run The Offense

The 4-out 1-in offense is incredibly versatile so it's important that you figure out how your team will best suit this offense before introducing it to your players.

It's impossible for teams to run every action, so you must figure out which actions work best for your team and focus on them.

For example if your post player is the best player on your team, you'll want them flashing to the ball-side more. If they're not, keep them mostly on the weak side of the floor.

Following on with this, the starting point for deciding how to run your offense begins with deciding how you'll use the post player.

Let's start by talking about that...

How to Use the Post Player

The most common reason the 4 out 1 in offense isn't always effective at a youth basketball and high school level is because the coach doesn't know how to use the post player effectively.

Many coaches simply allow their post player to move anywhere they feel like inside and around the paint. This will never work!

The post player must have rules they're required to follow.

If you have decided to run the 4 out 1 in offense with your team, the very first thing you must decide is how you're going to use the post player.

Here are the 4 post player options ranked in the order I recommend...

1. Post player must stay on the weak side but can flash to the post (Recommended)

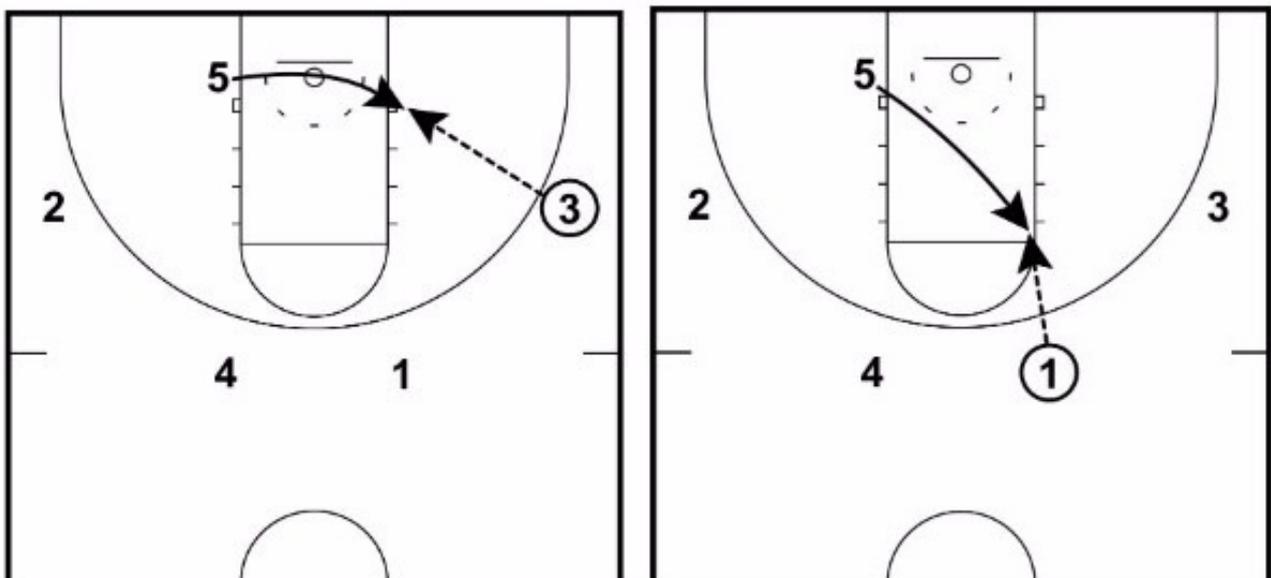
This is my favorite way to utilize the post player when running the 4-out 1-in and will be the option I refer to throughout this article.

It involves the post player staying on the weak side of the floor but giving them the opportunity to flash to either the low or high post if they see an opportunity to do so a certain number of times per possession.

The benefits to keeping the post player on the weak side of the floor for the majority of the possession are:

- The lane to the rim will stay open for driving, cutting, and passing by the perimeter players.
- Your post player will have great position to secure offensive rebounds.
- There will be many drive and dish opportunities.

When your post player does flash to the basketball and establishes position, they're allowed to hold their position for a maximum of 2 – 3 seconds before they must quickly retreat to the weak side again.



Be patient when first implementing this offense as it will take time for the post players on your team to learn which opportunities are best to take.

I recommend you begin by allowing them to flash to the basketball one time per possession.

When they're a little more experienced at reading the defense and knowing when to flash to the basketball, you can increase this to two flashes per possession.

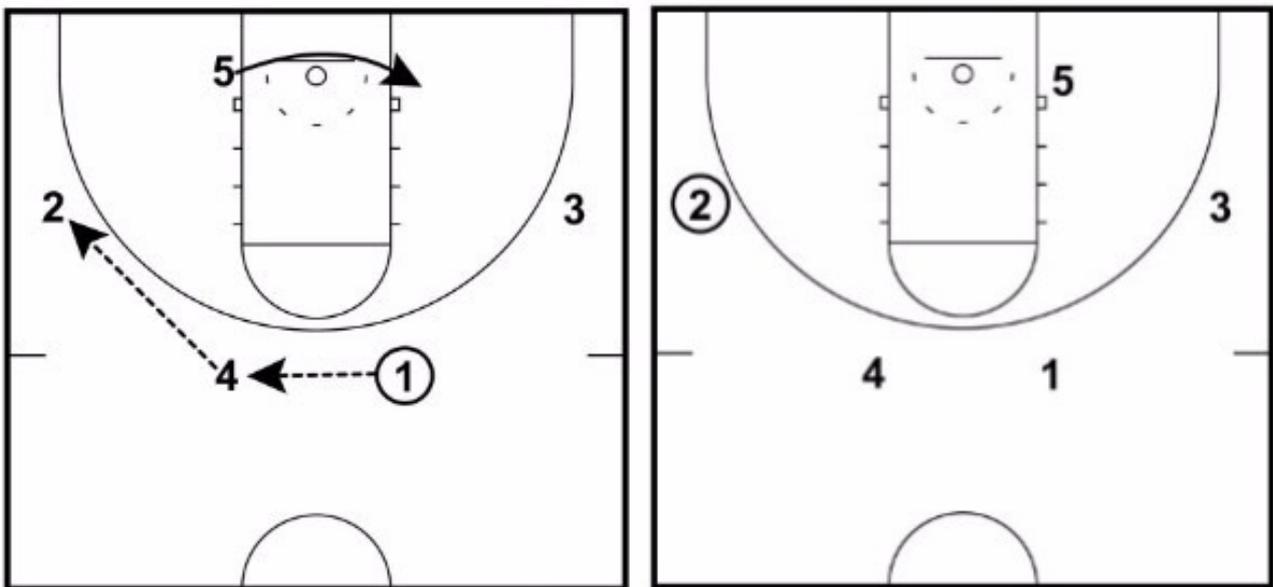
2. Post player must always stay on the weak side the entire possession.

For this option, we remove the post player opportunities to flash to the basketball throughout the possession.

I want to make it clear that using this option will not result in the post player being left out of the offense completely. There will still be plenty of drive and dish opportunities as well as offensive rebounding opportunities.

The two main reasons a coach might decide to use this option are:

- a. You don't have a post player on your team capable of creating their own shot or a shot for another player from the post.
- b. You want to keep the lane open to the ring for drives, passes, and cuts for the entire possession.

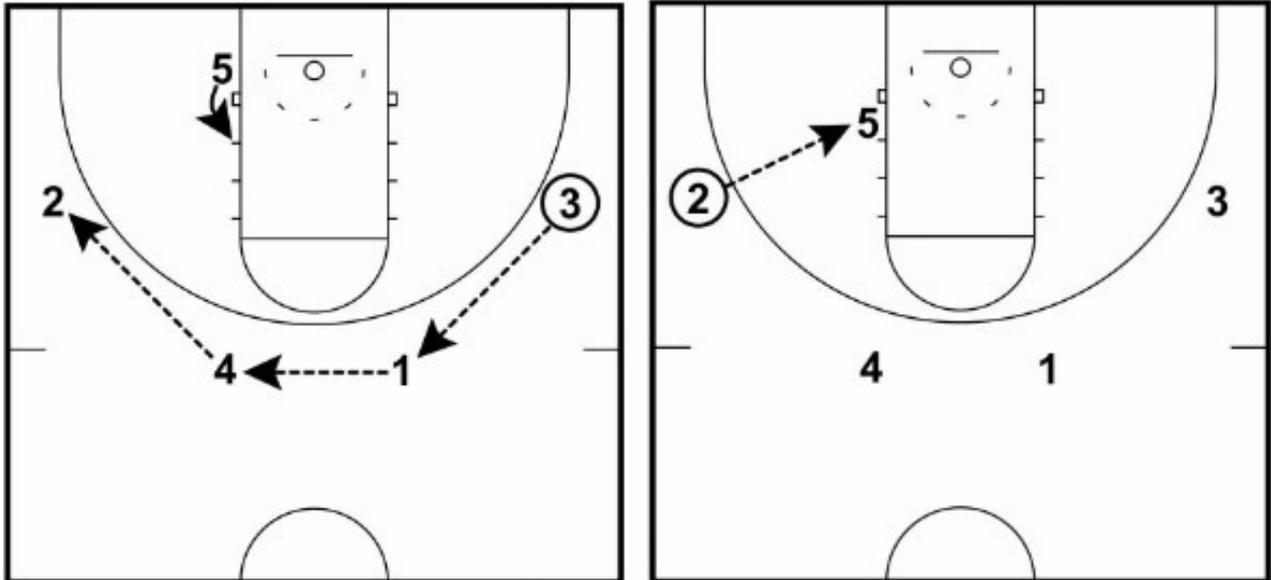


3. Post player must always stay on one side of the floor the entire possession.

The theory behind this post option is to take advantage of a post player who is more effective on one side of the floor while keeping the other side open for drives to the rim.

There can also be pre-determined actions that can only be run on specific sides of the floor. For example flare screens on the post player's side of the floor and back cuts on the open side of the floor.

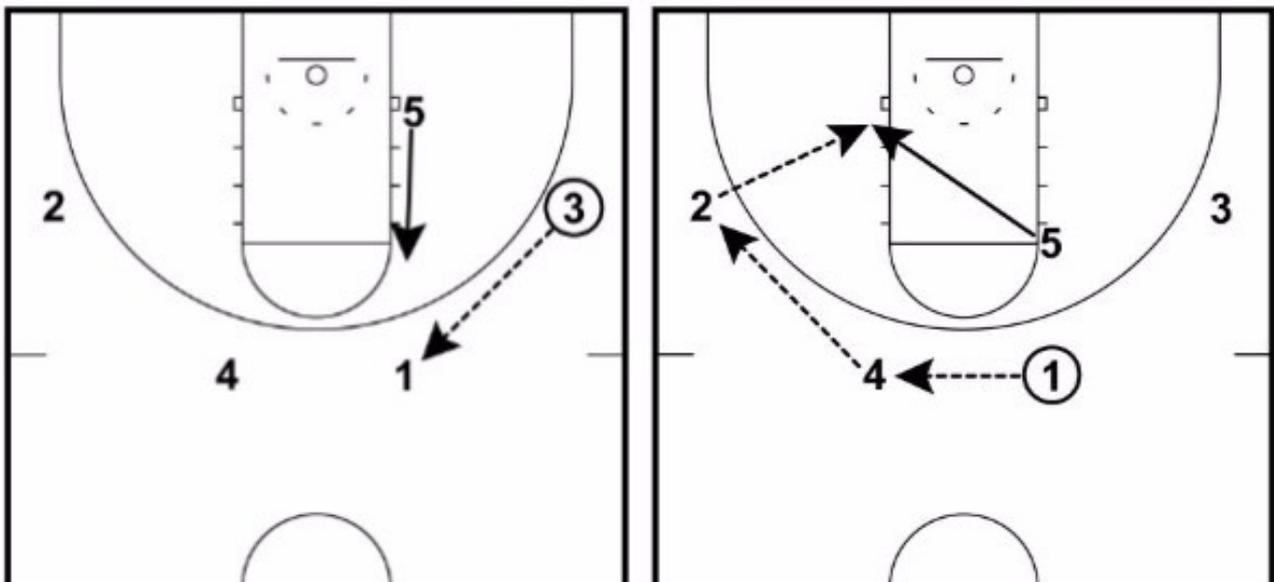
I've seen this run successfully by a few teams but it makes the offense too restricted and predictable. I don't recommend it.



4. Post player always stays in front of the basketball

The only time this is the best method to use is when you've got a post player who is by far the best player on the court and you plan to feed the basketball into them on every single possession.

Since players like this are incredibly rare, I'd advise against using this method.



So, which post option should you choose?

To recap, here are the two post options I recommend:

- 1. Keep your post player on the weak side of the floor and allow them to flash to the basketball a certain amount of times per possession.**
- 2. Keep the post player on the weak side of the floor at all times.**

Both options fit perfectly with the 4 out 1 in offense I'm about to show you.

To decide which option is best, I recommend evaluating each player on your team who will play in the post and decide which option is best for each post player individually.

Don't be afraid to allow your starting post player to flash to the basketball while keeping your backup post player exclusively on the weak side when they're in the game.

Post players must earn the right to be allowed to flash to the basketball and create a shot for themselves or a teammate from the post.

For those you don't believe are ready, keep them on the weak side and encourage them to improve their post game.

Also, ensure that all players on your team understand how to play the post position. You never know when you're going to get a mismatch and want to take advantage of it inside.

This is also a great strategy to use when one of the opposition players gets in foul trouble. Send the offensive player they're guarding into the post!

Filling Around the Perimeter



The other thing you should understand before we get into the heart of the offense is how players must fill around the perimeter.

When filling spots around the perimeter players must read their defender and make one of two cuts.

If the defender is within one step of the line to the basketball, the player must v-cut to get themselves open on the perimeter.

If the defender is two steps or further away from the line of the basketball, the offensive player should blast cut towards the basketball.

Rick Majerus calls these the 'blast cut' and the 'fill cut'.

Setting Up the 4-Out 1-In Motion Offense

For the perimeter players, there are 4 spots around the three-point arc that are primarily used in the 4 out 1 in offense.

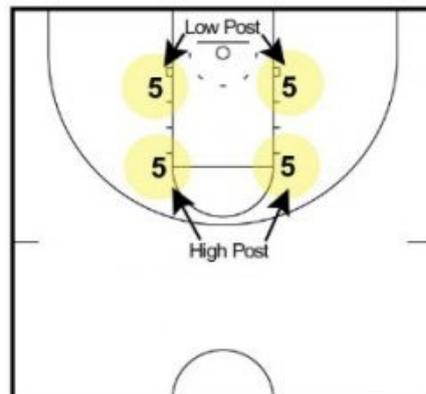
We call them the slots and the wings (corners are used occasionally but aren't primary spots).

These perimeter spots should be a step outside the three-point line to maintain ideal spacing.

post-spotsFor the post player, there are 4 spots around the paint they can move to depending on whether on how you decide to use them within the offense.

These are the two low blocks and the two elbows.

When first teaching the 4 out 1 in offense to your team, I recommend putting flat cones on the perimeter spots so that players have a guide.



Teaching the Base 4-Out 1-In Motion Offense

I have broken the 4 out 1 in motion offense down into 7 progressions to teach a team the offense from scratch.

The reason we teach in progressions is because it makes the offense far easier to understand and also because it allows players to start learning the basics of a complex offense from a young age.

If you were to teach a young team a complete offense immediately, they'll have no hope of understanding it. There's simply too much information for them to process.

Instead, use this method and only advanced to the next progression when your team can complete the current progression with minimal mistakes.

Once your players understand the complete offense, there are also many additional actions that you can choose to implement based on the skill level of the players on your team. I'll show you these in the 'advanced actions' section of the article.

Let's get started!

Progression 1 – Pass, Cut, and Fill

The first progression involves basic passing, basket cuts, and filling the spots around the perimeter.

This is the simplest way to teach players the different positions on the court and get them used to the different cutting movements involved in the offense.

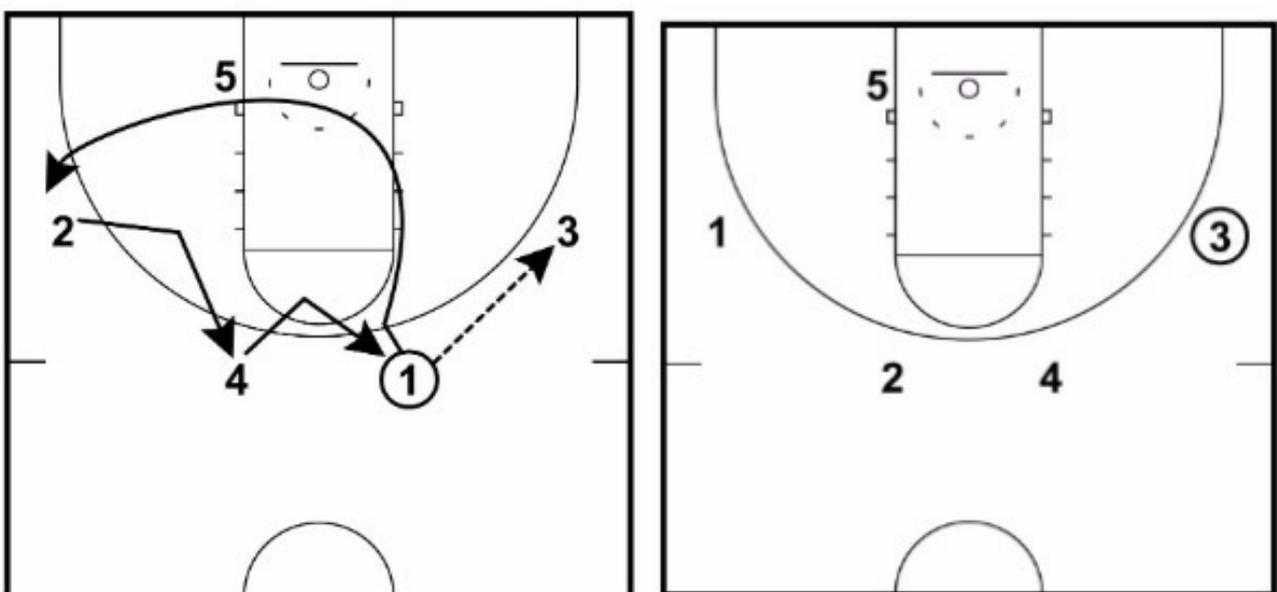
There are two things that happen during this progression:

1. Every time a player passes the basketball, they must cut.
2. On each cut, all players must fill towards the basketball.

The post player should stay on the weak side during this progression if you're using them how I recommended at the beginning of the article.

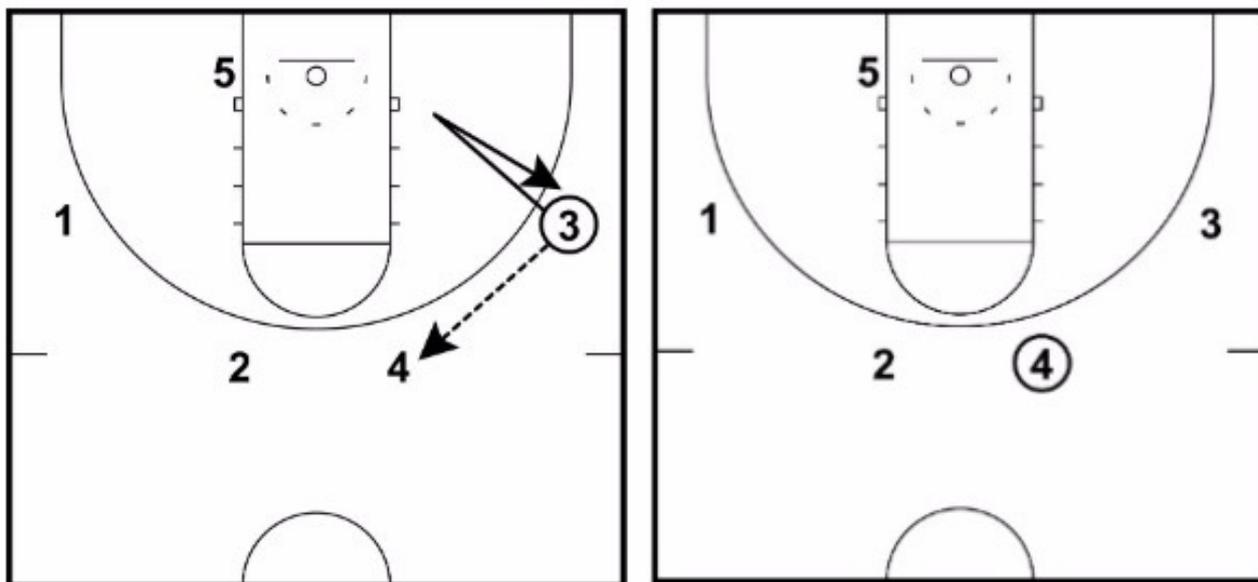
Let's break down the 3 types of passes that are involved in this progression...

Slot to Wing Pass



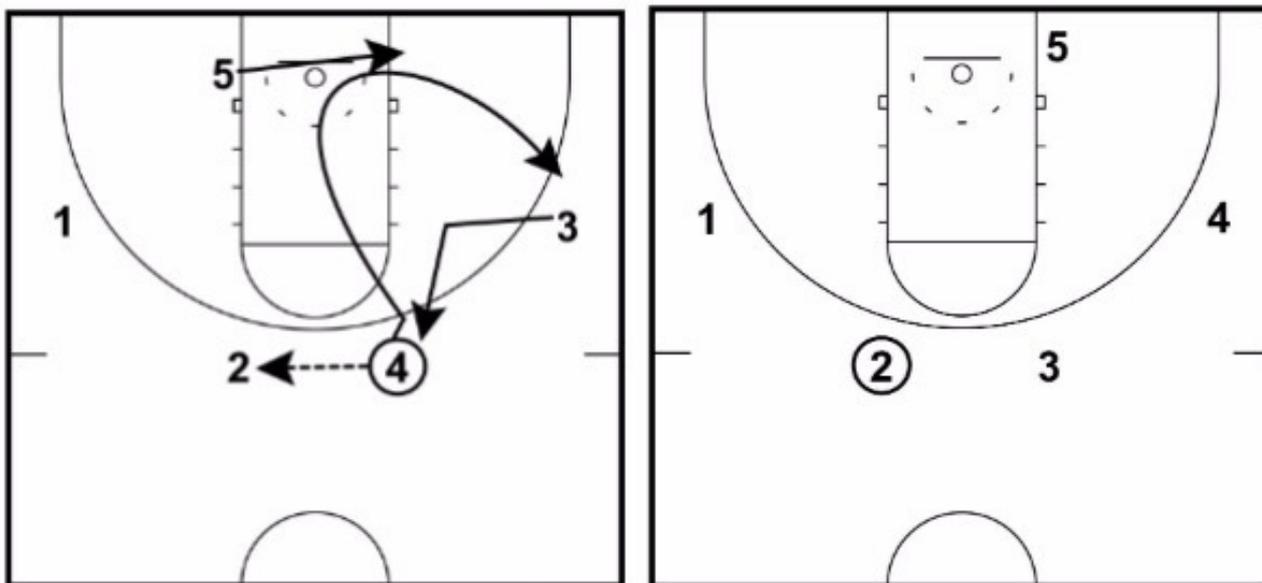
1. 1 passes from the slot to 3 on the wing.
2. 1 will then basket cut making sure they step within the charge and then replace 2 on the weak side wing.
3. 2 and 4 will both fill towards the basketball using a blast cut or v-cut.
4. 5 stays on the weak side of the court.

Wing to Slot Pass



1. 3 passes to 4 and then cuts towards the rim.
2. Since the only spot left to fill is their own, 3 cuts back out to the ball-side wing.
3. Everyone else holds their positions since there are no spaces to fill.

Slot to Slot Pass



1. 4 passes to 2 and then cuts through the paint to the rim and then out to the weak side wing.
2. Since there is a spot to fill closer to the basketball, 3 v-cuts and replaces 4.
3. 5 cuts across the lane to continue being on the weak side of the floor.

Coaching Points:

- Allow your players to run this progression for as long as it takes them for the movements to become almost automatic. Sometimes this is a few weeks, sometimes it takes a few months, but don't rush this progression.
- This first progression alone can make for a great youth basketball offense.
- Once your players have used the cuts a couple of times, allow the post player to flash to the basketball once per possession.
- If the post player flashes towards the low block and there's a slot to wing pass, the slot player must always cut behind the post player.
- Players must cut all the way through the charge circle on each cut while looking at the basketball. If you don't have a charge circle on your court, instruct the players to run under the rim.
- On any basket cut, a perimeter player can post up for about 2 seconds if they feel like they have a mismatch on the inside and the post player hasn't flashed towards the basketball.
- Remember that when filling spots around the perimeter players should be using either blast cuts or v-cuts.

Progression 2 – Add Back Cuts to Pass, Cut, and Fill

The next progression will be much quicker than the first since it involves the same cutting and filling strategies as progression 1.

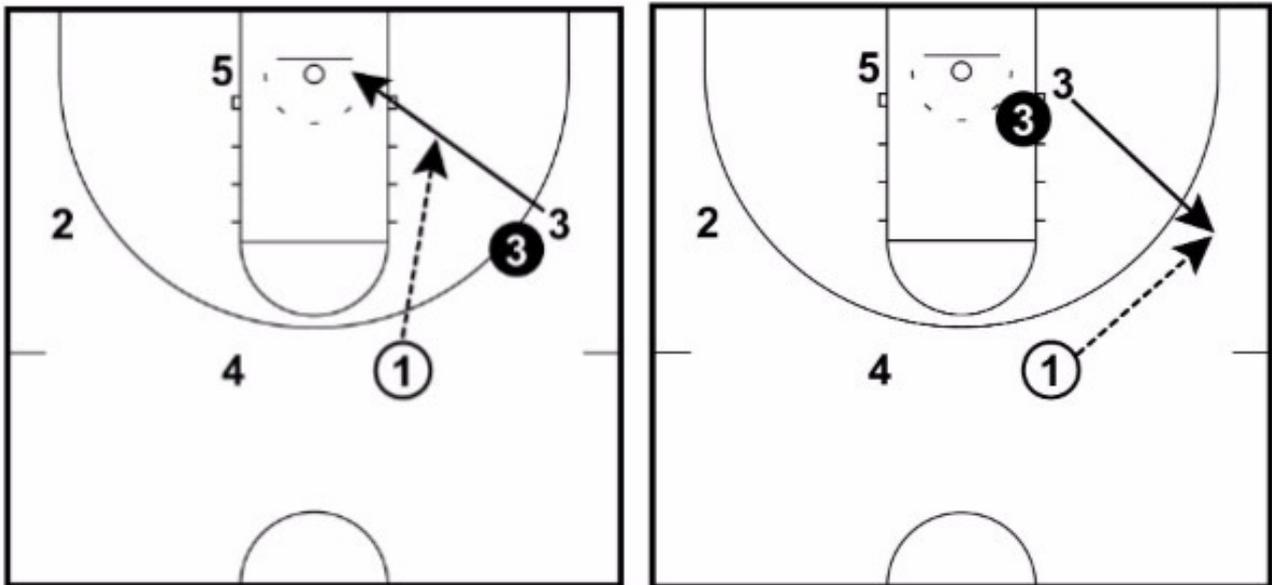
For the 2nd progression, we'll be teaching players to back cut when they're being overplayed by their defender.

Explain to your players that any time their defender has a hand in the passing lane whilst the player with the basketball is one-pass away and looking at you, you must back cut immediately.

And never hesitate. No exceptions.

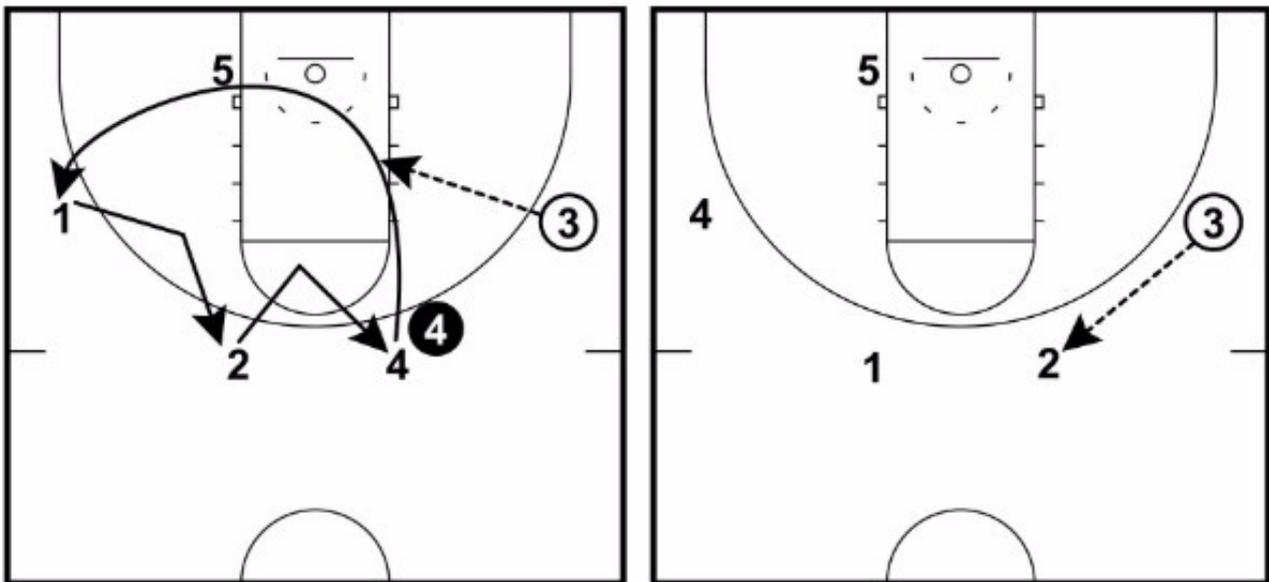
Here's how the back cuts work from each position.

Overplaying a Slot to Wing Pass



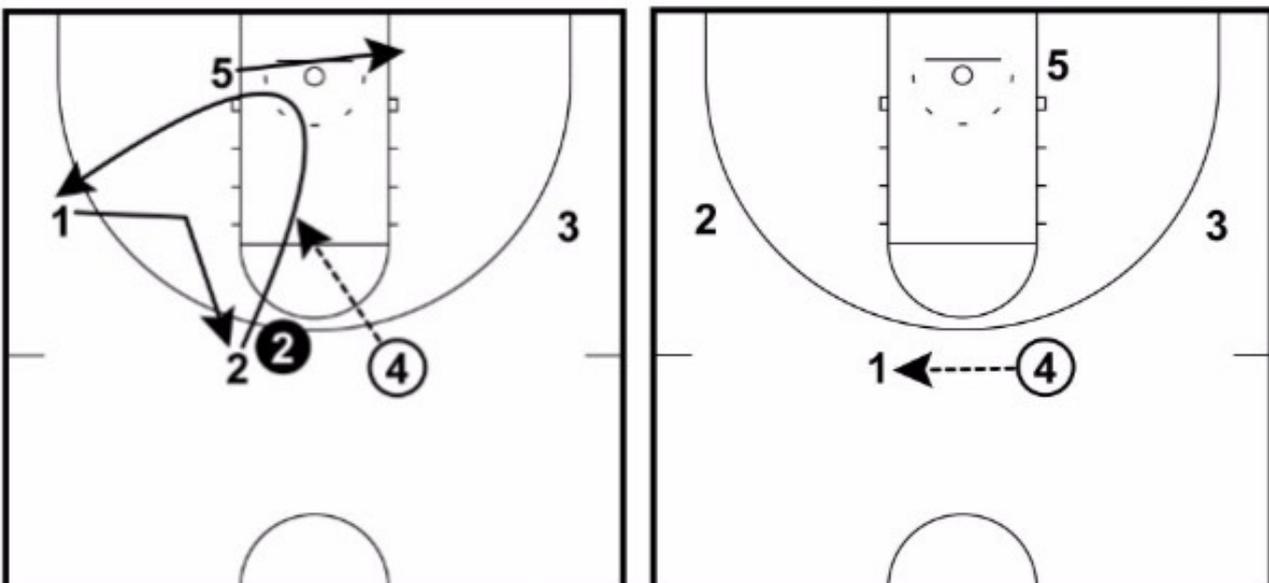
1. 3 is being overplayed by their defender so they cut immediately without hesitation.
2. If 2 doesn't receive the pass from 1, they pop back out to the same position.
3. All other players stay in their spots since there are no spots to fill.

Overplaying a Wing to Slot Pass



1. If 4 is being overplayed by their defender, they immediately back cut looking to receive the pass from 3.
2. If they don't receive the pass, 4 replaces weak side wing.
3. 1 and 2 then fill cut towards the basketball.

Overplaying a Slot to Slot Pass



1. If 2 is being denied by their defender, they must back cut through the paint looking for the pass.

2. If they don't receive the pass, they exit on the weak side wing replacing 1.

3. 1 fills towards the basketball replacing 2.

Coaching Points:

- You can teach this by adding defenders and getting them to play 'dummy defense' switching between normal denying or overplaying the passing lane.
- Constantly stress to your player that they must never hesitate. If the defender is denying the pass, back cut immediately!

Progression 3 – Dribble Penetration

Once your players understand the basic cutting and filling movements, it's time to add dribble penetration to the offense.

One of the perimeter rules is: If you think you can beat your defender off the dribble and get to the ring, do it!

With all the movement in the offense, the defenders will be constantly closing out late. This provides the offense with a great opportunity to attack the ring and create shots off dribble penetration.

This is the main reason why it's important to keep your post player on the weak side of the floor for the majority of the possession.

If the offensive player is always between the ball and the basket, it's going to be very hard for your perimeter players to penetrate and get a high percentage shot which is where most shots will come from in youth basketball.

Each time there's a drive, the post player must read their defender (who will help on the drive) and find an opening on the weak side anywhere from the baseline to the elbow. Create a passing lane.

The only deviation from this is on a baseline drive from a wing player. When this happens, the post player must get to the front of the rim. This creates the best passing opportunity to the post player and also open up the hammer pass to the opposite baseline corner.

Apart from those specific rotations, it's not effective to tell perimeter players exactly where they should rotate to...

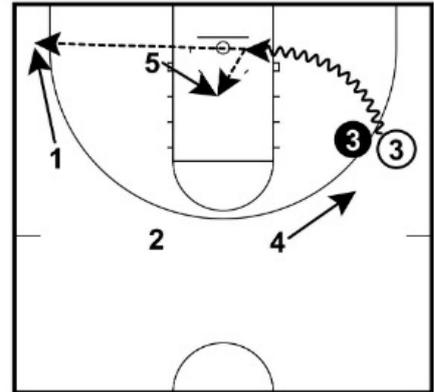
Each player must read where their defender is and create a passing lane so they can receive the kick out pass for the open shot.

If the player penetrating passes out and the shot isn't open, all players must communicate and adjust to the original 4-out 1-in positions.

With that said, here's how the rotations might look on different drives:

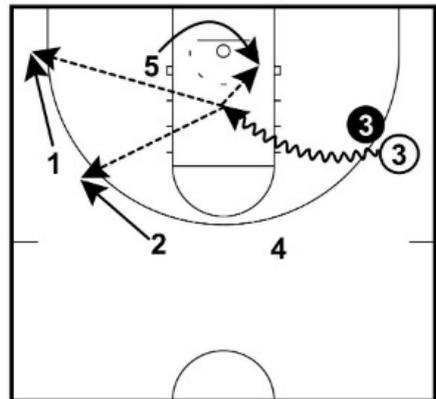
Baseline Drive from the Wing

1. 3 receives the basketball and elects to drive towards the baseline.
2. 5 steps to the middle of the paint to create a better passing angle.
3. 1 slides down to the corner to open up the hammer pass.
4. 2 and 4 read their defender and get themselves open on the perimeter.



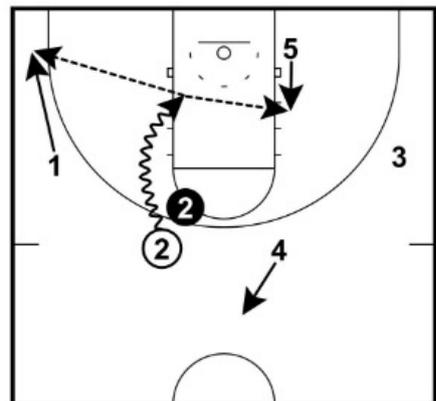
Middle Drive from the Wing

1. 3 receives the basketball and elects to drive towards the middle of the floor.
2. 5 rotates under the rim to open up the passing angle.
3. 1 and 2 cut down to get themselves open for the pass.
4. 4 stays at the top of the key to play safety.



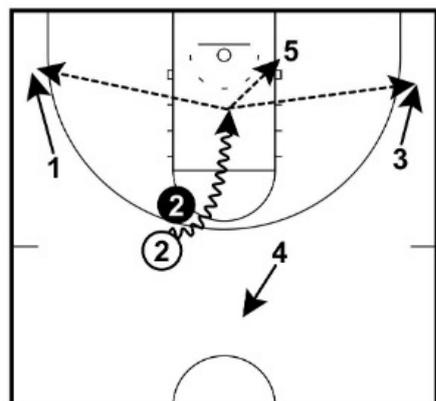
Baseline Drive from the Slot

1. 2 receives the basketball and elects to drive towards the baseline from the slot position.
2. 1 slides down to the corner to get open if their defender helps on the drive.
3. 5 slides up the key to open up the passing lane since their defender must help.
4. 3 and 4 attempt to get open on the weak side and also play safety.



Middle Drive from the Slot

1. 2 receives the basketball and elects to drive middle from the slot position.
2. 1 and 3 both slide down to the corner to open up the passing angle for the three-point shot.
3. 5 stays low and reads his defender who must help on the drive.
4. 4 steps back and plays safety.



Coaching Points:

- All players must catch the basketball on the perimeter ready to attack the basket.
- Players should be driving past their defender in as straight of a line as possible. This means attacking just outside of the defenders hips which keeps the dribbler in their lane and keeps great spacing.
- Make sure your players are practicing making a 'floater'. If they get into the lane they'll be using that shot a lot during this offense.

Progression 4: Away Screen – Curl Cuts Only

The next step in the offense is to give players a second option after passing the basketball in addition to cutting to the basket...

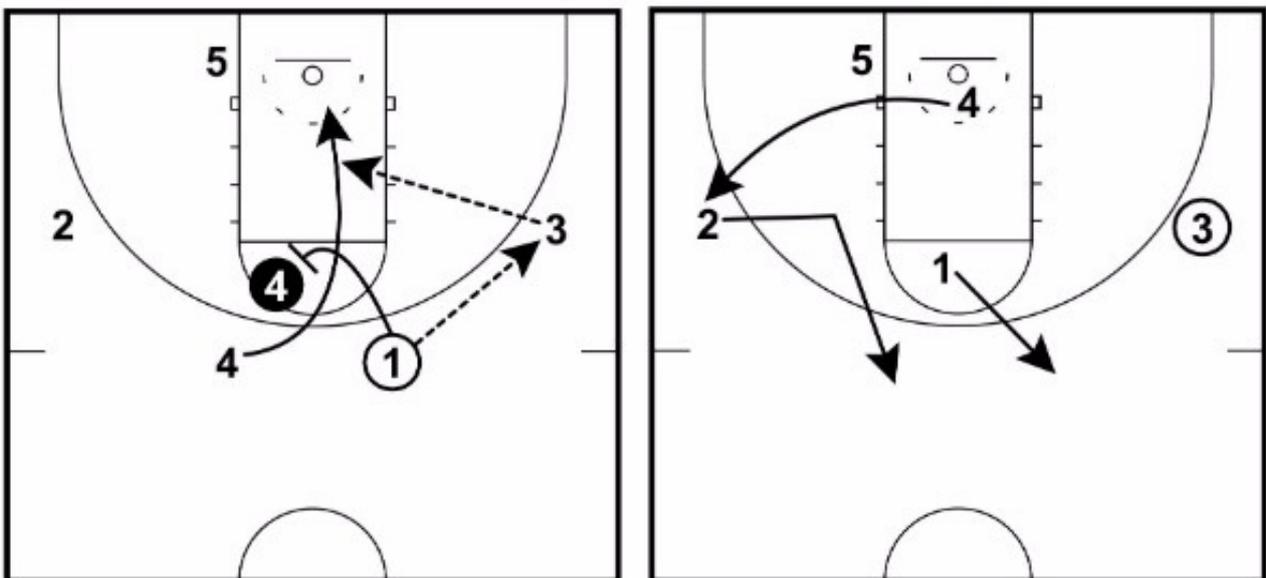
Giving players the option to screen away.

For this progression, the player who receives the screen must always curl off the screen to the basket and the player who sets the screen must always pop back out to their original position after screening.

This screen can occur on a slot to slot pass or a slot to wing pass. The only time this can't happen is on a wing to slot pass as there's no perimeter player the opposite direction to screen.

Here's how it will work from different positions on the floor...

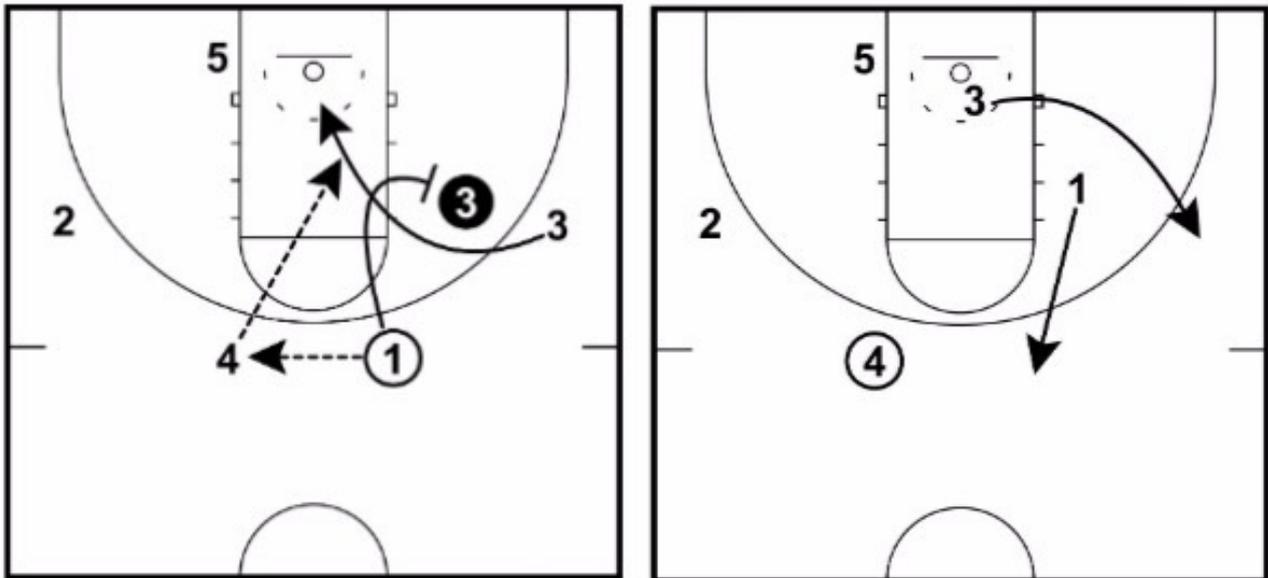
Away Screen on a Slot to Wing Pass



1. 1 passes to 3 on the wing.
2. Instead of basket cutting, 1 decides to set an away screen for 4.

3. 1 sets an away screen on 4's defenders back hip and 4 quickly cuts off the screen to the basket looking for the pass from 3.
4. 1 pops back out to the same position.
5. 2 fill cuts to the slot from the wing.
6. 4 fills out to the weak side wing.

Away Screen on a Slot to Slot Pass



1. 1 passes to 4 on a slot to slot pass.
2. Instead of cutting to the basket, 1 decides to set an away screen for 3.
3. 3 uses the away screen and cuts to the basket looking to receive the pass for the easy layup.
4. 1 then pops back to the basketball.
5. 3 then fills out to the weak side wing (the position they started in).

Coaching Points:

- It's important that the player who receives the pass holds the basketball for a second or two to see if either of the players involved in the screen get open.
- For the player setting the screen, it's important that the screen is set on the correct angle. This means the screeners back should be facing towards where the cutter wants to go (the rim). Since players are only curling off the screen, the screen should be set on the back hip of the defender.
- If the defender anticipates the screen and cheats over, the player receiving the screen can back cut to the rim.

Progression 5: On-Ball Screen

The fifth progression involves giving players a third option to perform after they have passed the basketball to a teammate.

Setting an on-ball screen.

When a player makes any pass during the offense, they can step up and set an on-ball screen for the player with the basketball.

When they do this, the player screening must call out the player with the basketball's name and also hold their arm up in a fist to indicate they're about to set an on-ball screen.

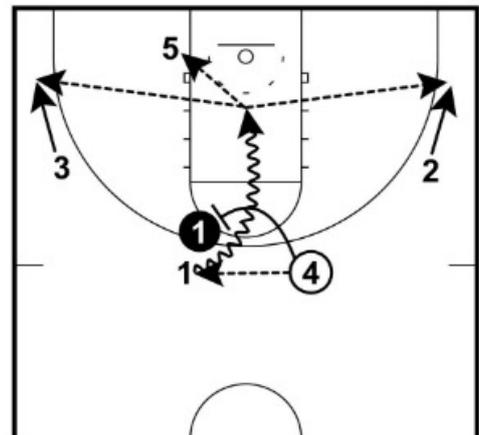
For the screen to be effective, the player with the basketball must be patient and wait until the screen is set before using the screen.

The post player should immediately find a good passing angle when their defender rotates to help on the player with the basketball.

Here's how the on-ball screen option will work from different areas on the floor:

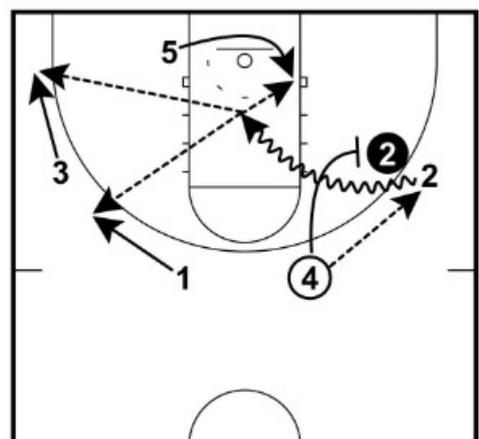
Slot to Slot On-Ball Screen

1. 4 passes to 1 and then sets an on-ball screen on 1's defender.
2. 1 waits until 4 is set and then attacks the rim off the on-ball screen.
3. 2 and 3 both slide down to the corners to open up passing angles.
4. 5 stays low to be open for the dump-down pass.
5. The screener stays behind to play safety.



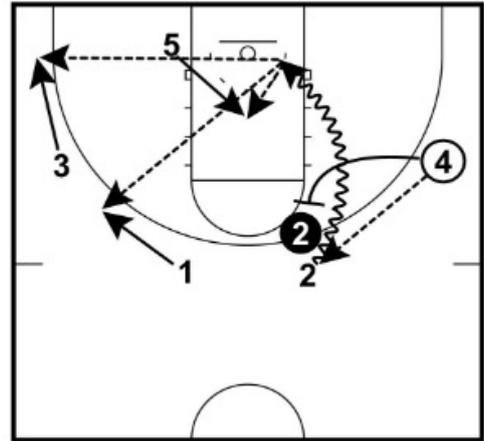
Slot to Wing On-Ball Screen

1. 4 passes to 2 and then sets an on-ball screen on 2's defender.
2. 2 waits until the screen is set and then attacks the rim.
3. 1 and 3 slide down to open up passing angles for the three-point shot.
4. 5 swings under the hoop for the drop-down pass.
5. 4 plays safety after setting the screen.



Wing to Slot On-Ball Screen

1. 4 passes to 2 and then sets an on-ball screen on 2's defender.
2. 2 waits until the screen is set and then attacks the rim.
3. 5 steps high to open up the hammer pass and also open up a passing lane.
4. 3 and 1 both slide down to be open for the three-point shot.
5. 4 plays safety after setting the screen.



Coaching Points:

- Players must select their actions based on the other offensive players on the court. Never set an on-ball screen for a player that can't dribble the basketball.
- Remember what was said about screening angles in progression 4. The screen should be set on the back hip of the on-ball defender so that they can't slip under the screen.

Progression 6: Away Screen – Add the Straight Cut

Next, we give another cutting option to a player receiving an away screen.

The straight cut.

While the players will now be experienced with curling off an away screen, we will also give them the option to straight cut depending on how the defense reacts to the screen.

A straight cut will involve the player filling the spot that was occupied by the player setting the screen.

If this option is used, the screener cuts to the rim looking for the pass and then fills to the perimeter as normal.

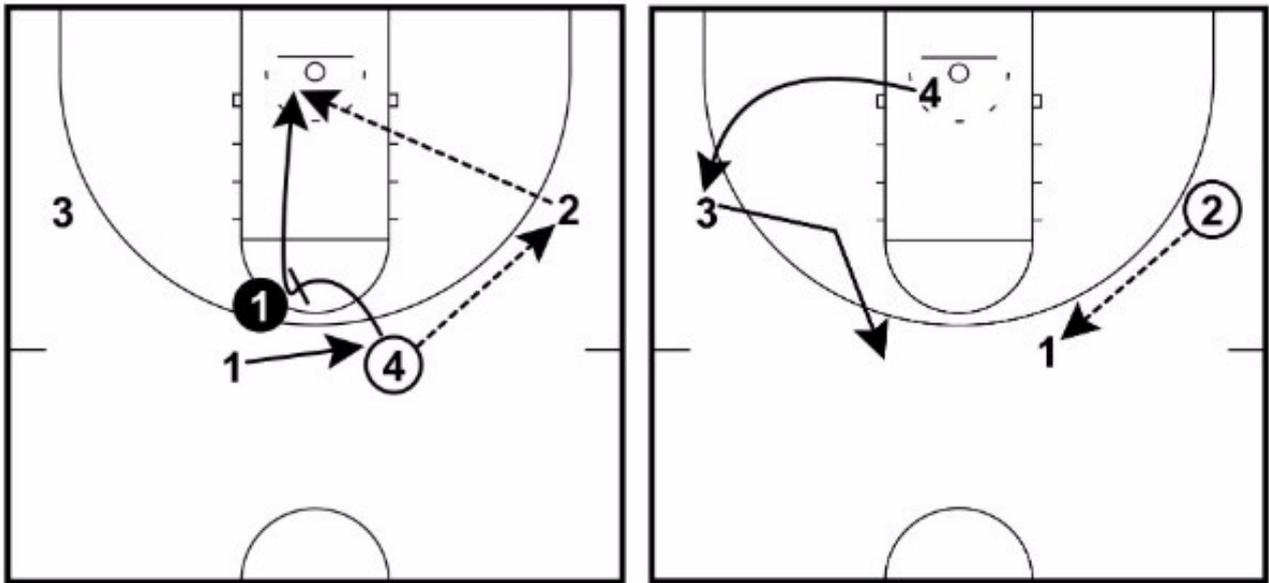
Here's what you must remember: On an away screen, one player must fill the spot closest to the basketball and the other player must cut to the rim.

It's up to the player receiving the away screen to decide which is used.

The screener must watch the cutter and go opposite.

Here's how it will look from different positions during the game...

Away Screen on Slot to Wing Pass



1. 4 passes to 2 on the wing.
2. Instead of cutting to the basket, 4 sets an away screen for 1.
3. 1 reads their defender and decides to straight cut to the ball-side slot position ready to catch and shoot.
4. Seeing this, 4 rolls to the front of the rim looking for the catch and layup.
5. If 4 doesn't receive the pass, they fill to weak side wing while 3 fills to the next slot position.

Away Screen on Slot to Slot Pass



1. 4 passes to 1 on the slot to slot pass.
2. 4 sets an away screen for 2 on the wing.
3. Instead of curling to the rim, 2 straight cuts to the slot position getting ready to catch and shoot.
4. Reading this, 4 cuts off the screen to the rim looking for the easy layup.
5. If 4 doesn't receive the pass, they fill out to the weak side wing.

Coaching Points:

- If you're trying to delay the game while keeping possession of the basketball, get your players to perform straight cuts out to the perimeter on all away screens.
- Make sure your players understand how they should decide which cut to use. If the defender is trailing them, curl to the rim. If the defender cheats under the screen, straight cut.

Progression 7: Dribble At

The 'dribble at' action can be used when the opposition team is putting on a lot of denial pressure.

This action involves one player dribbling at another player which can cause one of two actions:

1. A dribble handoff
2. A back cut

This is an efficient way to get the basketball around the perimeter when you want to get the basketball into a specific position.

For example, if you wanted to get the basketball into the low post from the wing but the wing is being denied.

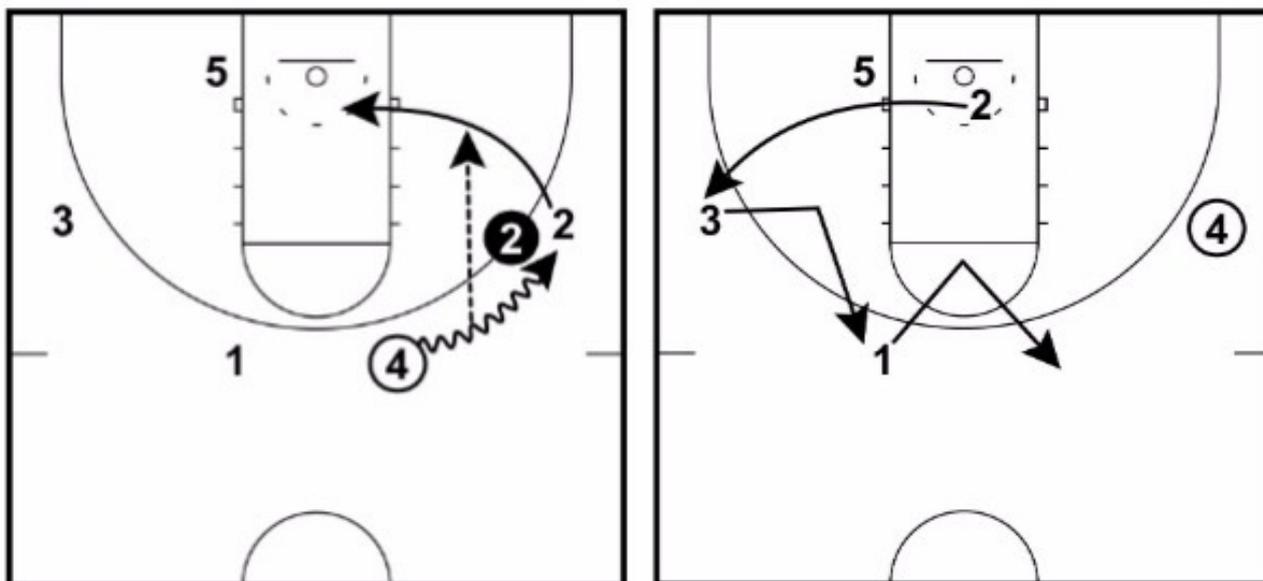
The task for the coach is to decide which option/s your team is going to use.

For youth basketball, I recommend only using the back cut option every time one player dribbles at another.

For high school and above, feel free to use both options.

Here are a couple of diagrams to show you how they work...

Slot to Wing Dribble At Back Cut



1. 4 dribbles towards 2 on the wing.
2. Noticing this, 2 immediately back cuts.
3. If the pass is open, 4 will pass to 2. If not, 4 continues dribbling to the wing position.
4. Since 2 doesn't receive the basketball, they fill out to the weak side wing.
5. 3 and 1 also fill towards the basketball.

Slot to Wing Dribble At Handoff



1. 4 dribbles towards 2 on the wing.
2. Seeing that there is no back cut opportunity, 2 steps forward and receives the handoff from 4.

3. 2 now has the option to attack the rim or dribble to the slot position.

Coaching Points:

- If running a handOff, the other offensive players must read this and stay in their spots. If a back cut is run, all players must fill towards the basketball.
- Again, for youth basketball I recommend back cuts every time there's a dribble at situation.

Piecing Together the 4-Out 1-In Motion Offense

Congratulations!

Once your team is comfortable with the 7 progressions of the 4-out 1-in continuity motion your team will have a very solid base offense with many options and also an offense that will develop basketball IQ.

Now that your players understand the offense, it's important to keep improving it.

This occurs as players start to learn the strengths and weaknesses of their teammates and make decisions accordingly.

I think we can all agree that setting an on-ball screen for the power forward who isn't a great dribbler is never a good idea!

This will take some time to get to the point where your players look fluid on the court.

Stick with the process and be patient. It will all come together.

But that's not all...

Additional 4-Out 1-In Motion Actions:

There are many additional actions that you can run out of the base 4-out 1-in motion offense that are optional inclusions.

Teach your players the base offense (the 7 progressions) first, and then adding these as 'plays' out of the base offense.

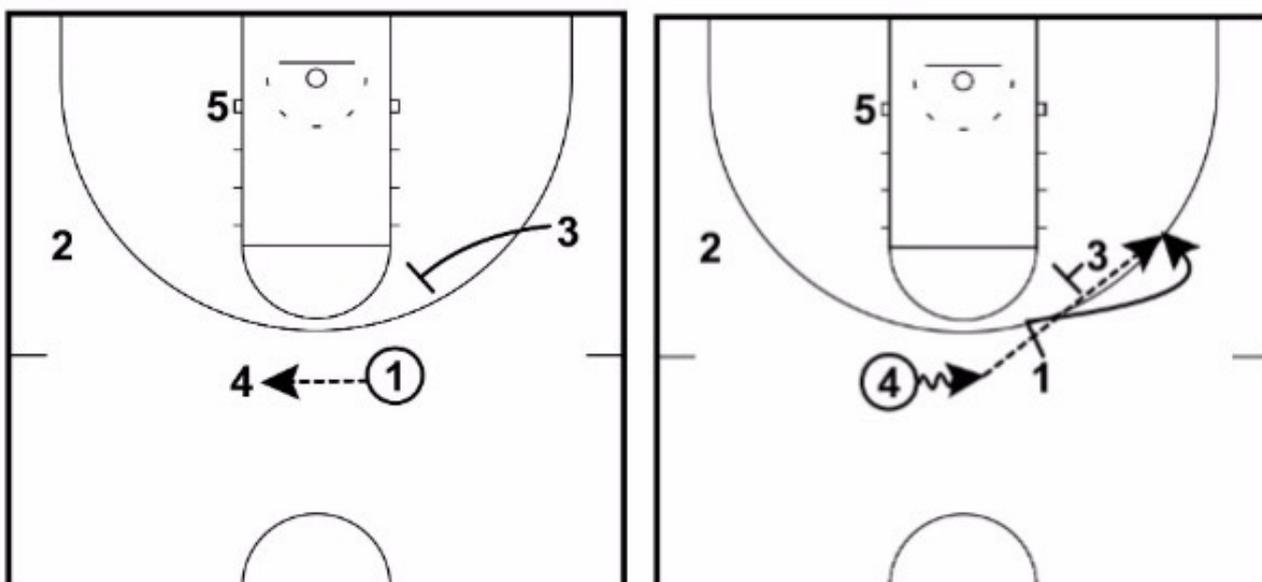
Call these actions out of time-outs, out-of-bounds, or when you need a basket in a crucial moment of the game.

Which of these actions you choose to implement into your offense will depend on the skill sets of the players on your team. Find the plays that take advantage of your best players' strengths.

Here they are...

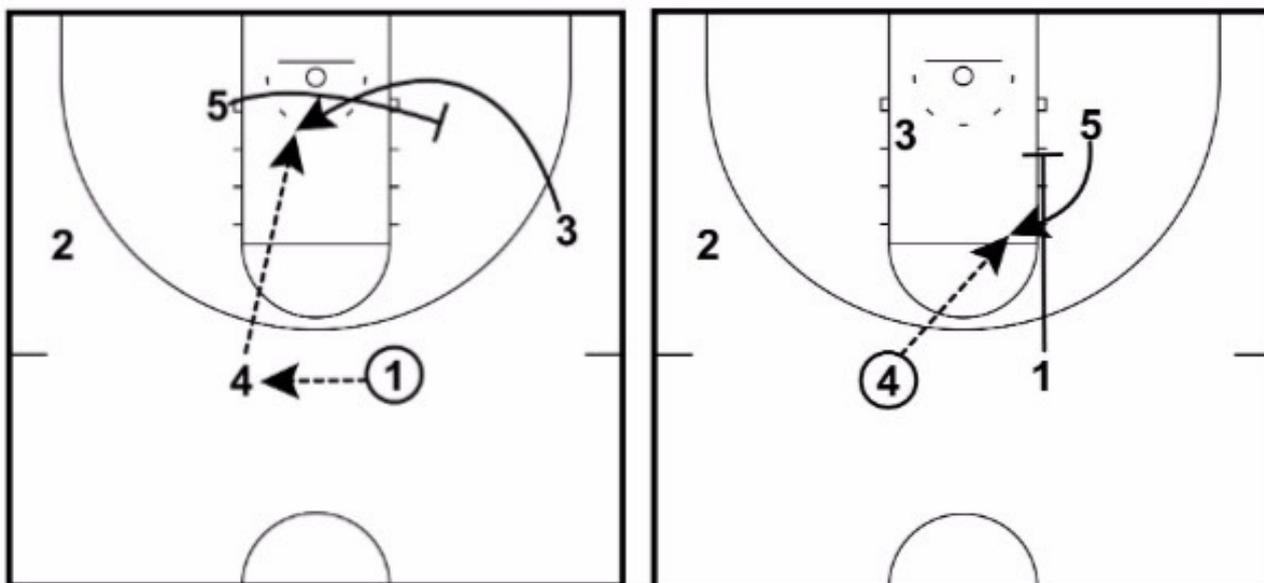
Slot to Slot Pass Additional Actions

Flare Screen for the Slot Player – “Fire”



1. 1 passes to 4 on the slot to slot pass.
2. 3 steps up and sets a flare screen on the blind-side of 1's defender.
3. 1 takes 1-2 steps forward and then flare cuts off 3's screen.
4. 4 takes 2 dribbles to improve the passing angle and then passes to 1 on the wing for the shot.

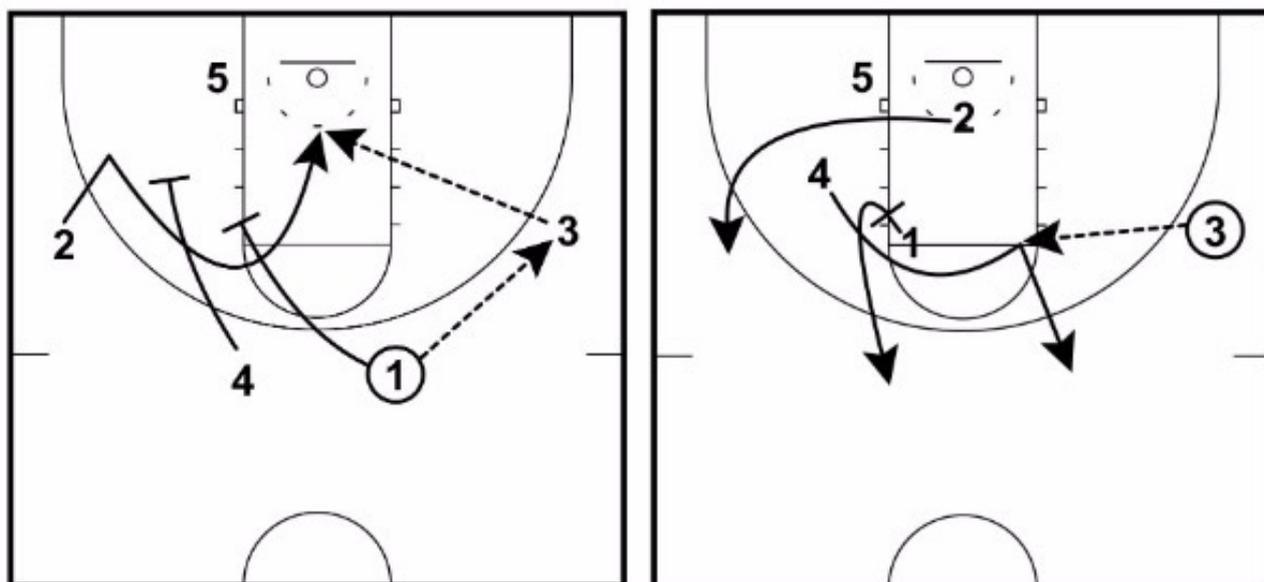
2. Flex Screen to Pin Down – “Flex”



1. 1 passes to 4 on the slot to slot pass.
2. 5 then sets a flex screen for 3 who cuts across the lane looking for the pass and open layup.
3. 1 then sets a pin down screen in a screen-the-screener action for 5.
4. 5 curls or straight cuts off 1's screen depending on their skill set to receive the basketball for the open shot.

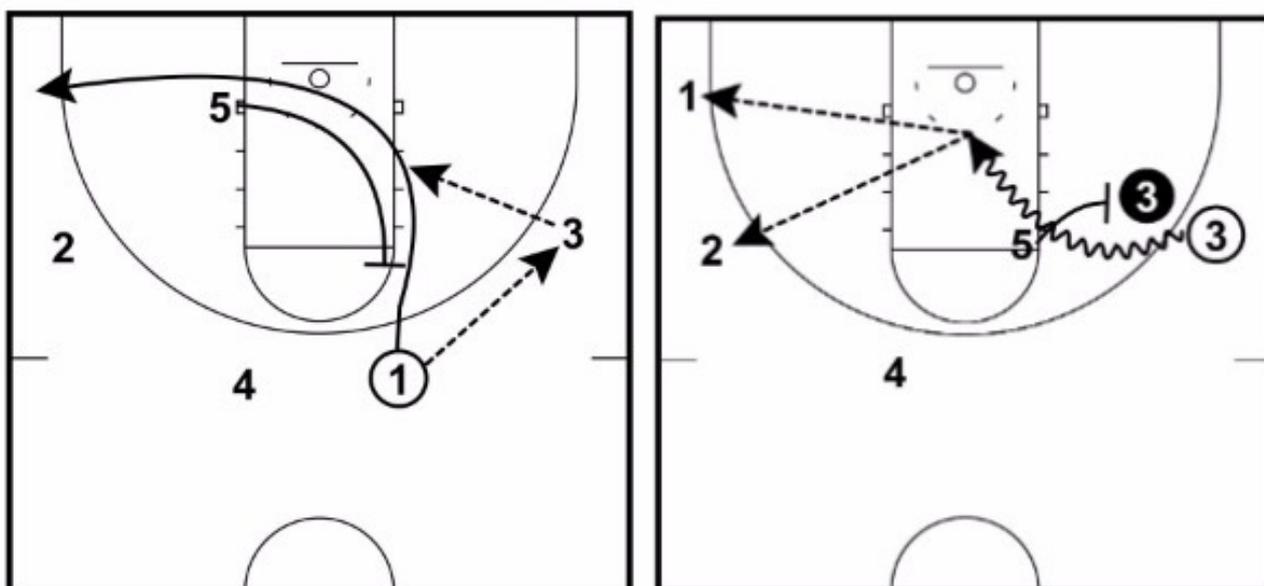
Slot to Wing Pass Additional Actions

1. Staggered Screen for Weak Side Wing – “Stag”



1. 1 passes to 3 on the wing.
2. 2 and 4 set a staggered screen for 2.
3. 2 curls off the staggered screen to the ring looking for the basketball.
4. 1 then sets an immediate screen on 4's defender.
5. 4 curls to the elbow looking for the catch and shoot. If it's not open, they clear out to ball-side slot.
6. If 2 didn't receive the pass for the layup they clear out to weak side wing.
7. After setting the second screen 1 clears out to weak side slot.

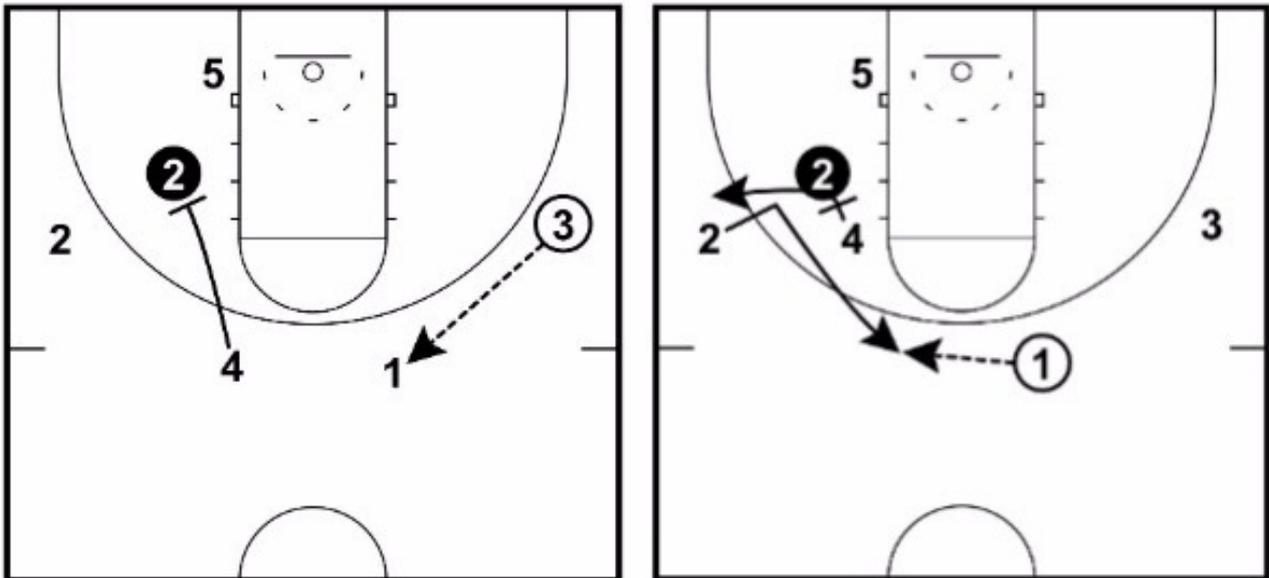
2. UCLA Screen to On-Ball Screen – “Celtic”



1. 1 passes the basketball to 3 on the wing.
2. 5 sprints up to set a UCLA screen for 1.
3. 1 cuts off the UCLA screen looking for the basketball for the open layup. If they don't receive it, 1 clears to the corner.
4. 5 then immediately sets another screen for 3.
5. 3 waits until the screen is set and then attacks the rim.
6. 3 now has the option of finishing in the lane or kicking out to 3 shooters behind the three-point line.

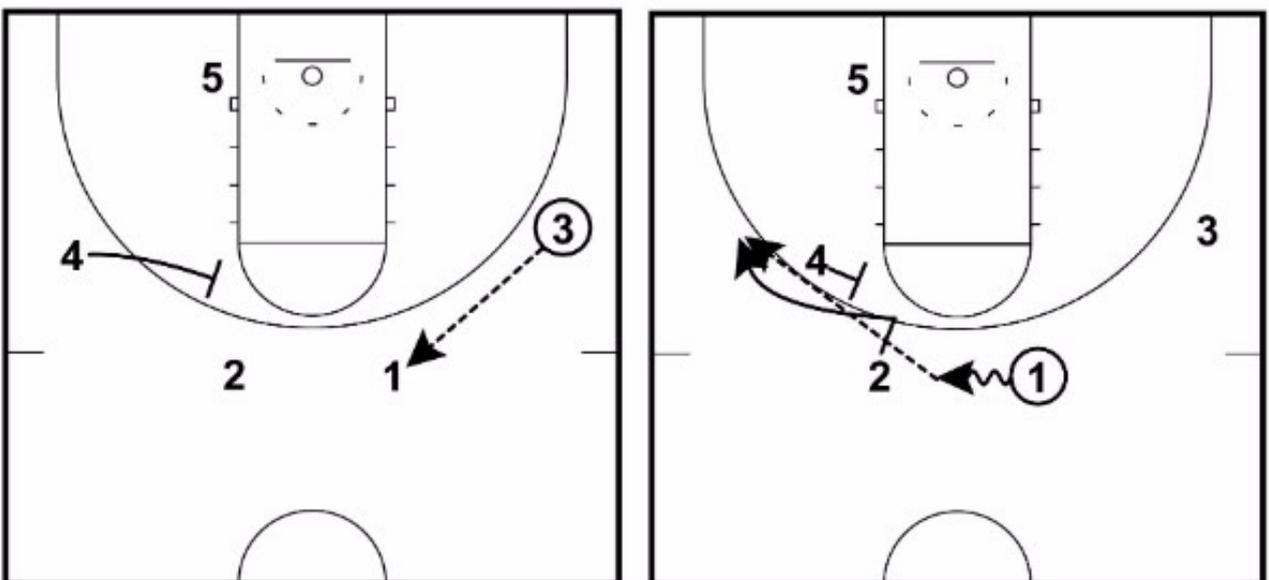
Wing to Slot Pass Additional Actions

Weak Side Down Screen for Wing – “Down”



1. On a pass from 3 to 1, that triggers 4 to go and set a down screen on 2's defender.
2. 2 then takes a few steps in and then bursts out to the perimeter looking for the catch and shoot.
3. 4 must hold this screen for as long as they can legally and then pop out to fill the wing.
4. This will often lead to a late close out by 2's defender which means easy dribble penetration.

Weak Side Flare Screen For Slot – “Flag”



1. On the pass from 3 to 1, 4 sets a blind-side screen on 2's defender.
2. 2 takes 1-2 steps forwards and then bursts out on the flare screen to the wing.
3. 1 takes 1-2 dribbles across to improve the passing angle and then makes the direct pass to 2 for the shot.
4. If 2 catches but the shot or drive isn't open, 4 has popped out and you're still in motion.

Advanced

On a Pass Into the Post

On any pass into the low post, the ball-side wing player must cut to the weak side.

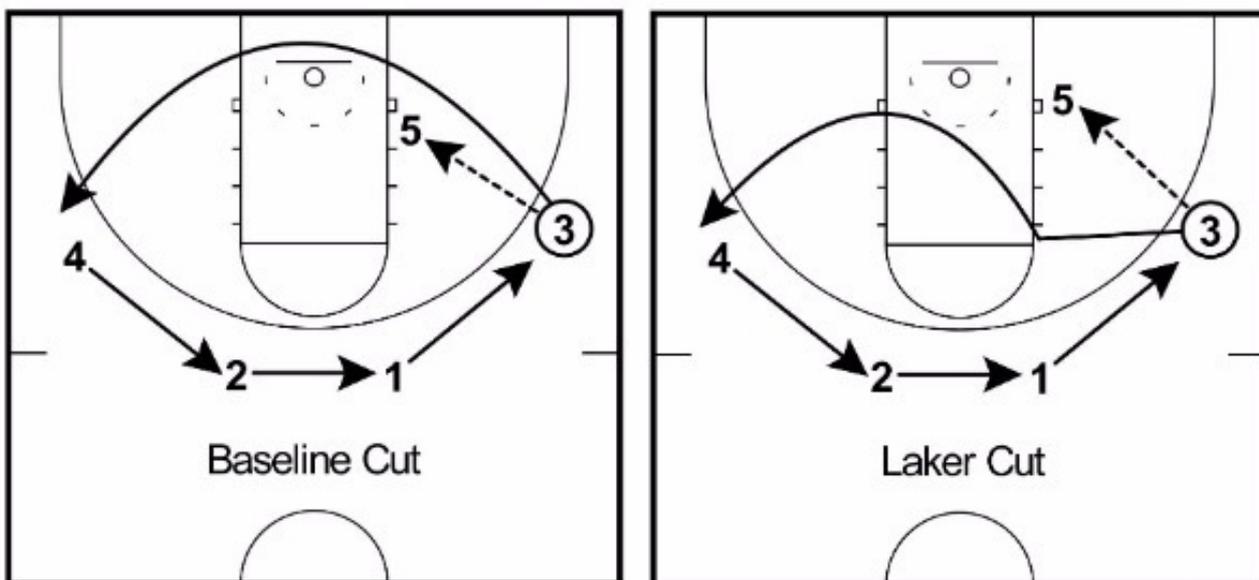
This forces the other defenders to focus on their player and make adjustments to their position instead of allowing them to double team or read the post player.

We want the low post player to receive the basketball with their low foot above the low block so that there's space for the baseline cut and possible bounce pass for the layup.

If the low post player is on or below the low block, it leaves little opportunity for this cut to be effective.

When this happens, the alternative cut is to make a Laker cut. A Laker cut is a cut to the strong-side elbow and then through to the baseline corner.

Even though I haven't discussed much about the post catching in the high post, the same rules exist. The wing player must cut baseline so that the help defenders must move and rotate out of position.



Rebounding and Transition Defense

Establishing offensive rebounding position and transition defense is crucial if you're going to run the 4-out 1-in offense well.

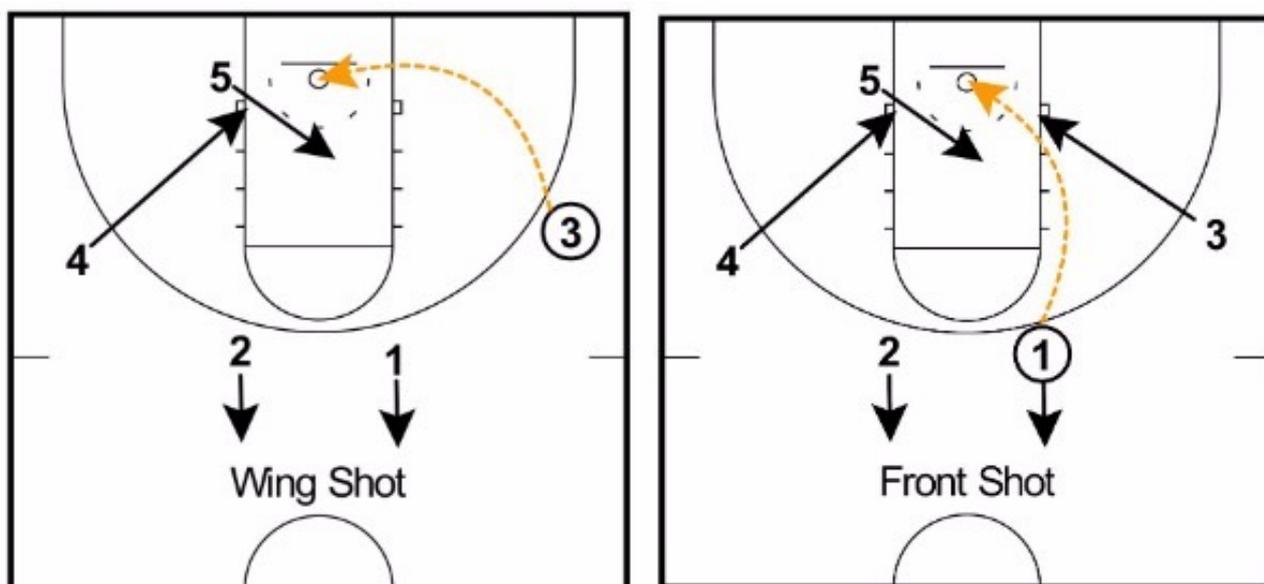
For this offense, we will rely on 2 or 3 players to fight for offensive rebounds depending on where the shot is taken from the outside.

If the shot is taken from inside the three-point line, encourage players inside the key to fight for offensive boards and those outside the three-point line to transition back on defense.

The post player always fights to the front of the rim on a shot from anywhere on the floor.

If the outside shot is taken from the wing, the weak-side wing player must sprint in to rebound on the weak-side while the post player fights for position in front of the rim. This leaves us with 3 players who must immediately transition back onto defense.

If the outside shot is taken from the top of the key, both weak-side wing players sprint in to rebound on their respective sides while the post player fights for position at the front of the rim. This leaves the two slot players to transition back on defense.



End of Clock Situations

To keep players from going through the motions, it's important that you have a specific action your team runs when the shot clock is winding down.

The best way to end a possession is with a ball-screen from your post player.

There are two ways to do this...

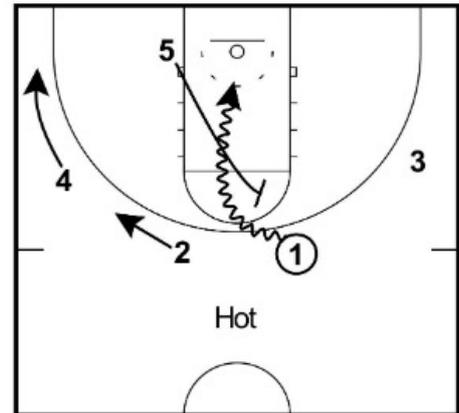
1. Straight Ball-Screen

Since the 4-out 1-in offense provides great spacing at all times, there's always a great opportunity for a ball-screen.

The simplest thing you can do is get the basketball to your best playmaker or scorer, and then sprint your post player out to set an on-ball screen for them.

This can occur in either of the wing positions or slot positions.

I recommend you have a key word (I use 'hot') that you or the players can call out with 5 – 7 seconds left on the shot clock to trigger this action.



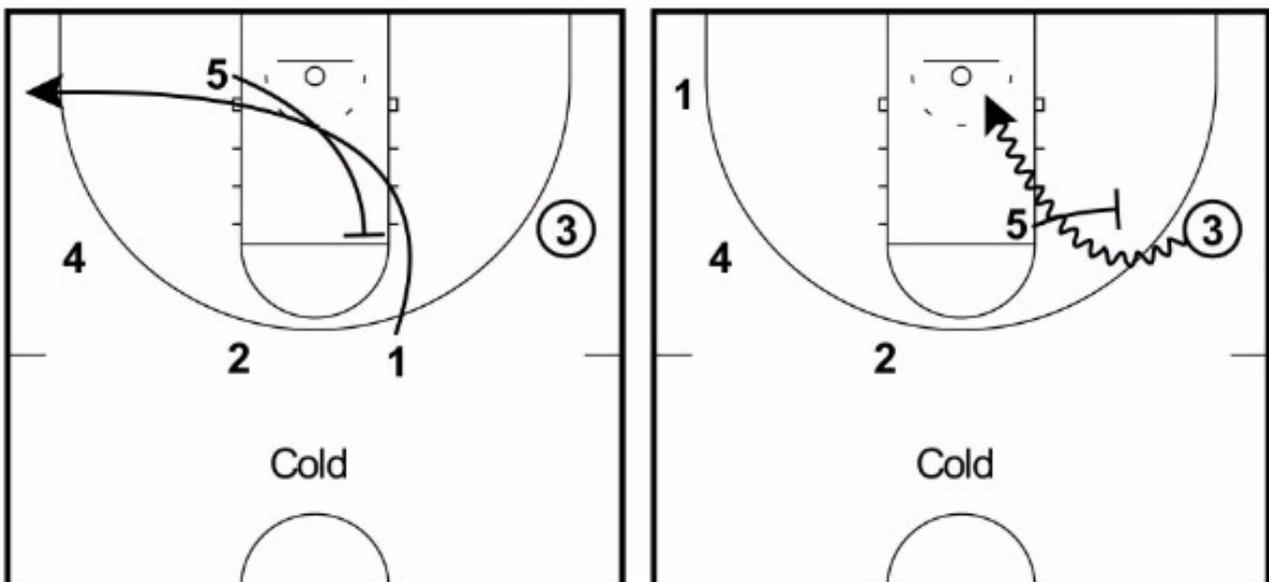
2. UCLA Screen to On-Ball Screen

This advanced option can be a very effective if you have experienced players who can run this quickly and efficiently.

The first step is to get the basketball to one of the wing players.

Instead of the post player sprinting out to set an immediate screen on the player with the basketball, they first set a UCLA screen for the ball-side slot player who cuts through looking for the basketball and quickly pops out to the weak side.

Immediately after setting this screen the post player takes a few short steps to the wing and sets an on-ball screen for the player with the basketball.



This advanced option does a few things:

1. If forces all defenders to rotate an extra position and stay with their player. If we only set a straight ball-screen the weak-side defenders will already be in help position.

2. Provides the offense with an extra opportunity via the slot player cutting to the rim off the UCLA cut.

Use a different keyword to trigger this option (I use 'cold') and once again call this out with about 5 – 7 seconds left in the shot clock.

For both of these options the post player must sprint to the screen to create separation between them and the post defender for best chances of success out of the ball-screen.

Zone Defense Adjustments

With a few adjustments the 4-out 1-in motion offense can easily be run against a 2-3 zone defense.

For it to be most effective and easy for the players to understand, we want to do our best to stay within the structure of our current offense with minimal changes.

Here's a few ways to do it.

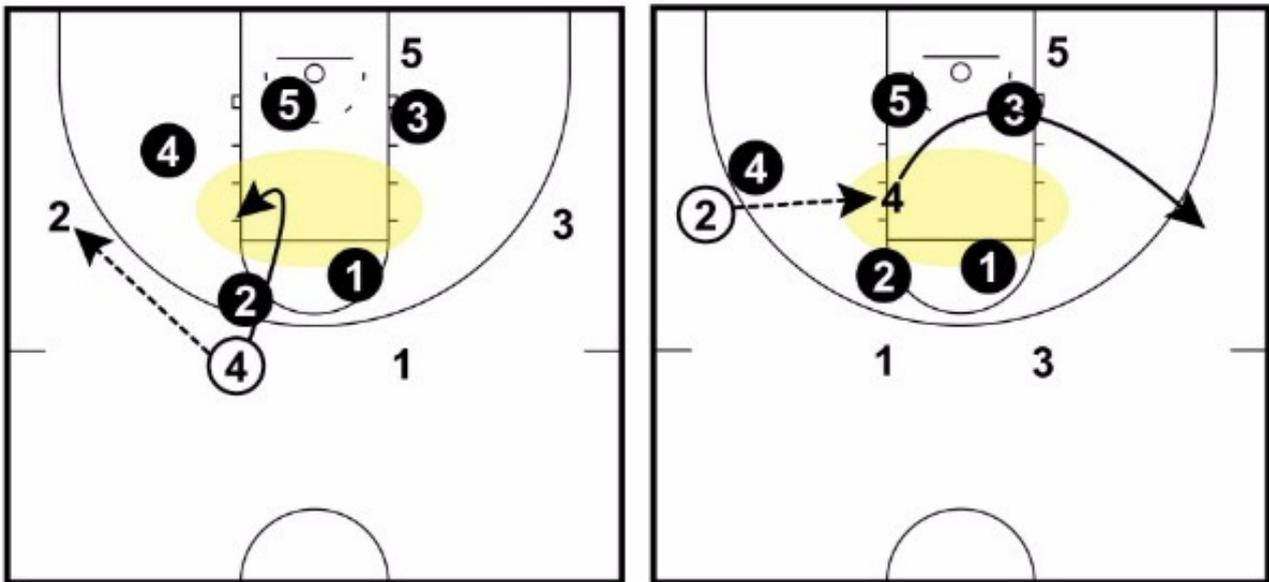
1. Post Seal the Middle of the Zone



As the basketball is swung around the perimeter the post player should establish a deep post seal on the inside zone player.

This is a great opportunity to get the basketball inside from the wing.

2. Hook and Look



Within any 2-3 zone there is an area between the bottom line of defenders and the free-throw line that is usually left open for a majority of the possession.

To take advantage of this, any time a player basket cuts they must 'hook and look' when passing through that area of the paint.

The player cutting can hold this position for 1-2 seconds before continuing their cut to fill the perimeter.

It's imperative that the perimeter players are watching these cuts and are ready to feed the basketball inside if it's open.

Often the middle player of the zone will have to step up leaving an easy drop-down pass to our post player for the layup.

3. Post Player to Short Corner



When playing against a zone you can often find a big advantage by changing the role of your post player and keeping them on the ball-side of the zone.

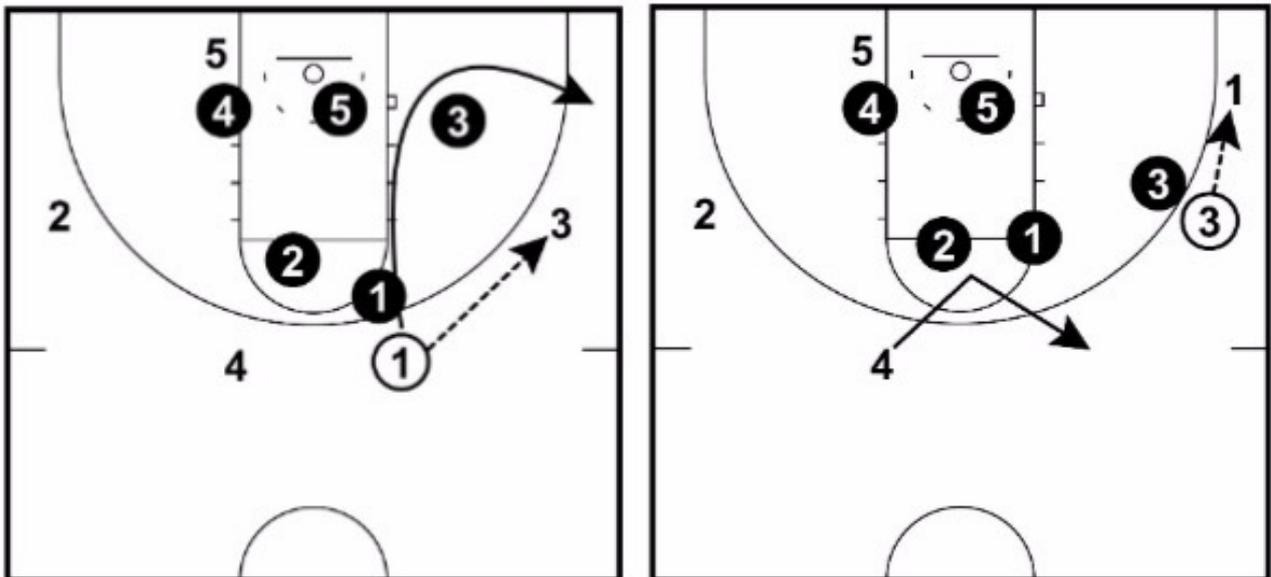
Especially if you've got a post player that can make the midrange shot.

Since we play the wing spots high on free-throw line extended, the bottom post player is often forced to rotate out and help to stop open shooters.

This leaves the short corner completely open for your post player to receive the basketball.

If the middle player of the zone steps out to help the middle of the zone will be open for cutters to receive the pass for an open layup.

4. Corner Cut – Zone Overload



Another great option against a zone is to create a classic overload situation.

We accomplish this by running the slot player to the ball-side corner on a pass to the wing.

This forces 2 defenders to guard 3 players and puts the offensive team at a big advantage.

This action will often lead to an open three-point shot from the corner.

Conclusion

And the 7,000 word 4-out 1-in motion guide has come to an end!

This is one of the most popular offenses at all levels of basketball for a very good reason.

It can be adjusted to suit any age and skill level, it can be run positionless (rotate the post player), and since it's a decision-making offense it will develop your players' basketball IQ.

To quickly recap the progressions, here they are:

- 1. Pass, Cut, and Fill**
- 2. Add Back Cuts to Pass, Cut, and Fill**
- 3. Dribble Penetration**
- 4. Away Screen - Curl Cuts Only**
- 5. On-Ball Screen**
- 6. Away Screen - Add the Straight Cut**
- 7. Dribble At**

Along with the 5-out motion and read and react offense, **the 4-out 1-in offense is one of my main recommendations for all youth basketball teams.**

If you're coaching a youth basketball team, use it!

- Coach Mac

5 Rules You Must Remember When Cutting Players

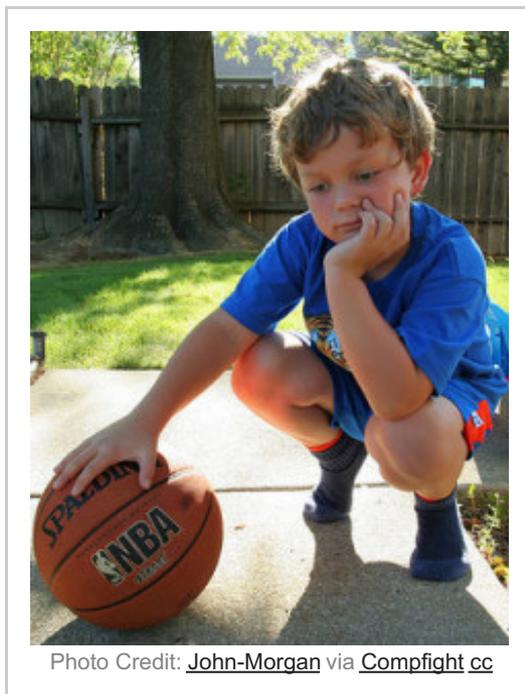
 basketballforcoaches.com/5-rules-cutting-players/

Is there anything coaches dread more than cutting players at the end of tryouts? If there is I haven't found it yet. It's the part I dread most every season.

You spend weeks with players – getting to know them, working on their game, developing a relationship with them – only to remember a few weeks later that you have to tell some of them they can't play on the team. It can be heart-breaking.

And while we all hate doing it with a passion, it's part of the role of being a basketball coach. You can't have a team with 20 players on it; cutting has to happen.

To make cutting players a little easier, remember the following 5 rules.



Rule 1 – Prepare the Players

One of the first things I do at the very first tryout, before we step onto the court for the first time, is explain that there will be players that won't make the team. Not a very positive note to begin on, is it? But it's a necessary one. If you know the amount of players that you'll be picking at the end of try-outs let them know now.

This speech is important to prepare those that may not make the team and give them reason to train extra-hard during tryouts. Players aren't stupid. Players that are on the edge of whether they will make the team will know that. As heartless as it sounds, this speech will prepare them for the worst if it is to come.

Rule 2 – Give Reasons Why They Got Cut

I've heard from many coaches that don't like to provide the player or parent with reasons why they didn't make the team after try-outs...

I completely disagree with this and feel like not doing so would be a disservice to the player that you're letting go.

Offer to set a date for a meeting where the player and their parents can come in and discuss their game with you. Perhaps you can give them some advice they can implement in their training to give them a better chance to make the team the next season? Giving

them this option will prove that you do care about the player.

Rule 3 – Never Compare Players

This rule should go without saying. As soon as you start to compare one kid to another you're getting yourself into a terrible situation. You'll be unpleasantly surprised how fast word gets around about what you said it and it will create unnecessary conflict between the players you compared and their parents.

Just don't do it.

Rule 4 – Cutting is the Last Resort

The first step in cutting players is to avoid it ([tweet that](#) if you agree).

I'm a huge believer in never cutting players unless you absolutely have to. If you can, create two teams instead of one, create three teams instead of two; do whatever you can to avoid cutting players. Especially youth players.

Plain and simple: Youth basketball is about having fun and becoming a better basketball player – no matter what your current skill level is. It's impossible to tell from a young age which players will develop to be better than others. Try to give them all the chance to develop.

Understandably there will be situations where this isn't possible. But if you're in a situation it is possible... do it!

Rule 5 – Don't Use the 'Cutting' Term

I sound like a bit of a hypocrite don't I? I've probably talked about cutting players twenty times in this blog post already. But that's coaches talk. There's a big difference between talking coach-to-coach and talking coach-to-player-or-parent.

I don't know what it is, I just don't like telling players they've been 'cut' from the team. I feel like the term 'cut from the team' brings negative emotions with it. I'd much rather tell them they 'didn't make the team this year'. I emphasise the words this year, letting them know they if they work on improving their game really hard they have another chance at making the team next year.

Conclusion

Cutting players is hard... really hard. But it's part of our job and we all have to do it.

Hopefully these 5 rules can help ease the pain for the player, parents, and the coach when you have to select your team for this coming season.

Are there any other rules you have when selecting your team? Or any of my rules that you disagree with? We're all different! I'd love to hear your thoughts in the comments.

PS. I love Twitter and Facebook.

5 Out Motion Offense *Complete Coaching Guide*



C O A C H M A C

basketballforcoaches.com

5 Out Motion Offense – Complete Coaching Guide



The 5 out motion offense is a fantastic primary offense for basketball teams at any level, but especially youth basketball teams.

It's a positionless offense that relies on spacing the floor and a set of rules that assists players to determine their movements and actions.

Due to players making decisions and reading the play of their teammates and defenders, the 5 out motion is great for teaching players how to play basketball.

Who Should Run the 5 Out Motion Offense?

As a positionless offense, I highly recommend the 5 out motion for all youth basketball teams since it allows all players on the team to develop into well-rounded basketball players.

This is important because it's impossible to know which players will grow in height and which players won't.

Countless times I've seen players who have matured and grown early in life get assigned to the post position only to have their teammates who developed at a later time quickly catch up to them.

When this happens the player who developed early has had barely any practice at dribbling, shooting from the outside, etc.

So it's imperative that all youth coaches use a positionless offense like the 5 out motion.

But with that said (sorry for the rant), it's especially a great offense for teams that lack height and want to run a fast offense with a lot of movement.

Strengths:

- **Creates positionless players** – All 5 players on the court are required to pass, cut, dribble, shoot, screen, etc. This is imperative for a great youth basketball offense.
- **Can be used as a delay offense** – If your league doesn't have a shot clock and you want to hold up the basketball, the 5 out motion will provide movement and keep the defense honest while not looking at scoring options.
- **Players learn how to play basketball** – Don't overlook this benefit. Players learn to read their teammates and defenders and make decisions accordingly. This is an important process that players won't learn from running set plays all game.
- **Every player contributes** – When running this offense, one or two players can't dominate the basketball. All players will be involved and must contribute to the team's offense.
- **Requires great spacing** – If players are all in the correct positions, your team will always have great spacing at all times. This opens up driving lanes and makes it difficult for defenders to help each other.
- **Difficult for opposition teams to scout** – Since there are no 'set' passes or actions, teams won't be able to work out a specific action they can stop to disrupt the offense.
- **The opposition can't crowd the key area** – All defenders on the opposition team will be required to guard all areas of the floor. This prevents them from keeping their biggest players on the inside.
- **Easy to teach due to progressions** – One of the best things about the 5 out motion offense is that it can be taught in progressions. Players aren't forced to learn the complete offense all at once which will overwhelm them.

Weaknesses:

- **Not great for teams with one dominant player** – If you have one or two dominant players that contribute the bulk of your team's scoring, this might not be the offense for you if you want your team to continue to play that way. All players must contribute in the 5 out offense. Even the weaker players.
- **Players can get stuck in the motions of the offense** – When you first implement this offense with your team, you'll find that they're so focused on running the offense properly, that they forget to look for scoring opportunities.
- **Sometimes difficult with a shot clock** – Similarly to the above point, if your players aren't constantly searching for scoring opportunities, the shot clock can play a factor and force your team to rush a shot with a few seconds left.
- **Can take some time for players to master** – While your players can quickly pick up the actions and movements of the 5 out, it does take time for players to learn how to quickly read the game and make smart decisions on the court.

5 Out Motion Rules

The 5 out motion offense is governed by 5 rules that players must follow at all times for the offense to run smoothly.

1. If your being denied and the player with the ball looks at you, back cut immediately – Never hesitate. This assumes you're only being denied one pass away from the basketball.

2. If you believe you can attack the basket and score on your defender, do it – Players must understand their own abilities and the abilities of their defender. If a player thinks they can attack, they should do it immediately on the catch.

3. Players must square up to the rim when they have the basketball – A player can't telegraph what they're going to do by facing a certain direction. By squaring up, players can shoot, pass, or dribble.

4. Every action must be performed with purpose – If you cut, cut hard. If you're screening, focus on setting a great screen. Never pass and stand still.

5. Spacing is always on the NBA three-point line – The NBA three-point line is about 2 feet behind the normal three-point line.

Setting Up the 5 Out Motion Offense

'5 out' simply means that all offensive players on the floor are starting outside the three-point line.

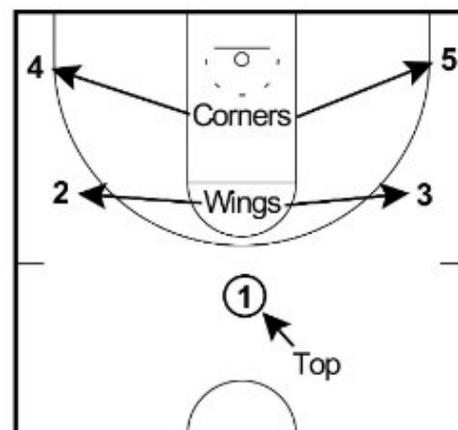
There are 5 spots that must always be filled unless players are performing an action like screening or cutting.

5 out setupThe five spots are:

1. Left corner
2. Left wing
3. Top
4. Right wing
5. Right corner

These spots should be on the NBA three-point line which is about 2 feet behind the regular three-point line used by all other levels.

When teaching the 5 out motion to your team for the first time, I highly recommend you use cones to mark these 5 spots on the floor to allow players to get used to where each position is.



How to Run the 5 Out Motion Offense

There are 4 progressions that you gradually introduce one by one into the continuity of your 5 out motion offense.

All coaches must make sure they start with progression one and move up without skipping steps.

This allows the players to gradually learn the concepts of the 5 out motion without being overwhelmed with the entire offense all at once.

These are the 4 progressions:

Progression 1: Basic cutting

Progression 2: Screening away

Progression 3: On-ball screen

Progression 4: Dribble at

Let's go through each of the progressions in more detail...

Progression #1 – Basic cutting

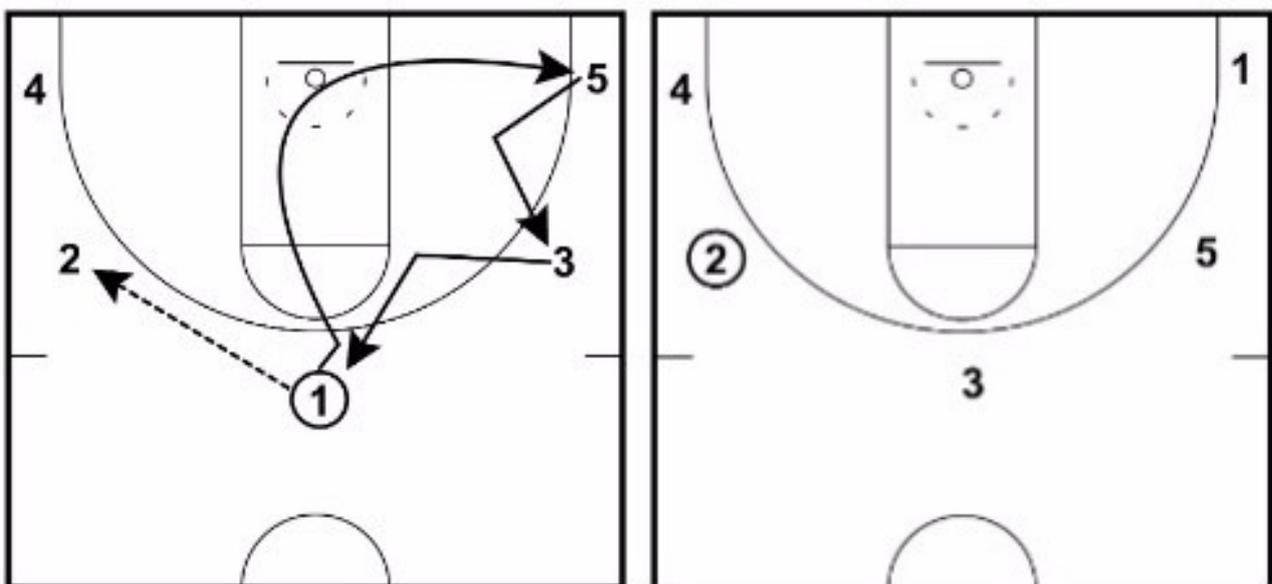
The easiest way to begin teaching your team the 5 out offense is to start with the basic movements of passing and cutting in a 5-0 situation.

Start by setting out 5 cones at the 5 fill spots on the court. Let your team know that when they're not cutting, they must be in one of these 5 positions.

Now it's time to teach the cuts...

There are 4 passes and cuts that can be made during progression 1.

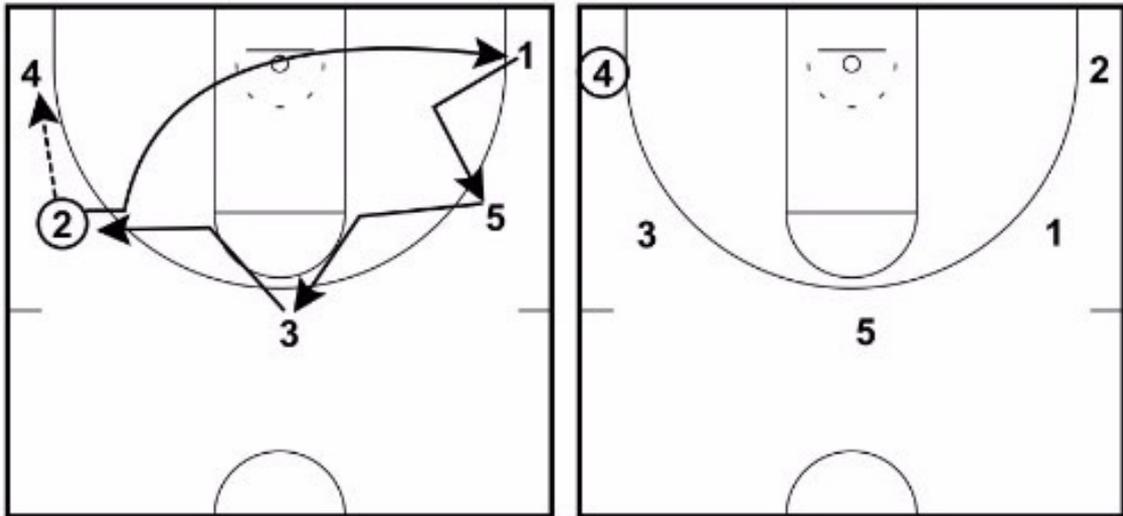
1. Top to Wing Pass



On a top to wing pass, the passer basket cuts all the way through the key and fills the opposite corner.

Once 1 has cut, 3 and 5 must fill up the positions closer to the basketball.

2. Wing to Corner Pass



On a wing to corner pass, the passer also basket cuts all the way through the key and fills the opposite corner.

Once 2 has cut through, 3, 5, and 1 must all fill up the positions closer to the basketball.

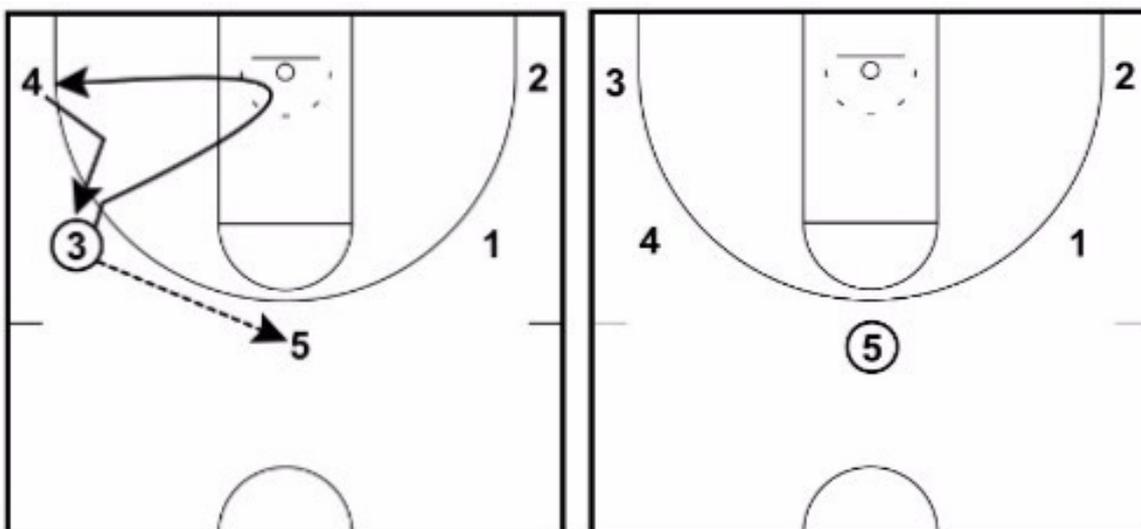
3. Corner to Wing Pass



On a corner to wing pass, the passer basket cuts and replaces themselves.

The other 4 players wait in the same spot for the next action.

4. Wing to Top Pass



On a wing to top pass, the passer basket cuts and then fills the corner of the same side they cut from.

On 3's cut, 4 fills up closer to the basketball and then 3 replaces them in the corner. The other 3 players wait for the next action.

Progression Practice:

Have your players practice this progression until they're comfortable with the passes and cuts.

This simple progression can be a great offense for a youth basketball team by itself. It will provide great spacing and get your players reading the play and making decisions.

Coaching points when teaching progression #1:

- Remind your players that if they're being overplayed, they must back cut immediately when the player with the basketball is looking at them.
- To set up the defender and get open on a front cut, after passing the player should take one step away from the ball and then explode to the ball-side of their defender on the cut to the rim looking for the basketball.
- If the defender 'jumps to the basketball' taking away the front cut, the passer should back cut and try to step in front of their defender to open up the passing angle.
- Always watch the basketball on cuts. If a shot is put up, they need to know immediately to establish rebounding position.
- Cut hard on all cuts to the rim. Doing so will make the cutter a threat to score which will force weak side defense to help.

Progression #2 – Screen Away

Once your team is comfortable with the cutting phase (making the correct cut 80% – 90% of the time), it's time to introduce the action of screening away after a pass instead of cutting.

This action can be performed on any top to wing, wing to corner, or wing to top pass. The only pass it can't be performed on is the corner to wing pass.

Before implementing this action, you must decide whether you want the player being screened to always curl, or whether you'll give them the option of cutting to the top or curling.

I recommend all youth basketball teams (below high school) get this player to curl off the screen every time so that there's no confusion.

For high school teams and higher, you can allow them to read the defense and perform the most appropriate option.

Option 1 – Screened player always curls off the screen

Here's how it works on a top to wing pass...

1. 1 makes the pass to 2 on the wing. Instead of cutting, 1 decides to set an away screen.

Note – It's important that 2 waits while this screen is being set so that the curling option is not missed due to passing to 4 too quickly.

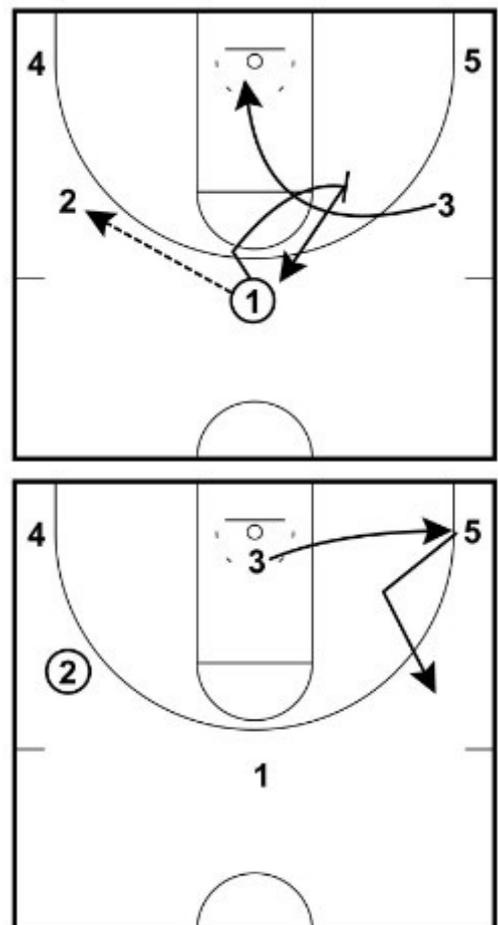
2. 1 screens for 3 making sure that they set the screen at an angle that allows the 3 to cut to the rim.

3. 3 can either front cut or back cut towards the rim depending on how quickly the defense reacts to the screen. **But they must cut to the rim since they were screened.**

4. After 3 has used the screen, **1 pops back out to the same spot that they set a screen from.** If 1's defender attempts to help on the cut from 3, you'll find that 1 will often get an open shot from the top of the key.

5. After the cut, 3 fills the weak side corner position since 5 has filled 3's previous position on the wing.

Then all players are back in position for the next action to be made.



Option 2 – Screened player has the choice of curling or popping out

If you're coaching an experienced basketball team, you can give the player being screened the option to curl or to pop out to the perimeter and receive the pass.

The difference when using this option is that **the screener must go the opposite direction to the cutter.**

If the cutter decides to pop out to the perimeter, the screener will cut to the rim and then fill the corner.

If the cutter decides to curl, the screener will pop out to their original position.

Here's an example of a top to wing pass using option 2...

1. 1 makes the pass to 2 on the wing. Instead of cutting, 1 decides to set an away screen.

Note – It's important that 2 waits while this screen is being set so that the curling option is not missed due to passing to 4 too quickly.

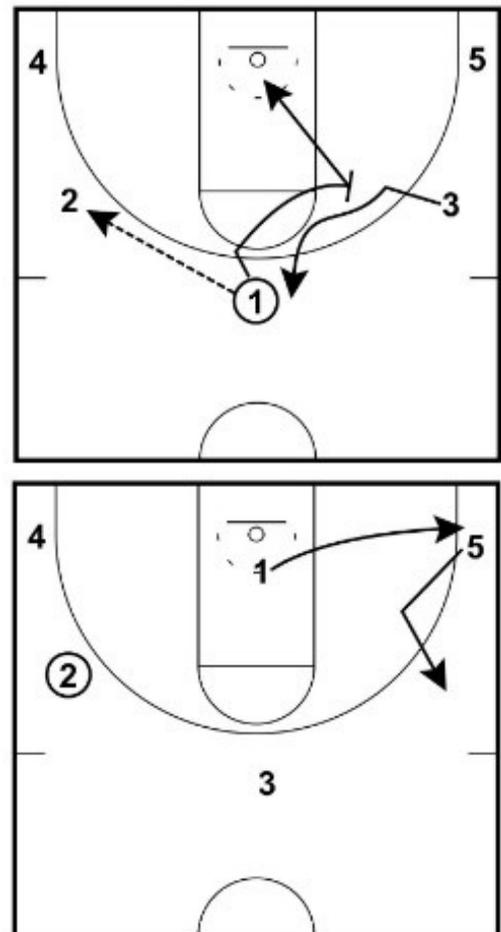
2. 1 screens for 3 making sure that they set the screen at an angle that allows the 3 to cut to the rim.

3. 3's defender cheats and goes under the screen so 3 pops out to the top perimeter position to catch and look for the open shot.

4. Reading this, 1 cuts to the rim because they must go the opposite direction of the cutter.

5. 1 then fills the corner position as 5 has filled 3's previous spot on the wing.

I've found that inexperienced teams can struggle with option 2 so I recommend starting with option 1 and then progressing to option 2 if you think your players are capable.



Coaching points when teaching progression #2:

- Players must be setting screens on the correct angle. This means the screener's bum should be facing somewhere between the player with the basketball or the basket. Too often youth players will set screens too high that allow the defender to quickly slip under it.
- The player setting the screen must make the player being screened aware with a verbal cue and a visual sign. I recommend you teach the screener to hold their arm up in a fist and call out the player's name before setting the screen.

Progression #3 – On-Ball Screen

Once your players are comfortable with cutting and screening away, next up is the action of setting on-ball screens.

This action of the pick and roll is often very effective because the offensive players are spaced out well.

The on-ball screen can be used after any pass in the offense.

Here are two examples of setting an on-ball screen in the 5 out motion offense:

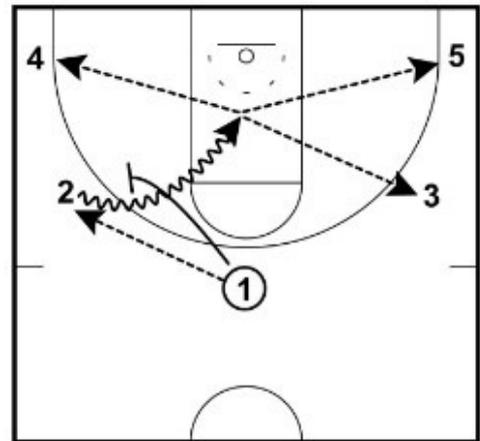
Example #1 – Top to Wing Pass On-Ball Screen

1. 1 passes from the top to 2 on the wing and then sets an on-ball screen on their defender.

2. 2 uses the on-ball screen and drives hard to the rim surveying the options that are presented.

3. Depending on how the defense reacts, 2 can pass to any of the perimeter players or make the shot in the key.

If the basketball is kicked out and the shot isn't immediately taken, all players must find one of the 5 fill spots and the 5 out motion offense starts again.



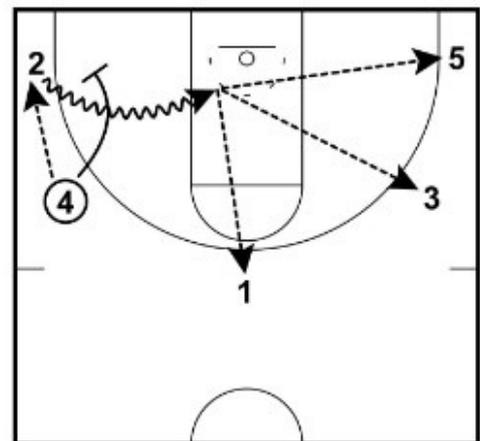
Example #2 – Wing to Corner Pass On-Ball Screen

1. 4 passes to 2 in the corner and then sets an on-ball screen on their defender.

2. 2 uses the on-ball screen and drives hard to the rim surveying the options that are presented.

3. Depending on how the defense reacts, 2 can pass to any of the perimeter players or make the shot in the key.

A lot of coaches who run the 5 out motion make it a rule that on each pass to the corner the passer sets an on-ball screen. So if it works for you, consider incorporating it as a rule into your offense!



Coaching points when teaching progression #3:

- As with the previous progression, it's super important that players are setting the on-ball screen at the correct angle that allows the player with the basketball to attack the rim.
- The three players not involved in the pick and roll should do their best to move into open positions where they can catch and shoot or catch and drive.

- Start to introduce to the players that they must take into account each player's skill set before making an action. For example. Your team should not set an on-ball screen for player that can't dribble the basketball well.
- Just like in the screening away progression, players must be giving a visual and verbal cue to the player they're about to set an on-ball screen for by saying their name and holding up a fist.

Progression #4 – Dribble At

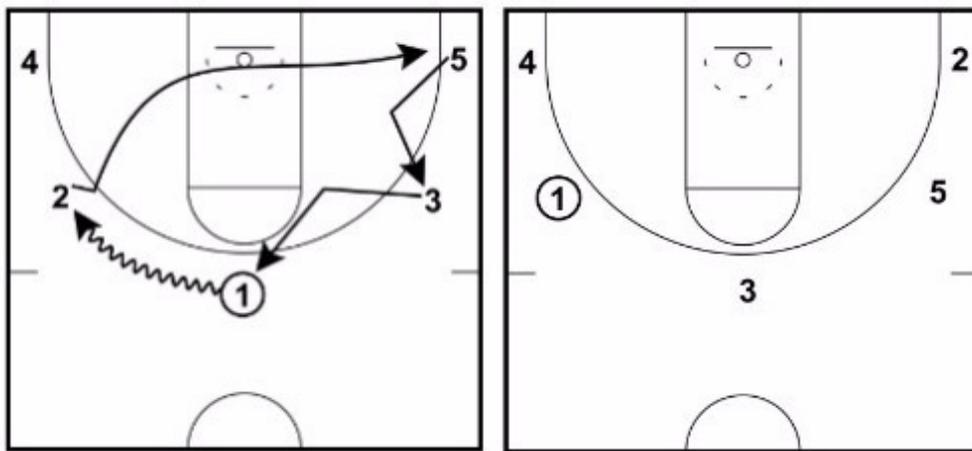
Another action to add to this continuity offense is the 'dribble at' action.

This can be used when a player with the basketball is being heavily pressured and the only options to pass are being denied well by the off-ball defenders.

In this scenario, the player with the basketball may decide to dribble towards another player at a different spot.

When this happens, the two offensive players involved (the dribbler and the player they're dribbling towards) have two options.

1. Backcut



If the player without the basketball is being denied, they can make a hard back cut looking to receive the basketball for a layup.

If they don't receive the pass, they fill the weak side corner, the other players rotate towards the basketball, and the next action begins.

2. Hand-off



The other option is to perform a hand-off between the two players.

This is similar to the pick and roll where the other 3 players on the court should hold their positions and wait.

The player that receives the hand-off should attack the rim and kick out to shooters if the defense slides over to help.

Coaching points when teaching progression #4:

- When performing hand-offs, the player with the basketball should rotate their hands so that they're on the top and bottom of the basketball. This allows the player receiving the hand-off to grab the basketball on the sides.
- In my opinion, I don't like hand-offs for youth basketball. For my youth teams, I have them automatically back cut on a dribble at.

Piecing the 5 Out Motion Together

Once your players have learned the basic 4 progressions of 5 out motion offense, you've established a fantastic primary offense that will teach them how to read and play the game of basketball.

Now that they can confidently perform all the actions, the next important step is for players to work out what actions work the best for them and their teammates.

For example:

- Players will work out that the best players to set on-ball screens for are the quick guards who make great decisions.
- The best players to away screen for are those that cut hard to the rim and can finish the layup or close shot.
- The best shooters on the team should primarily set away screens so that they're cutting back out to the basketball for the open shot.

While a lot of this knowledge will develop with experience, I believe it's important for the coach to talk to the team and each player individually about what they're good at and what they need to improve on.

Doing so will help their decisions when running the 5 out motion during the game.

Advanced

Flex Action Progression

Once your team has mastered the basic progressions of the 5 out motion offense, you can choose to add a more advanced flex cut progression.

This is best used on a pass from the wing to the top of the key and can potentially give you an open layup off the flex cut or an open jump shot off a down screen.

Here's how it works:



1. 2 makes the pass to 1 at the top of the key.

2. After making the pass, 2 will basket cut as usual. But instead of filling to the same side, 2 sets a flex screen for 5.

3. 5 uses the flex screen and cuts through looking to receive the pass for the layup. If 5 isn't open, they simply cut all the way through to the corner as 4 has moved up the wing to replace 2's spot.

4. 3 then sets a down screen for 2.

5. 2 uses the down screen and pops out to the perimeter looking to receive the basketball for the jump shot.

6. 3 can reverse pivot and seal 2's defender if they have a mismatch inside. If not, 3 fills the closest corner.

Even if the offense doesn't get a great look from the flex option, you will notice now that all five spots are now filled and the team can move on to the next action of the offense.

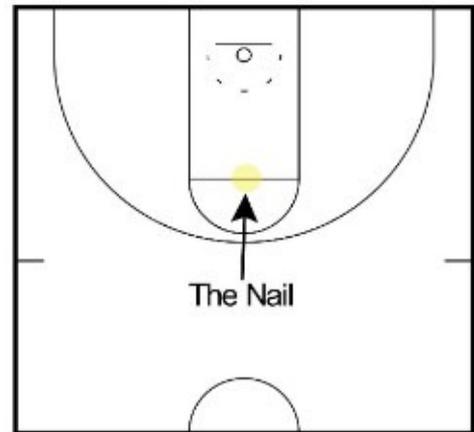
Variation – Cutting Through the Nail

Another variation of this offense I wanted to share with you is the option to 'cut through the nail' every time a player cuts to the top of the key.

This is most commonly seen in Bob Huggins' Open Post Motion offense.

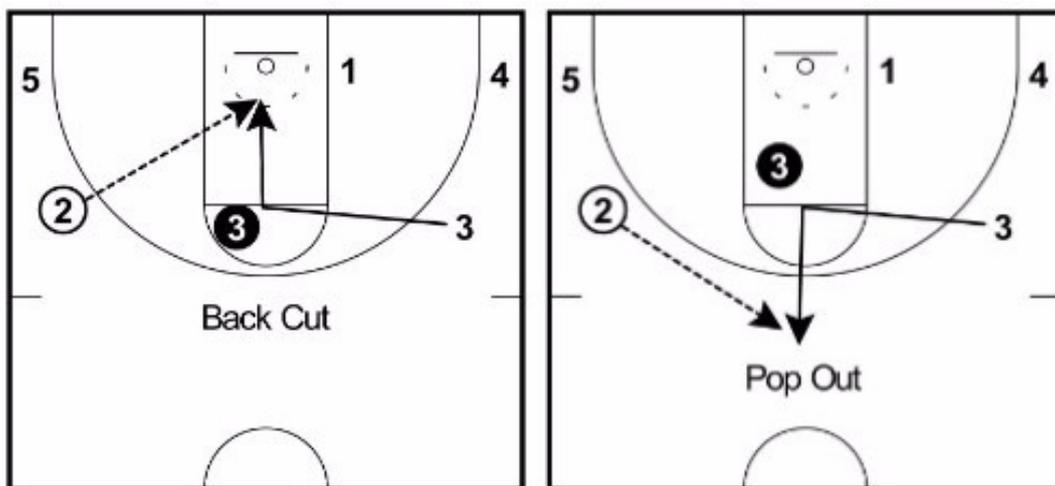
Instead of filling to the top spot just like any of the other 4 spots, players are required to L-cut through the nail.

Note – The 'nail' is the spot at the very middle of the free-throw line.



When players cut through the nail, they're required to decide whether to back cut or to pop out to the top spot depending on how their defender is playing them.

If the defender is denying them from receiving the basketball, the player must immediately back cut and then fill the weak side corner.



If the defender is playing off them, the player cuts out to the top spot to receive the pass.

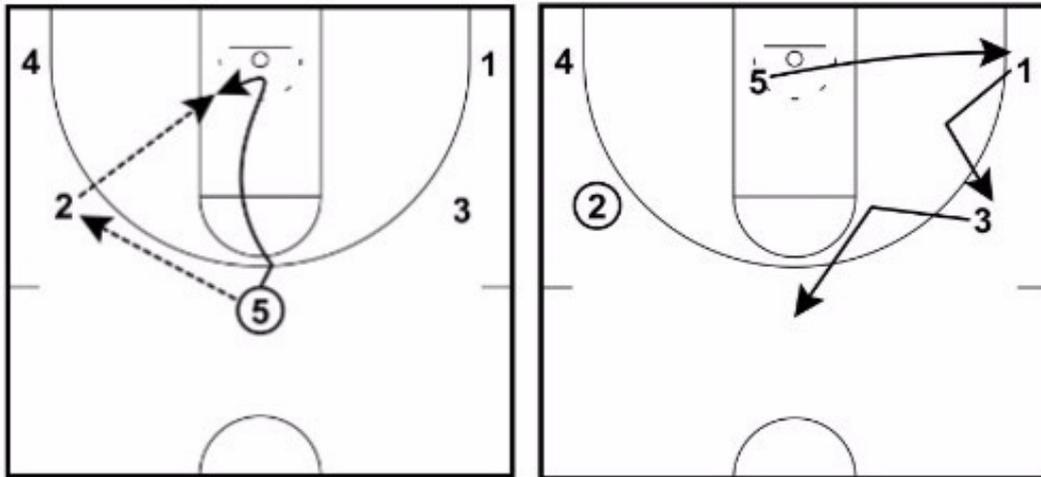
By implementing this variation to the 5 out motion you will achieve two things...

1. It will take away the defenders ability to get a deflection which leads to the opponent's fast break.
2. It can lead to some easy scores off the back cuts.

Getting the Basketball to the Post

The best way to get the basketball inside to players who have a mismatch is to allow those players to establish quick post up position after every through the key.

The player posting up is only allowed to hold this position for 1 – 2 seconds before clearing out if they don't receive the pass.



This ensures that the 5 out motion offense continues to run smoothly.

To take advantage of this mismatch, it's important that players with the basketball are looking at cutters to take advantage of the 1 – 2 seconds that they secure inside position.

Posting up isn't restricted to your biggest players. Any match up on the floor with an advantage in the post can use this technique.

Transition Defense and Rebounding

One thing a lot of coaches will find confusing is that since all our players are standing outside the three-point line, who's going to rebound!?

The answer to this question will depend more on the personnel on your team and how aggressive you want to be rebounding the basketball.

I'll give you three options. Pick the one you like the most depending on your coaching style and players on your team.

- 1. The point guard always plays safety. The other four players crash the boards.**
- 2. The point guard and shooting guard always play safety. The other three players crash the boards.**
- 3. Everyone below the free throw line rebounds. Everyone above the free throw line plays safety.**

What you'll quickly realize is that the 5 out motion can lead to a lot of offensive rebounds as long as your designated players are willing to work hard for them.

By starting on the perimeter when a shot is put up, it's incredibly difficult for the defense to box out an offensive player with a running start.

If you have any tough and athletic players on your team, expect them to grab a lot of offensive rebounds!

Conclusion

The 5 out motion offense is a great offense for any basketball coach to learn and implement with their team.

Being a very common offense, even if you don't use it with your own team, it's important for all coaches to learn about so that they know how to defend when playing against it.

It allows players to practice all skills, gets the whole team involved, and can be easy to teach as long as you're using the right progressions and not trying to implement the whole offense at once.

Any basketball coach who uses this offense will know they're improving their players!

6 Lessons I've Learnt from Coach Don Meyer

 basketballforcoaches.com/don-meyer/

Coach Don Meyer's battle with cancer came to an end on May 18, 2014. He was 69 years old.

He finished his long life as one of the winningest coaches in NCAA history, acquiring 923 wins throughout his coaching career.

I was one of the unfortunate ones who never had the opportunity to meet this great man, but I have read and heard a lot about him. One of the main reasons I respect him incredibly as a coach and influencer because he does something we talk about a lot here at BFC: He teaches more than basketball.

The amount of love he's received over the internet during the last few days is a testament to the impact he's had on the basketball community. Every second tweet I've seen on Twitter has had to do with Don Meyer, whether it's a quote, or someone sharing how he affected their lives.

So the lessons I'm about to share with you aren't things I learned directly from Coach Meyer (I wish), they are from quotes and stories I have read or have been told to me. Some of them basketball related, some of them life-related. I'm going to share with you the meaning that I took from each lesson he taught.

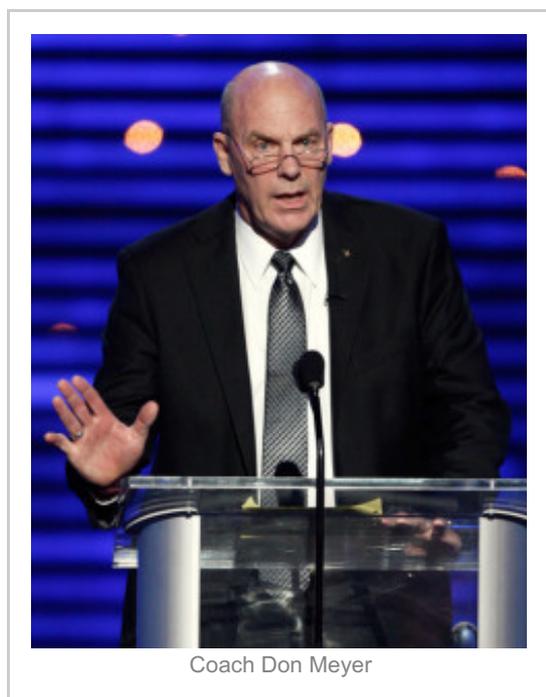
Exclusive Bonus: Download the 'Lessons from Coach Don Meyer' blog post as a PDF so that you can print it out and read it offline! ([Download Now](#))

1. Criticize Players in Private

| Shout praise and whisper criticism – Don Meyer

We encourage you to praise your players in front of their teammates. If they're working hard and deserve it, do it. There's nothing wrong with that. But openly shouting criticism directed at a single player isn't a great idea, especially at a youth level.

First, players don't want to be embarrassed in front of their peers. I've found they are usually so worried about what their teammates are thinking that they won't pay much attention to what you're saying anyway. And then they're angry at the coach for embarrassing them. That's a lose-lose.



Coach Don Meyer

Sitting down with the player before or after practice, or taking them to the sideline during practice, I've found to be a much better idea. This will show them that you care about them, and give them time and focus to pay attention to your words.

2. Emphasize What's Most Important

It is not what you teach, but what you emphasise – Don Meyer

I look at this quote in two different ways...

1. When teaching drills, emphasize key points with your tone of voice. Players aren't going to remember everything, so the tone of our voice tells them what we want them to remember.

Emphasizing a key point with the tone of your voice is like highlighting words on a piece of paper. The words stand out. Your players will remember the things that stand out.

2. Also, you must emphasize the things your team stands for. If you're a fast break team, make sure you're emphasizing that every single training. Constantly talk about playing a fast pace style of basketball and make sure your drills are in line with the type of basketball you want to play.

3. Know Why You're Coaching

It's not where you coach, it's why you coach – Don Meyer

The level of basketball you're coaching doesn't matter as long as you're coaching for the right reasons.

Here's something I want you to think about: What's the most important goal for you as a coach? Usually, the answer to this question is going to come down to either: winning, or developing your players into better people.

Sure, we can want both of those, but they can never be equally important. One has to take precedence over the other at some stage. Which one is more important to you?

Developing your players into better people should always be the most important goal of a coach. If you do that, you win. No matter how many wins and losses are displayed on the ladder at the end of the season.

4. Be Nice to Everyone You Meet

It doesn't cost nothing to be nice to people – Don Meyer

Everybody says please and thank you, yes sir/yes ma'am, no sir/no ma'am – Don Meyer

Every day you get to decide your attitude. Regardless of your current circumstances or status, no one is forced to be nice or rude. It's a choice.

I've had conversations with a homeless man who could be the nicest person I've ever met! And unfortunately, some of the richest people I know are impolite and arrogant. It's up to you to choose to use your manners and be polite.

Make the decision to be nice to everyone you come in contact with. And smile!

5. Put the Team First

Successful programs consist of people working hard, working together, while never worrying about who gets the credit – Don Meyer

One of my favorite Don Meyer quotes of all time.

It essentially breaks up into three parts:

1. Work hard
2. Work smart
3. Don't worry about who gets the credit

For me, the third point is the most important. When you worry about who receives the credit it means you're putting the individual before the team. This is a recipe for disaster. This isn't only the players, this is everyone in the program. From the Athletic Directors, to the coaches, to the players, to the parents. Everyone.

I've found a big piece to this puzzle is not accepting all the credit when it is given to one individual. When all the credit is accepted by one, the rest will start to question whether their heart really lies with team. The person receiving the credit has to be big enough to share the credit and let people know they couldn't do this by themselves. A great example of this is [Kevin Durant during this years MVP speech](#).

6. Effort is a Choice

There's only one thing we can control, and that is how hard we play – Don Meyer

There will be nights when the ball won't go in the ring. We can accept that. It happens. It's annoying, but it happens.

The one thing that should never have a night off is our effort. Similar to lesson 4, effort is a choice. There's nothing a coach hates more than a player choosing to be lazy on the basketball court. We shouldn't have to coach effort.

What's next?

The first thing I recommend you to do is put these two books on your reading list.

['How Lucky You Can Be' – by Coach Meyer](#)

['Playing for Coach Meyer' – by Steve Smiley](#)

I've read many great books in my life and never had the chance to check out either of these two. They're next on my reading list!

Once you've done that, I want you to share a lesson that you've learnt from Coach Meyer in the comments below.

Rest in peace, Coach.

6 Mistakes I Made My First Season Coaching Youth Basketball

 basketballforcoaches.com/mistakes-i-made/



My first year coaching youth basketball I had the privilege of coaching an under 12 boys basketball team that was made up of nine wonderful kids between the ages of 9 and 10.

Being my first time, I grew tremendously as a coach throughout the season. I was constantly being put into new, challenging situations that allowed me to gain more life and basketball coaching experience.

But, as much as I enjoyed it, the season definitely wasn't the perfect start to my coaching career that I had initially hoped for...

We lost... A lot... Many, many more games than we won.

While this disheartened me at the time, by reflecting on the season I was able to learn a lot about what I did right and what I did wrong during my first season coaching.

When the season was over, I asked myself these two simple questions...

1. What did I do well?
2. What didn't I do well?

In this post, I'm going to share with you 6 things I didn't do well during my first season coaching youth basketball.

Here they are...

1. I Viewed the Results as a Reflection of My Coaching Ability

After the losses started piling up, I remember asking myself ‘what am I doing wrong?’ What were the other coaches doing that I’m failing to do?

As time has passed and I developed my coaching knowledge further, I’ve realized how silly it is to correlate coaching ability with the results of your team.

There are two main reasons why I believe this:

a. In youth basketball, more often than not it’s the team with the most talented and skilled players that will win.

Coaches don’t make as much difference as some would like to think in the short-term.

Some coaches might point out that it’s the coach who develops the skill of the players, and, therefore, the results of your team do reflect your ability to coach.

To these coaches, I would point out that the current skill level of your players will depend a lot more on all the coaches who have trained the players before the current season.

It’s unfair to grade a coach’s coaching ability on a team they’ve only been training for a couple of months.

I love this quote from Jeff Van Gundy...

“Your greatness as a coach isn’t tied to the greatness of your players. Anyone who thinks otherwise doesn’t understand coaching.” – Jeff Van Gundy

b. Some coaches will use tactics that allow their team to win basketball games at a young age, but that hinder their players for the future.

Running a zone defense and encouraging your best players not to pass the basketball to the weaker players will definitely result in wins, but don’t do much for improving the team in the future.

Does running a zone defense that allows your team to win and under 10’s game make you better than the coach of the losing team who played man-to-man all game? Not to me it doesn’t.

Key Takeaway: The numbers in the win and loss columns don’t reflect your ability to coach basketball.

2. I Didn’t Create Positionless Players

Numerous times throughout my first season I made the mistake of splitting my team up into ‘biggs’ and ‘smalls’.

I’d send the bigger players to one end of the court to work on post moves and send the smaller players to the other end of the court to work on their dribbling skills.

I now firmly believe that this should not happen in youth basketball.

All players must work on their dribbling skills at practice. All players must work on their post

skills at practice. Never split kids up by position.

As youth basketball coaches, we must prepare players to play all positions on the basketball court because we have no idea how they're going to develop in the future.

A prime example of why we must train players to be positionless from a young age is current NBA superstar, Anthony Davis.

Davis is currently regarded as one of the most dominant post players. As a youth basketball player, Davis had always trained and played the guard position. But then between his sophomore and senior years of high school, Davis grew from 6'2" to an incredible 6'10" ([source](#)).

This incredible growth spurt meant that Davis now 'has the fundamentals and movements of a guard within the body of a center'.

Do you think working on dribbling and outside shooting instead of restricting him to staying under the basket helped Davis become the player he is today? I do.

Key Takeaway: Prepare players to play all positions on a basketball court. You never know what position they will be playing in the future.

3. I Implemented a Full-Court Press

Yep. I was once one of those coaches who implemented a full-court press in an under 12's basketball game.

Thankfully, those days are in the past and I won't be returning to them.

At the time, there was one specific reason why I implemented a full-court press. Can you guess why?

Because it worked.

By spending about 15 minutes on the press twice per week, our team got reasonably good at the 2-2-1 full-court press and that was often the main factor in the games that we did win.

But if I was to coach that season again with my current knowledge, I wouldn't run a full-court press again.

Here are the two main reasons why:

1. Running a full-court press speeds up the tempo of already chaotic youth basketball games. I'd rather youth players gain more experience playing man-to-man half-court offense and defense.
2. Coaches of youth basketball shouldn't spend valuable practice time implementing a full-court press (I've watched some coaches spend over half of every practice practicing their press). Spending extra time on skill development and small-sided games will be far more beneficial for the players' future.

Key Takeaway: Full Court presses and zones take up valuable practice time that can

better be used developing players for the long-term. They also rob players of the opportunity to play man-to-man defense and half-court offense which is much more important for their development.

4. I Didn't Give My Team a Chance to Succeed

This might sound like an odd mistake to make, but I managed to do it...

Unlike some coaches that will drop their team back into a division or league that they're confident they will win, I wanted my kids to play against the best competition.

And, to be honest, it was a mistake. They simply weren't up to it.

But I was stubborn and kept entering them in the top division even when we had the opportunity to enter in a lower division where they would have had more chance of experiencing success.

My intentions were in the right place. The team was progressing rapidly by playing against better competition and since development (not wins) was my main focus, I thought I was doing the right thing.

Teams that we lost to by 30 at the start of the season we were only losing to by 10 points towards the end of the season. We were closing the gap. But we weren't there yet.

What I failed to take into account was the age of the players and their mindset. These 9 and 10-year-old kids weren't thinking about how good they could be in the future like I was. They wanted to have fun and compete. They didn't want to get beaten every single game they played.

Getting blown out by 30 points every game is going to make every 10-year-old player want to quit no matter how much they improve in the process.

Key takeaway: While playing against better competition is important for improvement, give your players the opportunity to experience the joy of success.

5. I Didn't Play Enough Small-Sided Games

As I've said many times, small-sided games are the best way to teach basketball to kids. They're unpredictable, super fun, and everything that players experience is transferrable to games.

While we ran some small-sided games during my first season, we definitely didn't utilize them enough.

Lately, I've been suggesting coaches use SSG's for at least 25% of their total practice time. So if you have an hour-long practice, use small-sided games for at least 15 minutes at the absolute minimum.

I've also written an article explaining [8 reasons why you must use small-sided games](#).

I encourage you to check out that article to get a deeper understanding of the 8 reasons,

but here they are to save you a click.

1. Players get more touches.
2. Easier decision-making.
3. More scoring opportunities.
4. Increased space.
5. Involves all players.
6. Breaks the game into chunks.
7. Eliminates zones and presses.
8. Teaches players when to use a skill.

Key Takeaway: Small-sided games are great for teaching basketball to players. Use them!

6. I Used Some Terrible Drills

One of the biggest problems that new coaches run into is knowing which drills they should use to best improve their players.

A tendency of many new coaches is to simply use the drills that they used to run when they were players. Depending on how good your previous coach was, this can be a good or bad thing to do.

As for me, I wasn't familiar with a large number of drills at the time so my options were limited. Looking back now, it's painfully obvious that some of the drills I used didn't improve the team as much as I would have liked.

Since my first season coaching, I've spent an enormous amount of time researching the best drills to use for youth basketball.

I won't get into what I consider a good or bad drill in this post, but if you're wondering what my favorite drills are, you can receive 31 of my favorite youth basketball drills for free by [clicking here](#).

Key Takeaway: Use basketball drills that really improve your players. Not just the ones you used when you were younger. Do the research and find the right drills!

Conclusion

If you're an experienced coach, I bet you can relate to a lot of my mistakes.

If you're a beginner coach, learn from the mistakes that I made so that you can avoid making them yourself.

It's important for all coaches to evaluate their coaching after a season and find areas they can improve on in the future. Dedicate some time to think about this and be honest with your answers. I did and it taught me a lot.

As legendary coach Pat Summitt puts it...

“Admit to and make yourself accountable for mistakes. How can you improve if you’re never wrong?” – Pat Summitt

While I wouldn’t change the experiences, relationships, or memories I made in my first season for anything, I definitely learned a lot from it in regards to coaching.

Now I want you to share with the BFC audience...

“What mistake did you make in your first season coaching basketball?”

6 Tips for a Better Nights Sleep

 basketballforcoaches.com/tips-sleep/

Coaches and players need high levels of energy if you're going to compete at your best and improve every day. The amount of energy you have during the day is highly affected by the amount of quality sleep you get each night.

For athletes, it's even more important because they expel a lot of energy practicing and working out each day.

For players that don't get enough sleep, studies have shown that along with a decrease in energy levels, they will also have a much harder time concentrating, have more mood swings, and a lack of sleep can also make losing weight a whole lot tougher. I talk about the ways lack of sleep kills basketball performance [here](#).

These are all things that we want to avoid to operate a great basketball team.

Here are 6 tips to get a better nights sleep.

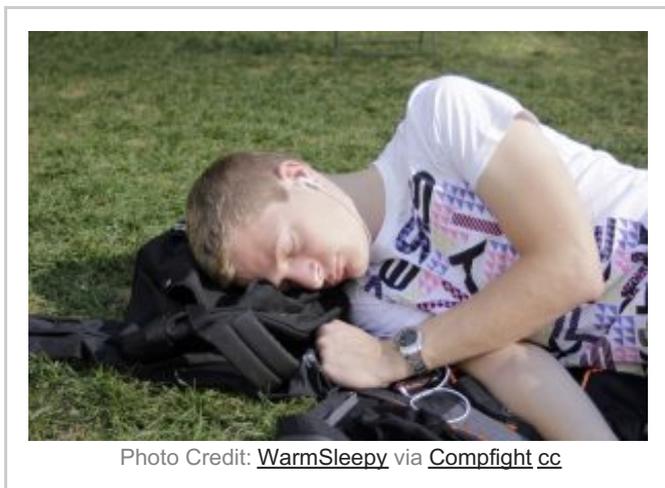


Photo Credit: [WarmSleepy](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

1. Go to bed at the same time each night

This can be hard for players because they may have homework or other requirements that need to be completed late into the night. However, one of the reasons that players are forced to stay awake and do homework is because they've put it off until the last minute. Stress the importance of going to bed at the same time each night and that they need to use their time more efficiently during the day to accommodate this.

This is important because they will start to teach their body what time they need to go to sleep and wake up each day. Then they'll feel much more energized upon waking up and have a lot more energy during the day.

2. Create a bedtime routine

This doesn't have to be anything fancy, just something that your mind and body will begin to associate with going to sleep. The most important thing is to have the same routine every single night.

My bedtime routine looks like this;

1. I clean the dishes if there are any still left out from today's use.
2. Let the dog outside to do her 'business'.
3. Brush my teeth.

4. Lock up the house.
5. Read in bed until I feel I can go to sleep (usually about 20 minutes).
6. Turn off my light and go to sleep.

That's it. Nothing special. But a routine works because when I start the routine my mind begins preparing my body sleep.

3. No electronics

Once you decide on what time you're going to start your routine, from that time until the next morning you should force yourself to be electronic-free.

This includes TV's, laptops, phones, e-readers, anything with a backlight. All of these devices will stimulate your brain which will keep you awake for much longer.

Your body is designed to be awake and alert at the sight of light. So it's crucial that when you wake up in the middle of the night you don't check your phone or flick on the TV.

4. No Caffeine or Alcohol after Dinner

Alcohol does in fact help you get to sleep. But the problem is that once you are asleep, the alcohol in your system greatly affects the quality of the sleep you get.

Caffeine is similar to alcohol, but it definitely does not help you get to sleep. It's similar because it will also disrupt the quality of your sleep if you have it close to going to sleep. And by 'close to going to sleep' I don't mean 10 minutes before... I mean any time after dinner. Caffeine can stay in your system for up to 6 hours.

5. Get Rid of Brain Clutter

Have a million things running through your head when you're trying to get to sleep?

This happens to me all the time. I used to stay awake for hours thinking of all the things I must remember to do the next day. And then a close friend solved all my problems...

He explained to me that he used to experience the same thing (I assume pretty much all of us do), his answer to the problem was to keep a pen and notebook on his bed-side table and whenever something popped into his head that needed to be remembered, he would write it down.

I can't stress enough how much this one technique improved my quality of sleep. My brain feels free as soon as I write it down.

6. Create the right sleeping environment

My advice is to make your room completely dark. Even the little numbers on a bed-side clock can create a glow in the room that makes it more difficult to sleep.

Are you sleeping on a comfortable pillow?

Do you have a comfortable mattress?

Are your sheets old and uncomfortable?

I understand that good sleeping equipment can cost a lot of money, but remember that on average you will spend one third of your life in bed. For example if you live until the age of 90, you will spend 30 years in bed sleeping!

Great sleeping equipment is a great investment to make and you'll definitely get your moneys worth out of it.

Conclusion

The main thing to remember is these changes won't be easy to make. For the first week or two you're going to find it difficult to fall asleep at an earlier time than usual. Don't try to make large jumps by going from a bedtime of 2am to 10pm in one night.

Changing a habit is a gradual process. At least, if you want it to be a permanent change.

Instead, try going to bed 15 minutes earlier for a week, and then another 15 minutes earlier than that for the second week, and so on until you get to your desired bedtime.

You and your players are going to find the change hard at first, that's expected. But you need to push through that pain for the long-term benefits that this routine will bring.

7 Easy Steps to Dealing with Difficult Parents

 basketballforcoaches.com/difficult-parents/

Every year, thousands of coaches all over the world dedicate their time to teaching other parents children how to play the game of basketball.

The majority of parents appreciate this good-natured act, but occasionally you'll find a couple of people that don't see it this way. Often the love they have for their child can blind them if they believe their child is being treated unfairly.



Dealing with difficult parents is something we as coaches need to accept will happen once in a while. No one goes through an entire coaching career without ruffling at least a couple of parents feathers.

Before I dive into the solution for how to deal with difficult parents, let's first look at a technique that will prevent any issues occurring in the first place.

Have a pre-season meeting with all parents and players

I'm not going to go into too much detail of what to include in your pre-season meeting (I'll save that for another post!), but I want to talk about two very important aspects of the pre-season meeting that relate to difficulties you may have with parents during the season.

1. Let them know you're approachable

A pre-season meeting will let you begin to develop relationships with the parents and lets them know that you're approachable if they ever want to talk about any problems or concerns they might have.

I've learned a lot of the time parents are intimidated by coaches and would prefer the coach makes the initial move to developing the coach/parent relationship. Being friendly at the pre-season meeting is the first step towards this. Being an approachable coach is very important.

I always make sure to end the meeting by letting all parents and players know that if they ever have anything to discuss, don't hesitate to contact me. Then I give my number to all parents and players.

You see, most of the time when parents storm up to a coach demanding answers out of the blue, it's because the problem's been building up for a long time and finally got to a point where they couldn't handle it anymore. If the parent felt like they could talk to the coach

about it prior, this outburst might not have happened.

2. Discuss distribution of playing time

The second important topic to discuss is how you're going to distribute playing time among the players. This is a very important topic and is the number one issue that arises for parents each season.

If you're coaching youth basketball, let them know that you're going to distribute all playing time evenly regardless of talent (if that's what you choose to do).

If you've got an older group and are playing basketball at a serious level, let the players and parents know that playing time will be based on talent and work ethic, so some players might not get much playing time in crucial games. If you're taking this route, make sure to let the parents and players know that during easy games, you will make sure to give the less talented players extended minutes so that they can develop into better players... And make sure you do it!

7 Steps to use if you encounter problems with parents

1. Never talk to someone that's yelling at you

First and foremost, never talk to someone if they're yelling at you. You're giving up your time to help out their kids and deserve more respect than that.

Thankfully, this doesn't happen too often anyway... But I've seen times where parents came down from the stands yelling at the coach and the coach has tried to defend his decisions on the spot. Which, as you can imagine, quickly escalates into a shouting match between the coach and parent.

Rather, if a parent comes up to you frustrated and yelling, in a clam voice let them know that you'd be happy to discuss whatever their concern is when they've calmed down.

2. Discuss their problem at a later time

If a parent gets frustrated with you during the game and walks over and demands you talk to them this instant (during the game), kindly let them know that you're happy to talk to them about it, but they will need to wait until after the game when you can both sit down and talk about it alone, without the other parents or the players watching.

If you don't have time to talk to them after the game, schedule a meeting with them at a later time.

Scheduling a meeting for the next day or later is my preferred option. This gives both yourself and the parent time to sit down and think about the conversation prior to meeting, rather than blurting out what ever comes to mind when they're angry.

But often the parent will insist on not leaving the venue until you have talked to them after the game.

3. Get someone else to sit in on the meeting

I always get my assistant coach to sit in on private meetings.

This can be beneficial in many ways. Such as;

1. Clarifying facts that may arise during the meeting.
2. A witness incase anything happens.
3. To recall comments made in the meeting at a later time if needed.

4. Hear them out

Without interrupting!

The parent needs to feel like they're being heard. If you're constantly interrupting and disputing their comments mid-conversation, the only thing you're going to achieve is making the parent much angrier than they already are.

Hear them out and get their complete side of the story before you start adding your two cents in.

The last thing you want to do is make the situation worse than it already is.

5. Body language

You must show the parent that you're paying attention to what they have to say by using good body language.

Don't sit back in your chair with your arms crossed. This shows a type of arrogance and stubbornness and will only infuriate the parent further.

Sit forward and look them in the eyes. Nod when they're speaking to show that you understand.

6. Keep your composure. Even if they don't

Even if they come in blasting you for reasons you don't understand, it's important to make sure you keep calm and talk rationally. You don't want to get into a shouting match and say something you'll regret in the future.

If you find the way they're speaking to you is unacceptable, politely ask them not to talk to you that way, and if they continue to do so, you'll have to end the conversation. Then if they do continue to speak to you in an unacceptable way, simply tell that that you're not willing to talk to them when they're in this state and you'd be happy to talk to them again when they've cooled off.

7. The correct way to respond

Once you've let them have their say, it's your turn to respond.

The correct way to respond is going to differ greatly every situation. But I'm going to give

you a couple of tips I use that help in the response.

Even if you don't fully agree with their argument, let the parent know that you can see where they're coming from. Acknowledge the points in their argument that you agree with.

Acknowledge their son/daughters strengths before you tell that parent what they need to improve on. For example you may have this conversation... "I understand where you're coming from. Look, Johnny's a very good shooter and we'd love to have him out on the floor more to make the most of that. The problem is that he isn't as strong as we need him to be defensively."

7 Important Tips to Remember When Dealing With Referees

 basketballforcoaches.com/dealing-with-referees/

Last weekend there was a basketball tournament in town. I had no teams participating and had no other commitments, so I thought I'd head down and check it out...

While it was great watching the youngsters playing, some of the coaches absolutely disgusted me. They were yelling at these young referees all game, nearly every game there was a coach receiving a technical foul. Hell, there were even a couple of ejections. It was terrible to say the least.

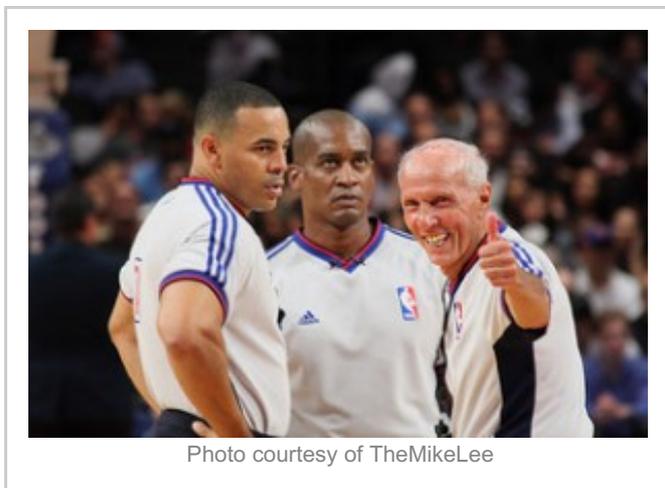


Photo courtesy of TheMikeLee

As the tournament pointed out to me, sometimes coaches find it incredibly difficult to know how to handle referees.

So I decided to write this post providing coaches with a couple of tips to remember about dealing with referees...

1. Understand That They're Human

Referees aren't perfect. Just like you and I aren't either.

They're not going to make the correct call 100% of the time. Just like you and I aren't going to make the correct coaching decision every single time.

Just because they make an incorrect call doesn't mean they need to 'get their eyes checked' or 'learn the rule book'.

Stop expecting perfection and start expecting consistency.

2. You Both Have Different Angles On The Play

While you are both watching the same game, you will always have a different angle on the play from the referee.

Sometimes you're going to see things that the referee misses, and sometimes they're going to see things that you miss.

3. Set An Example

Your role as a basketball coach extends much further than merely winning games.

Whether you like it or not, as a basketball coach you are a role model to your players. They look up to you.

If they see you being overly angry at the referees, you can bet they won't be far behind you.

Don't teach them bad habits. Teach them to stay under control and fight through it mentally when things aren't going their way.

4. Players Never Argue

One of the most important rules on all of my teams is that players never argue with the referees.

As I pointed out in number three, by not allowing your players to argue, it teaches them self-control.

Not every call in basketball is going to go their way. Just like not everything in life is going to go their way either. Learning how to deal with this is an important skill for all players to learn.

5. Remember Your Role

One of the biggest problems I notice in coaches without much experience is that they often get caught up dealing with the referees and forget what their role is in the game.

Your role is to coach. Remember that. Don't let the referees affect your ability to coach.

6. Adjust to The Referee's

As long as the referees are making calls consistently at both ends of the floor, it's up to you to adjust your game plan to their style of refereeing.

For example, some referees allow the players to play tougher in the paint than other referees do.

Everyone's heard the phrase 'take what the defence gives you', right? Well in some ways that rule also applies to referees, 'take what the referees give you'. Adjust your coaching style to suit the way they're calling the game.

7. Never Blame Losses on the Referees

Never blame a loss on the referees. Especially to your players.

By finding an external force to blame for the loss, the players dodge being held accountable for the loss.

If they accept accountability, they accept that the other team was simply a better side which will motivate them to improve. However, if they blame the referees for the loss, they have no motivation to improve their game.

Rather, let your players know that the game is not won and lost in the dying seconds of the game. If they had made one extra shot, or one extra hustle play during the first 46 minutes of play, the game would have been out of reach for the other team.

Do you have any other tips for dealing with referees?

7 Lessons Coaches Can Learn Watching Coach Carter

 basketballforcoaches.com/7-lessons-coach-carter/

Coach Carter is one of my all time favorite movies. While older coaches will remember re-watching some of the classics like 'Hoosiers' and 'Glory Road' hundreds of times, it seems the new generation of players have taken a hold on Coach Carter and aren't letting go. Possibly because a lot of young athletes can relate to the circumstances that the players on the Richmond Oilers team find themselves in.

But it's not just the players that can benefit from watching it, there are many lessons that we coaches can also learn from Coach Carter.

Below I've listed 7 lessons that really hit home with me while recently watching it.



7 Lessons to Learn from Coach Carter

1. Players should always arrive to practice on time

“If basketball practice starts at 3, you are late as of 2:55”.

Unless they have a valid excuse, all players must arrive on time to practice.

Arriving on time displays a respect for your teammates and the coach. It also ensures that practice is kept on a tight schedule according to your practice plan (I know none of you go to practice without a plan... right?).

2. Show your players respect, and they will show it back

“Sir is a term of respect. And you will have my respect, until you abuse it”.

In the opening meetings with his players the first thing Coach Carter does is call one of the players 'sir'. While initially it's evident they feel uneasy about it, they quickly come to realise the importance of showing respect.

I'm not advocating you refer to all of your players as 'sir', and I don't believe they should call you it either, but I do want to bring to your attention the importance of respect between players and the coach.

3. Athletes need to be well conditioned

“I cannot teach you the game of basketball until your conditioning is at a level that allows me to do so. Gentleman, report to the baseline”.

Ahh the famous Coach Carter quote... “Gentleman, report to the baseline”. Love it!

Basketball is an aerobic sport, which means the players are going to run... a lot.

If your players aren't conditioned to play a full game of basketball, what do you think will happen towards the end of the final quarter? Your players will start to make mental errors that will often contribute to a loss. Maybe they'll miss a defensive rotation, or a couple of late game free throws.

4. Education is important

“These boys are student athletes. ‘Student’ comes first”

The importance of education is one of the main topics in this movie. Coach Carter went as far as to ‘lockdown’ the gym because his students/players weren't reaching the educational standards that they set at the start of the season.

Coach Carter understands that the likelihood of any of his players going on to have a career as a professional basketball player is very slim. For that reason, he forces them to focus on their education to improve their quality of lives in the future.

5. The little stats really do matter

“Worm, you had 5 and 4”. “No sir, I had 12 points and 8 assists”. “No sir, you had 5 turnovers and 4 missed free throws”.

Contrary to what some coaches, players, and parents seem to believe, points don't tell the whole story. The ‘little’ statistics often tell a lot more about the game than the amount of points scored per player does.

Make sure you're tracking other statistics like turnovers, deflections, free throws, etc.

6. The team is one unit

“I'll do push ups for him. You said we're a team. One struggles we all struggle. One player triumph's we all triumph, right?”

After asking to rejoin the Richmond basketball team, Timo Cruze is given the near impossible task of 1,000 suicides and 2,500 pushups. When he fails to reach required number within the time given, his teammates step in to help him complete them so he can get back on the team.

Great teams have players that can count on each other.

7. Winning doesn't mean everything

“Oh well, now, not quite your story book ending hah? Not for us anyway. But you men played like champions, you never gave up, and champions hold their heads high. What you achieved goes way beyond the win loss column or whats gonna be written on the front pages of the sport’s section tomorrow. You’ve achieved something that some people have spent their whole lives trying to find, what you achieved is that ever elusive victory with-in, and gentlemen I am so proud of you”.

Coach Carter recognises that there are more important things in life than winning basketball games. After losing their final game, Carter lets his players know how proud he is of them despite their loss.

Have you watched Coach Carter?

If you haven’t seen it, make sure you do. There are tons of lessons coaches can learn by watching movis like Coach Carter. Way more than I can talk about in a single blog post.

The ones I’ve discussed above are the lessons that had the biggest impact on me. Share the lessons you’ve learnt watching Coach Carter in the comments. I’m sure there are many that I’ve missed!

– Coach Mac

7 Rebounding Drills

Dominate the
Rebounding
Battle

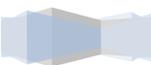


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Rebounding Technique

How the Drill Works:

The first player in line with a basketball passes to themselves off the backboard and goes up strong for the rebound with two hands, secures the basketball, and then pivots outside to pass to the next player in line.

Purpose:

The purpose of this drill is to teach all players how to rebound in a controlled drill that lets them focus 100% on their rebounding technique. Great drill for all youth teams.

Setup:

- Split your team up into two groups with one basketball per group.
- Each group forms a straight line on opposite sides of the backboard.

Instructions:

1. The first player in line with a basketball begins the drill by passing off the backboard to themselves.
2. They will then jump up as high as possible and secure the basketball with two hands.
3. As they're on the descent of their jump, the player must secure the basketball by gripping it tightly under their chin with their elbows out.
4. Upon landing, the player front pivots with their outside (closest to sideline) foot as the pivot foot.
5. The player then passes to the group they were just in before joining the end of the opposite line.

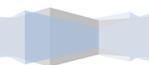


Variations:

Both Ends of the Court - If you have a large group and access to two backboards, split them up into four groups and use both ends of the court.

Coaching Points:

- It's important that players are getting maximum elevation on their jumps to secure the rebound.
- On the landing, knees should be slightly bent and the player should have a wide stance.
- When pivoting, players shouldn't raise up out of their low stance until after the pass.



Slide Rebounding

How the Drill Works:

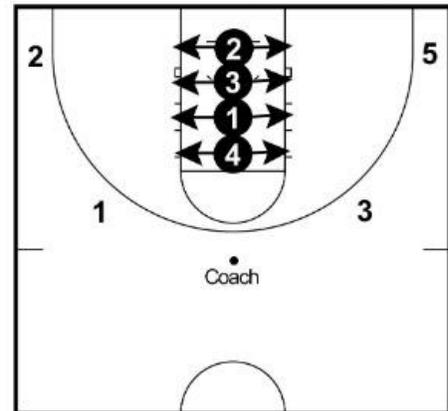
This drill is primarily run 4 on 4. The offensive players space themselves outside the three-point line and the defense starts in the key. The defense will slide from side to side and then a specific defender will close out on a shooter. The rest of the players must communicate and find a player to box out before securing the rebound.

Purpose:

This is a great drill for giving players experience communicating, boxing out, and pursuing the basketball on a rebound. It also works on three-point shooting.

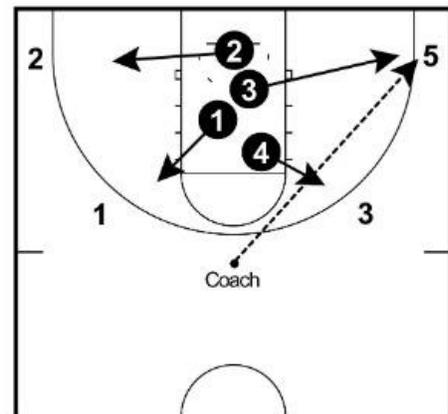
Setup:

- 4 defenders inside the key.
- 4 offensive players outside the three-point line.
- The Coach starts with a basketball at the top of the three-point arc.



Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the 4 defenders sliding side-to-side in the key.
2. After a short amount of time, the coach passes the basketball to one of the offensive players and calls out the name of one of the defenders. The defender who is called out must box out the shooter.
3. The other 3 defenders must communicate to each other which offensive player they're going to box out.
4. The goal for the defensive team is to secure the rebound.



Scoring System:

There's a couple of ways you can score this drill:

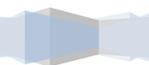
1. Set a number of defensive rebounds the defensive team must get before the teams switch over. 3 is usually a good amount.

or

2. Get three consecutive defensive rebounds in a row (made shots don't end the streak. Only offensive rebounds).

Coaching Points:

- Defenders must touch the outsides of the key when they're sliding.
- Be sure the defenders are putting in the effort with their slides. Nothing half-hearted. Refuse to pass the ball to the offensive team until they're going hard.
- The offensive team must be ready to shoot when they receive the ball.
- 4. Stutter the feet on the close-out. No jumping.



Battle Boards

How the Drill Works:

Two groups competing against each other. Drill starts with 2 offensive players and 2 defensive players on the elbows. A coach or player shoots the basketball and the 4 players must battle to secure the rebound. If the defensive team rebounds, they receive one point. If the offensive team rebounds, that's one strike. On 3 strikes the teams switch places.

Purpose:

A tough rebounding drill that encourages players to make contact and then pursue the basketball to secure the rebound.

Setup:

- Start by splitting the team into two even groups.
- One group starts on the baseline (defensive team).
- One group starts above the three-point line (offensive team).
- The coach has a basketball.



Instructions:

1. The drill begins with one offensive player and one defensive player on each of the high post elbows (4 players total).
2. A coach or player will then shoot the basketball from the top of the key.
3. Once the basketball is released, the players start working hard to establish best position for the rebound.
4. On either a make or miss, one of the players must secure the rebound and the drill is over.
5. The basketball is then passed back to the top of the key and a new 4 players set up to begin the drill.



Scoring System:

The goal is for the defensive team to secure as many rebounds as possible before the offensive team grabs 3 rebounds.

For each defensive rebound secured, the defensive teams gets 1 point.

Once the offensive teams grabs their third rebounds (3 strikes), the teams switch roles.

Whichever team finished with the most points at the end of the drills is the winner!

Variations:

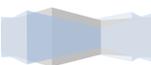
3 Pairs of Players - If you have a large group, you can add a third pair to the drill which means there will be 6 players fighting for the rebound.

Offensive Player Shoots - Instead of the first shot not meaning anything, the offensive team can rotate through who shoots the shot. On a make, the offensive teams gets one bonus point.

Both Ends of the Court - If you have another coach at practice and a large team, split them up into 4 groups and run the drill at both ends of the floor.

Coaching Points:

- Do keep in mind that this is a physical drill. Don't let them players get out of hand with unnecessary pushing. Call fouls if you need to.
- The defensive rebounders must make contact and then pursue the basketball. Don't wait until the basketball hits the floor.
- Players don't have to match up on players a similar size to them. It's good to get bigs playing on guards and guards playing on bigs occasionally.



Rotation Rebounding

How the Drill Works:

This drill involves an even number of either 3 or 4 players rotating around the key. The offensive team is rotating clockwise and the defensive team is rotating anti-clockwise. When the coach shoots the basketball the defenders must quickly find an offensive player to box out before securing the rebound. The drill then leads into a small-sided game.

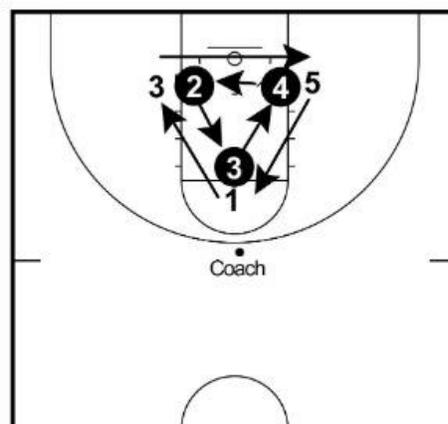
Purpose:

A fun rebounding drill variation that emphasises the importance of defenders communicating, working as a team, and making contact with an offensive player before securing the rebound.

Setup:

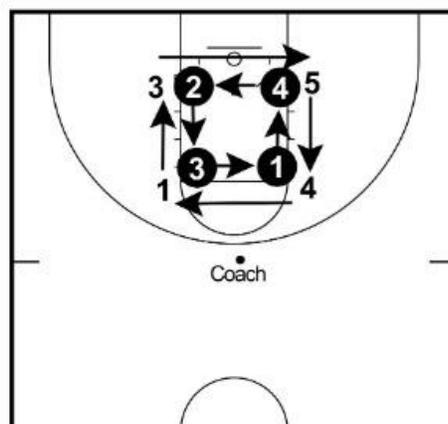
(Square as an example)

- 4 players on offense. 2 on the low blocks and 2 on the elbows.
- 4 defenders on the inside of each of the offensive players.
- The rest of the players behind the baseline.
- Coach on the free-throw line with a basketball.



Instructions:

1. The coach begins the drill by calling out 'start' or 'go' to the players.
2. The 3 defenders start rotating anti-clockwise around the key on the inside of the offensive players in a low stance.
3. The 3 offensive players start rotating clockwise around the key on the outside of the defensive players in a low stance.
4. After a short amount of time, the coach attempts a shot from the free-throw line. As soon as the shot is in the air the players react and battle to secure the rebound.



5. If the defenders get the rebound, the drill transitions up and down the floor in 4 on 4 with both teams playing both offense and defense.
6. If the offensive team gets the rebound, the play is live and they must attempt to score at the same end of the floor.

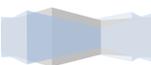
Variations:

3-on-3 or 4-on-4 –The drill can be run with teams of either 3 or 4 players. If there are teams of 3, the starting formation is a triangle. If there are teams of 4, the starting formation is a square.

No Transition - It's not compulsory to transition up and back off the rebound. You can simply use this as a rebounding drill and then set up again.

Coaching Points:

- It's incredibly important that the defenders are talking to each other throughout the rotations at the start of the drill. They must know who's going to box out who on a shot attempt.
- The defenders should be making contact and not allowing the offensive players to move closer to the rim after the shot.
- On a defensive rebound, the team with the basketball should be looking to push the basketball quickly down the floor before the defense sets up.
- Players must be going up with two hands for every rebound.
- A player must quickly get into outlet position after a rebound so that the transition from defense to offense can be done quickly.



Golden Egg

How the Drill Works:

4 pairs of players are spread out around the free-throw circle or center circle. One of the players is on offense and one on defense. There is a basketball in the middle of the circle. On the coach's call, the defenders have to keep the offensive players away from the basketball using boxing out technique.

Purpose:

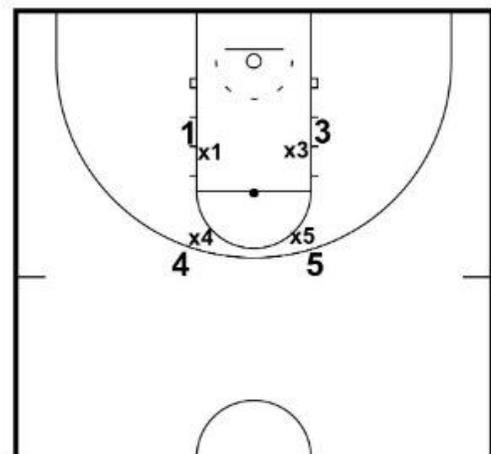
This is a great drill for teaching players the basics of how to box out and also encouraging them to be physical with their box outs.

Setup:

- Players get into pairs of similar position. One on offense and one on defense.
- The defenders are positioned around the circle with the offensive player in front of them.
- A basketball is in the middle of the circle.

Instructions:

1. On the coach's call, without pushing and fouling, the offensive players attempt to get inside the circle and secure the basketball.
2. The defenders must make contact with the offensive players, get in box out position, and then do their best to keep the offensive players out of the circle.
3. The goal is for the defensive team to keep the offense away from the basketball for 5 seconds.
4. The pairs then switch position every 3 - 5 turns.



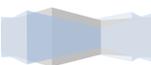
Variations:

Different Number of Players - You can use this drill from 1-on-1 to 5-on-5. After 5 pairs, there's simply too many offensive players for the drill to be effective.

More Groups - If you have more than 10 players, split up into two separate games instead of making players wait for their turn. Keep everyone involved.

Coaching Points:

- Before using the drill make sure to go over correct box out technique with your players. They should start by facing the defender, then when the defender picks a side to attack, they make contact with them (bump them), and then pivot around into the box out.
- When boxing out, ensure the defenders are getting their backsides into the offensive player and keeping their arms out wide to take up more space.
- Balance is very important for the defenders. Make sure they're low and wide, taking up a lot of space. The lower they are, the more strength they'll have to hold off the offensive player.
- The defender must keep constant contact with the offensive player throughout the drill. If they lose contact, the offensive player can easily slip around and grab the basketball.



Road Runner 2.0

How the Drill Works:

This drill is a more competitive and advanced version of Road Runner. In this drill, two players compete to rebound a basketball inside the key and then score. Which ever player scores the basketball outlets to a wing player. The wing player must then dribble down the court and make a layup, midrange shot, and three-point shot before returning to the end of the line.

Purpose:

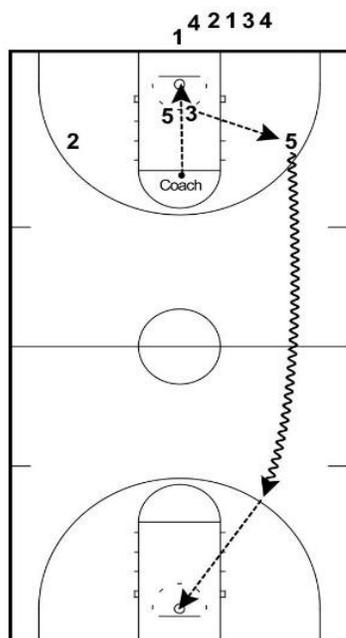
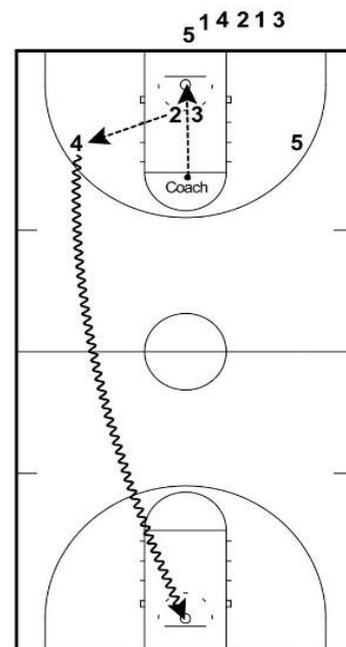
This is a great multi-purpose drill to work on a variety of skills with a focus on rebounding and toughness inside the key. Players will practice rebounding, scoring under pressure, and making shots from a variety of distances.

Setup:

- 2 players are positioned under the basket.
- 1 player on each wing as an outlet player.
- The rest of the players behind the baseline.
- Coach has a basketball on the free-throw line.

Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the coach shooting the basketball and the two players inside battling for position and then rebounding the basketball.
2. Instead of immediately passing out, the two players inside must compete until a score is made by one of the players.
3. The player that scores the basketball rebounds their own shot and then outlets to one of the players waiting on the wing. Then replace them on the wing.
4. The player who receives the pass must dribble the length of the floor and make a layup, midrange shot, and a three-point shot as quickly as possible before returning to the end of the line on the baseline.



5. Immediately after the outlet pass has been made the next player in line comes in and competes with the player that lost on the previous possession.
6. The drill runs like this continuously for a set amount of time.

Variations:

No Scoring Inside - Instead of the players battling inside for the score, you can make it so that the rebounder immediately outlets to the wing player.

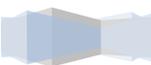
Three Players - Instead of only having two players rebound inside, introduce an extra player.

Different Shots - On the opposite end of the floor, you can vary what shots the players have to make instead of a layup, midrange, and three-pointer.

Dribbling Course - Set up a short dribbling course using cones that players must complete and they dribble to the opposite end of the floor.

Coaching Points:

- Don't allow anything dangerous, but allow players to battle hard on the inside. There should be no intentional fouling, but let the little stuff go.
- The rebounders should be getting low and wide when they're establishing rebounding position. Encourage them to make contact and create a large rebounding area.
- Players must be going up strong with two hands, chinning the basketball, and landing with a strong and wide base before throwing the outlet pass.
- The receiver must speed dribble down the court. Don't allow them to jog. 100% effort.



Weakside Rebounding

How The Drill Works:

Two offensive players located on the wing and corner. Two defenders in weakside positions near split-line. Coach has a basketball on the opposite wing. The coach shoots the basketball and the two defenders must box out the offensive players and secure the offensive rebound.

Purpose:

This is a great drill to get players used to boxing out from a help position. Many players have a habit of not worrying about boxing out when they're already in help. This drill focuses on the players finding their players and making contact when the coach goes up for a shot.

Setup:

- Offensive players are positioned on the wing and corner.
- Defensive players (x1 and x2) are positioned in the correct help positions.
- The rest of the players form two lines. One behind each offensive player.
- Coach has a basketball.



Instructions:

1. The coach begins the drill by shooting the basketball while the defenders are in correct help positions.
2. The offensive players (1 and 2) both crash the boards looking to secure an offensive rebound.
3. The defensive players (x1 and x2) must leave their help position, find and make contact with the offensive player they're guarding, and then pursue the defensive rebound.



4. If the defense secures the rebound, they are rewarded by staying on defense while the offensive players rotate out and a new two players come in to offense.
5. If the offensive team secures the rebound, they switch to defense for the next repetition and the current defensive players rotate out to the end of the line and a new set of offensive players come in.

Scoring System:

The drill is scored individually on how many defensive rebounds you can get.

Any time a player secures an offensive rebound, both defensive players receive a point.

There are no points awarded for an offensive rebound.

At the end of the drill, whichever player has the most points wins!

Coaching Points:

- There is no out-of-bounds in this drill. Players must pursue the basketball until one of the teams secures it.
- Start your defenders in the help positions that you emphasise with your defense. Some have the players helping from split-line and others start them on the edge of the key.
- Players must alternate lines so they get repetitions from both the wing and the corner.
- Defenders must seek contact and be the first one to initiate contact on the box out.
- Make sure your defenders stay low and can always see their man and the coach who has the basketball.
- Remind your players the importance of boxing out in this position. Frequently, a rebound is made on the opposite side of where the shot came from.



8 Reasons Why You MUST Use Small-Sided Games

 basketballforcoaches.com/reasons-small-sided-games/



Small-sided games are awesome. I love them and use them in every youth basketball practice I run. I think you should too.

In my blog post on [creating a youth basketball practice](#), I emphasised the importance of small-sided games in youth sports. This being a new concept to some coaches, I received a few emails asking why exactly are they're so important or wanting more information on the subject.

Most of the questions I received basically summed up into this question...

"Why are small-sided games so important? If the players play 5 on 5 in a game, wouldn't it be silly for them to practice with fewer players?"

Understandable question and I can definitely see why some coaches may question the concept of small-sided games for quicker and easier development of our players.

To answer this question I decided to create this blog post of the 8 reasons you MUST use small-sided games in every practice.

But first...

What Are Small-Sided Games?

For those who haven't read into them, small-sided games (SSG's) are simply games with fewer players. For us coaches of basketball, that means basketball games with fewer players than the traditional 5 on 5.

This can mean games of 3 on 3 (my personal favorite), 2 on 2, 4 on 3, etc. All the different combinations are effective in their own unique way.

Now that that's out of the way, let's move onto the 8 reasons...

1. More Touches

Fewer players on the court means each player will receive more touches of the basketball...

The more touches each player gets the more opportunity they have to make decisions and work on their skills in a competitive situation...

The more opportunity a player has to make decisions and work on their skills in a competitive situation the quicker they improve at making the smart basketball play...

Basically, the more touches the better!

2. Easier Decision Making

Players will make better decisions when there are fewer players on the court as there are less options to consider.

Can we really expect an 6-year-old kid to consistently make a smart pass in a game of 5 on 5? Already lacking skill and basketball experience, we bombard them with four offensive players they can pass to, not to mention the five defenders they also have to worry about.

When dealing with young players, we want to start off with only a few options (3 on 3) and then build up from there when they begin to get a feel and understanding for the game.

3. More Opportunities to Score

What kid doesn't love to score a goal? Or at least the opportunity to score a goal for their team?

We all see how often little kids sprint up to their parents after the game with a massive smile on their face and enthusiastically tells them how many goals they scored that game. Does it mean they're bad teammates because they're worrying too much about scoring? No. They're young. That stuff will come later.

At a youth basketball age we just want them to love the game!



4. Increased Space

An increase in space allows players to get off shots and try different moves without immediately running into a wall of players.

As we've all seen countless times, young players are drawn to the basketball like a magnet leaving very little room for the player with the ball to be under control and practice anything.

Extra space on the court allows players to be creative and practice their skills because there's less congestion.

5. Involves All Players

It's easy for young players to hide in a game of 5 on 5. It's not so easy for them to hide in a game of 3 on 3 or 2 on 2.

All players have to contribute in SSG's.

Unfortunately, in a typical 5 on 5 game played at a youth level, usually only a couple of players will dominate. They'll control the ball most of the time and take by far the most shots (usually because of coaches that wants to win).

What does that mean for the players on the team that aren't as good? Rarely will they ever have a chance to bring the ball down the court or take a shot. They'll end up shying away from the game and standing in the corner. It won't be long before these players quit basketball forever.

This doesn't happen in 3 on 3. It gives all players an opportunity to develop and everyone has to be involved!

6. Breaks the Game Down into Chunks

To avoid confusion you have to break the game of basketball down into chunks when teaching it.

You can't introduce the pick and roll to players in a 5 on 5 game. There's too many options and other players when all you want the players to be focusing on is how to run the pick-and-roll.

SSG's allow you to teach small chunks of basketball without confusing your players. You can teach things like the pick and roll, screening away, how to back cut, how to v-cut, etc.

7. Eliminates Defensive Presses and Zones

Is there anything worse than a zone defense in youth basketball? If there is, I don't know about it.

In small-sided games you don't have to worry about zone defenses or beating a press.

I believe it's best for players to first learn how to play in the half court in a slowed down game where they have to make smart decisions before they start learning how to play a fast break style game forced on by full court pressure defense.

8. Teaches Players When to Use a Skill

If all coaches run at practice are drills that work on technique without any opposing player, then when the player faces competition, they won't know how to use the skill they were taught.

Technique drills are great for just that... technique, but players must learn when and how to use the skill in a competitive environment.

Small-sided games allow players to put the skill they learnt in technique and practice drills into competition and then learn from experience.

To reiterate what I said in the last article, we must put in positions that allow them to make decisions.

Conclusion

If you look closely at all 7 reasons, you'll notice an obvious reoccurring trend... Small-sided games make the game of basketball much more fun for our youth basketball players!

1. More Touches = More Fun
2. Make Easier Decisions = More Fun
3. More Scoring Opportunities = More Fun
4. Increased Space = More Fun
5. Involves All Players = More Fun
6. Breaks the Game down into Chunks = More Fun
7. Eliminates Presses and Zones = More Fun
8. Teaches Players When to Use a Skill = More Fun

Increased development and more fun at the same time? That sounds like a win/win situation to me!

8 Simple Tips to Earn Your Players' Trust

 basketballforcoaches.com/earn-players-trust/



Every basketball coach at a high level knows the importance of developing a great player/coach relationship with each player on a basketball team.

Some of the biggest names in basketball coaching have expressed this sentiment...

“In leadership, there are no words more important than trust” – Mike Krzyzewski

“Relationships with people are what it’s all about. You have to make players realize you care about them” – Gregg Popovich

Once trust is established between a coach and their players the benefits can’t be overstated...

- Players WILL work harder on the court for a coach that they trust.
- Players who trust their coach WILL buy into their system and, therefore, work better as a team when they’re on the basketball court.
- Players WILL attend more practices.
- Players WILL be happier at practices and games.
- Players WILL feel safer and more comfortable in the basketball environment.

All of these and many more reasons will lead to a happier and more fulfilling season for both the coach and the players.

So basically, as the coach, earning your team’s trust is super important!

And it’s important that you make it a priority as early as possible in the season.

All coaches may not agree, but I feel it's so important to establish that every year I swap a practice or two in the pre-season for a fun activity to bring the team closer together and assist myself in developing a relationship with each player.

Often the benefits from these activities away from the basketball court will far outweigh the benefits we'll receive from a single practice.

The only problem is that I'm making this sound too simple..

Here are the two most important things you must remember about trust...1. Trust is not easy to earn

1. Trust is not easy to earn

There's no super secret tip that I can tell you that will instantly award you the trust and loyalty of every single player on your team. Developing trust a process and it does take time.

In fact, it's even harder to establish in this day and age because players and coaches are jumping between teams more frequently. Not to mention due to the 'must win now' mindset so many people have, coaches are finding it more and more difficult to hold a single coaching position for a long period of time.

2. Trust must be developed with each individual player

The tricky thing about trust is that you can't develop trust between a coach and 'the team'. Every single player on the team does not miraculously start trusting you at the same.

You must individually establish trust with each player on your team and that can occur at different times throughout the season.

The Two Types of Trust you Must Earn

There are two types of trust you must earn from each player on your team...

1. Trust as a basketball coach.
2. Trust as a person.

The reason I separate the two is because trust is not black and white. It's possible to have trust in your coach as a person but not trust them as a basketball coach or vice versa.

I was fortunate enough to experience both types of coaches in my playing days and will forever appreciate what I learned from both of them...

I've played under a coach that I was 100% confident I could trust with anything. I knew they cared about me and would be there for me anytime I needed them, day or night, and they proved it on numerous occasions. But they weren't that experienced as a basketball coach and I didn't always trust or agree with their methods for improving players.

Another coach I had really knew his stuff. He played many years at a high level and had a high basketball IQ. He always knew the best way to stop an opponent and provide our team with the best opportunity to win basketball games. But unfortunately, this coach made no effort to connect with his players or get to know them. He wasn't a great communicator and often my teammates and I didn't enjoy going to practice because of this. The trust wasn't there as a person.

I'm sure a majority of coaches and players reading this have similar experiences with different coaches they had during their playing days.

It's important to strive to establish both types of trust but undoubtedly at a youth basketball level it is much more important to gain the trust of your players as a person.

Here are a few tips on how to do that...



1. Get to Know Your Players Off the Court

To truly gain the trust of your players you should speak to them about non-basketball related topics.

The simple act of showing an interest in their life outside of basketball shows the player that you genuinely care about them as people and don't just think of them as chess pieces on the basketball court.

You can talk to your players about other sports they play (you do allow this, don't you?), ask how their day's going, ask them about school, talk to them about their favorite sports teams, if you know they had an event on you can ask them about it. There are countless topics if you give it a little thought.

Obviously, you don't want to be asking these questions during practice so take advantage of the hours upon hours of time you spend with the team before and after you step on the court. This includes bus and car trips, before and after practices while they're changing into their basketball shoes, when you run into them at the gym, anywhere.

Another great time to develop a relationship with your players is by scheduling team activities not related to basketball like going to the movies or trying a new sport. As well as developing chemistry between the players, you'll also develop chemistry and trust between the players and the coach.

2. Keep Your Word – Always

This is non-negotiable if you expect trust to be developed between a coach and their players.

Never lie to them.

If you benched a player for a majority of a game and then promise them you'll start them the next game, you had better start them the next game.

If you tell your team this is the last sprint they have to do and then practice is over, that better be the last sprint they have to do.

While they might only be small lies, they can quickly add up and become significant to the players.

Your team must know that when you say something you're going to follow through on it.

3. Smile and be Polite

This is especially true when coaching youth basketball.

Children can be easily intimidated by adults. We have to go out of our way to make them feel comfortable and safe with us.

A simple please, thank you, and a smile can go a long way to gaining the trust and respect of your players.

Do remember that you can't be afraid to be stern with players during practice or during games as sometimes the situation requires it if your players are mucking around and not concentrating, but do your best outside of practice to smile and be polite all of the time.

The trust you earn from doing so off the court will prove to the players that when the game is on and you're stern with them that you still care about them and have their back.

4. Get to Know Their Parents

No one has a bigger influence on the thoughts of a player than their parents.

As much as I hate to say it, if parents don't like or don't trust you, more often than not they're going to say negative things about you and that can play a big role in the opinion their child forms of you.

On the other hand, if you get to know their parents and develop a positive relationship with them, there's a good chance they'll defend your decisions and speak highly of you.

A few great ways to get to know the parents of your players are similar to the ways you should be developing relationships with players...

These include chatting before and after practices and organizing non-basketball related activities, just to name a few.

5. Be an Organized Coach

It's no secret that we're all wired to trust organized people.

These are the types of people that when they say they're going to be somewhere, they're always there on time. When they say they're going to bring something, you never need to remind them.

I love and trust people like that.

Players are the same.

If you arrive at practice without a plan and the players can tell you're making up the practice on the fly and aren't sure what you're doing, then the players might lose a little trust in you as a coach.

Being organized shows that you're reliable and trustworthy.

6. Be There For Your Players

“Don't be afraid to let your players know how much you care about them” – Thad Matta

As all coaches know, when you're coaching a basketball team you often become more than just a 'coach'. You're a role model and someone that the players will often see as a second parent.

This is an important responsibility and not one that should be taken lightly.

If a player is looking upset when they arrive at practice, don't be afraid to take them to the side and ask them if they're okay. Remind them that you're there for them if they ever need anyone to talk to.

The players will appreciate your support. Sometimes all a person needs is the knowledge that someone's there for them if they need it.

7. Gain More Credibility

Once you start coaching older and more experienced players, there's a certain amount of credibility at the level you're coaching that you'll need to prove before the players will begin to trust your ability to coach at that level.

This is much less important in youth basketball, but will become more and more important as you start coaching at a higher level.

Players and parents will start to ask questions like...

“Do you have a winning coaching history?”

“Do you make good adjustments during games?”

“Do others speak highly of your coaching ability?”

So, how do you improve your credibility as a coach?

Apart from winning more games, you should be constantly striving to improve yourself as a basketball coach.

In [this post](#) I show you 13 different ways to improve including tips such as attending as many clinics and coaching courses as you can, attending the practices of more experienced teams, and more.

8. Touch Develops Trust

“Touch every player every day. In practice, at meetings. Touch develops trust between the coach and the player” – George Karl

Unfortunately, I forget where I first read this quote from George Karl, I do remember the impact it had on my thoughts from the moment I read it.

Admittedly, I hesitated to include this tip in the article. In this day and age it’s controversial whether even high-fiving a player as they come out of the game is appropriate or not.

I’ve included this tip last because I want **YOU** to give me your feedback on George Karl’s quote.

I agree with the premise of his quote, but I think it becomes difficult when you start taking into account all the variables...

All players are different and will have a different comfort level with it, the gender of the players and the gender of the coach, whether the parents have a problem with it, etc.

In my opinion, trust can be developed from touch in situations like patting a player on the back as you’re walking past to say hello, putting your hand on a players shoulder as you lead them somewhere on the court while explaining a drill, high-fiving players after practice or a game, etc.

8 Ways to Connect with Other Coaches

 basketballforcoaches.com/connect-with-coaches/

Relationships are everything as a coach.

Connecting with other coaches is a great way to learn new things and open up new opportunities that you might never have known existed.

I've realised the benefit of having a close-knit group of fellow coaches that are there to talk to and bounce ideas off, because let's face it, we all have our friends and family, but none can relate to the ups and downs of a season like another coach.

The only problem is finding other coaches to connect with isn't always easy to do.

Too often people view other coaches as 'the enemy'. They don't want to connect with coaches they're going to be playing against. "What if they steal my secrets!?". I disagree.

Some of the coaches I've went into battle against are the same coaches I've met up with on weekends to discuss ideas. You can learn something new from everyone.

The first step is to find out where other coaches are hanging out and become part of that conversation. Get your name on the map.

Here are 10 places you can begin connecting with other coaches...

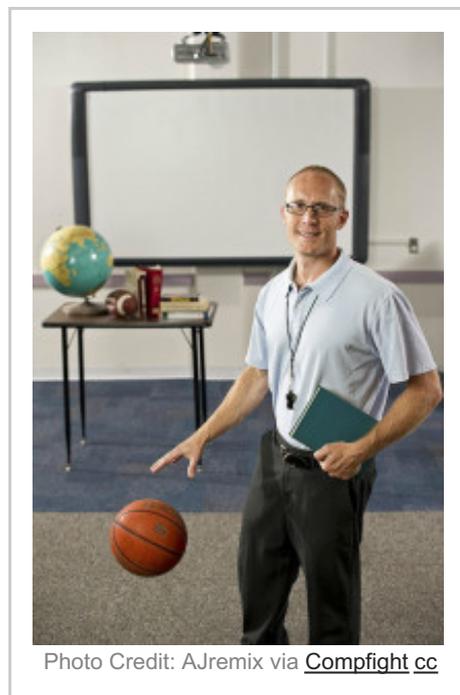
1. Volunteer at Basketball Clinics

Volunteering is where it all begins for most coaches. Attend as many clinics and camps as possible. This is a fantastic opportunity to connect with as many other coaches as you can. Most of them will be in the same situation as you!

2. Attend Coaching Clinics

Though I haven't been able attend many of these clinics, I've heard countless stories of the contacts people have made by attending them. Coaches go there specifically to meet other coaches and learn. Make sure you take some business cards to hand out to people in case they want to contact you in the future.

3. Leave a Comment on their Blog



There are a ton of basketball coaches with blogs online. Reading them is what inspired me to begin my own blog a couple of years ago.

Not only is reading blogs a great way to learn more about coaching basketball, it also provides you with opportunity to connect with some of the most influential coaches in the profession.

But don't just leave any old crappy comment, contribute to the conversation or ask a follow-up question on the post. Most will respond. I always do.

A few blogs you might want to look at:

Coach Mike Dunlap – <http://www.coachdunlap.com/blog>

Coach Jeff Haefner – <http://jeffhaefner.com/coach/>

Coach Kevin Sivils – <http://www.kcsbasketball.com/blog/>

4. Create your own Blog

Let's flip things on their head for a minute and reverse the situation. You want to connect with other coaches... well why not have them come to you instead of you chasing them?

Creating a blog isn't hard and it's a great way to share information that could benefit other coaches.

Just from starting this blog I receive numerous e-mails every week from fellow coaches asking questions and basically just wanting to connect. That's one of my favourite things about running a blog!

5. Send them an E-mail

When sending an e-mail be sure to remember that some blogs receive hundreds of e-mails per day. They might not be able to get back to you, and this definitely doesn't mean they don't want to, but not all coaches will have the time.

My best advice is to keep the e-mail relatively short. Let them know that you appreciate the content they're sending out and maybe ask a quick question or two.

6. Master Social Networking

There are a lot of coaches on social media. There are many different reasons for this – scouting potential players (character stands out on social media), monitoring the social media of current players – but the point is... a lot of coaches that use it. And you should too!

Share their posts, reply to their tweets, like their photos. These things only take a couple of seconds to do but will always be appreciated.

I've made contact with hundreds of coaches through my [Twitter](#) and [FaceBook page](#) and some of them are people I now call friends and we contact each other often to discuss different topics.

7. Submit a Guest Post

By contributing a guest post to blogs that you're interested in can lead to forming new relationships with the readers of the article and the owner of the blog.

I know a lot of basketball coaches that blog that simply can't find the time to keep their website updated as often as they'd like to (myself included). By requesting to submit a blog post you'll not only have the satisfaction of helping others by sharing your knowledge, you can be sure the owner of the blog will appreciate it too.

Most blogs will allow you to link back to your website or social networking sites so that readers of the article can follow the links and connect with you.

8. Join a Forum

There are a few great forums on basketball coaching. I haven't really had a chance to contribute much to any of them, but I hope to one day soon. If you ever have a question you need answered, there are a ton of great basketball minds on these forums.

A couple that stand out in my mind are:

1. <http://coachingbball.proboards.com/>
2. <http://www.basketballcoach.com/coaching/>

Start Connecting – Now!

For no other reason than there's simply no point in waiting any longer. The sooner you start developing relationships, the sooner opportunities you've never even thought could be possibilities will begin to appear.

9 Secrets to Dominating as an Undersized Post Player

 basketballforcoaches.com/undersized-post-player/



Post players come in all shapes and sizes. You don't have to be taller than 7 foot 2 and weigh more than 300 pounds to dominate opponents in the post. You don't have to be built like Shaq or have the height of Yao Ming to own the paint (don't get me wrong... it definitely helps).

There have been many great undersized post players in history including Elvin Hayes (6 ft 9 in), Karl Malone (6 ft 9 in), Charles Barkley (6 ft 6 in), Dennis Rodamn (6 ft 7 in), and many, many more.

I'm about to share with you nine secrets that I believe made the players listed above great post-players despite their lack of size that your players can implement into their own games.

1. Be Willing to Go to Battle

There's no better secret to start us off than 'be willing to go to battle'. It's a war zone in the paint when you're an undersized post player. There will be elbows thrown, knees colliding, pushing and shoving; it's going to get physical.

You're going to have to fight on every play with everything you've got! There's no other way.

Playing in the paint while undersized is just as much mental as it is physical. You have to come prepared physically and mentally every time you step onto the court.

2. Read the Basketball's Flight Path

You must get proficient at guessing where the ball is going to bounce off a missed shot. Of course you're not going to get it right every time, but the more you focus on this the better you'll become at it.

Reading the flight path isn't a skill you can pick up overnight. It takes a lot of focused attention and many, many thousands of shots of practice. But there's no better time to start paying attention to it than right now. Whenever you're rebounding, practice guessing which direction the ball is going to bounce.

Even if you know where the ball will bounce, it's still hard as an undersized big to secure the rebound unless they follow the next secret about body positioning...

3. Use Your Body to Create Space

One of the few benefits of being an undersized post player is that you have a lower center of gravity. You win the battle of getting your hips lower than your opponents hips.

After using secret number two and reading the flight path of the basketball, you must use your body and strength as leverage against your opponent to keep them away from where you think the ball is going to land to give yourself the best chance at it. It's all about increasing your chances at securing the rebound.

Keep in mind that the earlier you get a body on your opponent, the more space you'll create to get yourself a rebound... so box out early!

4. Have an Incredible Motor

I never thought I'd be quoting Nate Robinson in a blog post on post players, but this quote couldn't suit undersized post players any better...

| I'd rather have heart than height – Nate Robinson

- You have to make it up and down the floor quicker than your opponent does.
- You have to relentlessly pursue every rebound that comes near you.
- You have to dive on every loose ball.
- You have to be consistently talking on defense.
- You have to box out early.
- And many more!

What you lack in size you have to make up for in heart, desire, and hustle.

5. Out-think your Opponent

You must play smarter than your opponent and think your way through the game.

If you have the luck of having seen your opponent play before or, if you play against them on a regular basis, think about what advantages you have over your opponent.

- Can you step outside and knock down the jump shot?
- Do they have a tendency to foul?

- Are they slow on their feet?

Determine in what areas of the game YOU have the advantage and strive to put yourself in that position as much as possible throughout the game.

6. Master the Jump Shot

If you're too small to beat them inside then it's time to step outside for a few easy points (as long as your team offense allows it).

When you're playing on a big man that loves to clog up the paint, step outside and stretch the floor as long as you have a reliable jump shot.

This is a huge benefit for your team. If you make a couple of easy jump shots your opponent has to start respecting your jump shot and come out and play you. Now the paint is opened up for your teammates to get to the ring for a few easy scores.

7. Get Crafty with Your Post Moves

When it comes to post moves it's not only power that can get you points down low. Being crafty, skilled, and smart, can work just as well.

To score in the post as an undersized post player you must have great footwork and you must have counters to every move. The best post players will sometimes use 3 or 4 moves in the post before they get their defender off-balance enough to allow them an easy score.

I recommend every post player learns the jump hook with either hand, and then which moves to master from there is up to you.

8. Keep Your Body at Peak Performance

As an undersized big you need to get up and down the court quicker than your opponent to establish position. This means staying in shape. You must be well conditioned, eating properly, and getting good rest.

We all know big men aren't usually well conditioned so if you can force them to work hard and stay with you you'll be playing against a fatigued opponent making it easier for you to push them out of the way. If they can't keep up you'll get easy shots at the rim in transition.

9. Count the Rotations of the Basketball

Here's an awesome story about Dennis Rodamn, one of the greatest rebounders of all time, that was told by Isiah Thomas...

“We were standing in the lay-up line, warming up and shooting, and Rodman was standing back and watching everybody shoot. I said, ‘Hey, come on, you have to participate; everybody’s shooting lay-ups, you have to shoot lay-ups, too.’ And he said, ‘I’m just watching the rotations on the basketball.’ I said, ‘Excuse me?’ He said, ‘Like, when you shoot, your ball spins three times in the air. Joe’s sometimes has 3 1/2 or four times.’

“That’s how far Rodman had taken rebounding, to a totally different level, like off the charts. He knew the rotation of every person that shot on our team — if it spins sideways, where it would bounce, how often it would bounce left or right. He had rebounding down to a science, and I never heard anyone think or talk about rebounding and defense the way he could break it down.

“When you talk about basketball IQ, I’d put Rodman at a genius level.”

Conclusion

The main thing I want everyone to take from this article is that undersized post players must take advantage of their strengths. Players should take a step back and self-evaluate their game and determine where and how they can be most effective on the basketball court.

A quick recap...

- 1. Be willing to go to battle.**
- 2. Read the basketball’s flight path.**
- 3. Use your body to create space.**
- 4. Have an incredible motor.**
- 5. Out-think your opponent.**
- 6. Master the jump shot.**
- 7. Get crafty with your post moves.**
- 8. Keep your body at peak performance.**
- 9. Count the rotations of the basketball.**

As a post player, the smaller you are, the more you have to make up for it in heart and smarts. Use these 9 secrets to start dominating opponents as an undersized post player!

PS. All of these apply to tall post-players as well, but don’t tell them 😊

– Coach Mac

10 Basketball Cuts Every Coach Must Know

 basketballforcoaches.com/cutting/

Proper cutting movements are one of the most under-taught skills in our youth programs.

A lot of the time coaches don't worry about teaching proper cutting to their players, they say it will 'come naturally' with time. Well I'm here to tell you it won't. At least not proper cutting. Cutting that will get your players open when ever they wish during a game.

Players need to learn how to get open on their own. They're not always going to be able to use a screen to get them open for a pass. Sometimes they're going to have to do it in isolation. That's what we as coaches need to teach them how to do.

Players like Reggie Miller and Ray Allen can score 30 points a game without taking a single dribble just because they've mastered the art of reading the defense and then using the appropriate cut to get them open for the pass.

In this article I'm going to describe and show you the 10 most common cuts in basketball.

1. Backdoor Cut

The backdoor cut is used when the defender is over-playing in the passing lane denying the pass. Depending on your offence, this will leave a big hole to cut into between. If you are being denied the pass you will be able to backdoor cut.

The biggest problem with backdoor cuts is that it requires great passing skills by the person with the ball to result in an easy lay-up. This is why it is not a common pass in youth basketball. The lack of passing skills results in many turnovers.

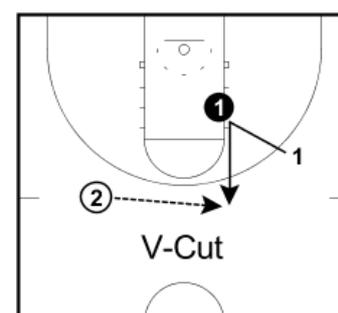
For the backdoor cut to be most effective your players must set their defender up and have a quick change-of-direction and explode towards the basket.



2. V-Cut

V-cuts are the most common type of cut and are mostly used when on the perimeter in isolation when you need to get open for a pass.

V-cutting requires body-to-body contact by players. They are executed by walking the defender a couple of feet inside the 3-point line, planting your foot, and then exploding out to receive the ball.



It works because the defense's reaction time won't be quick enough to stop the player from receiving the pass.

3. L-Cut

L-cuts are a great way to get open on the perimeter when starting on the block.

This cut doesn't require the offensive player to be quick, rather this cut will be most effective if good footwork is used and good use of the body.

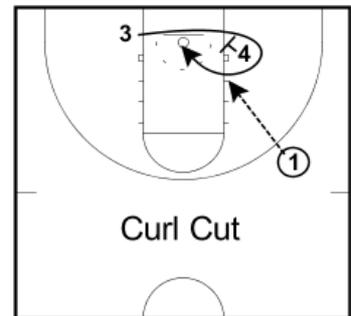
Take the defender up to the elbow, get your top foot over theirs, give a small nudge to create space, and lead directly out to the wing while calling for the ball.



4. Curl Cut

The curl cut is executing a curl around a screen.

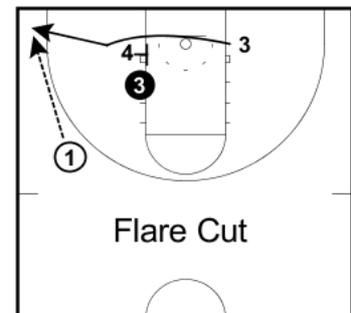
This cut relies on the offensive player reading his defender. If the defense follows around the screen, then a curl cut is the best option to receive an open lay-up. But if the defense cheats on the screen and goes over it, then the best cut would be the next one on the list, the flare cut.



5. Flare Cut

The curl cut and flare cut go hand-in-hand.

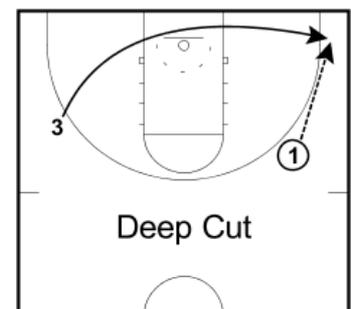
When the defender cheats on a curl and tries to cut it off, players should flare out to the corner.



6. Deep Cut

A deep cut involves the player on one side of the floor to cut baseline behind everyone and to the other side.

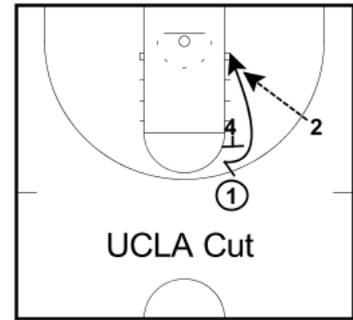
This cut is used a lot against zone defenses because often the defense doesn't see the player cutting if they're pre-occupied with the ball and other players.



7. UCLA Cut

The UCLA cut got its name because it was popularized by UCLA legendary coach John Wooden.

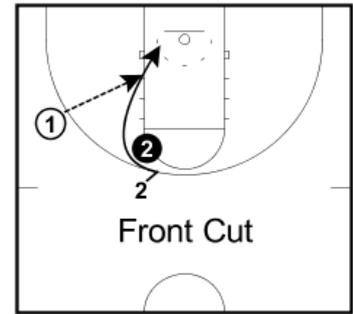
It involves a player at the top of the key making a pass to a perimeter player and then cutting directly to the block off a high post screen. If performed properly, this cut often leads to an open lay-up for the cutter.



8. Front Cut

The front cut involves getting on the ball-side of your opponent.

Usually this is executed by performing a jab step or a small cut behind the defense to get them to move back. Once they do, you cut in front of them closest to the ball.



9. Shallow Cut

A shallow cut is used when you're exchanging positions with the person dribbling the ball. This means going underneath them and keeping your defender occupied while they fill the spot that you were in.

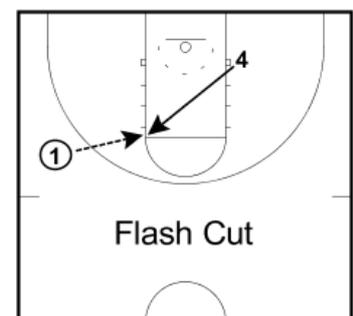


10. Flash Cut

A flash cut is a quick, explosive cut made by a post player to the high post.

If you found this post useful, please do me a favor and share it!

– Coach Mac



12 Simple Tactics to Get More Playing Time

 basketballforcoaches.com/how-to-get-more-playing-time/



The most common question I get from players is without question “*How do I get more playing time?*”.

A fair question. Every player wants more minutes on the court and most of them can probably justify why they deserve it.

Coaches understand that it’s tough being a player that gets limited court time. For most, basketball is their favorite thing to do. Most players play during school breaks, after school, before school, anytime they get a chance.

Throughout a game there are limited minutes to divide up and some teams get so large they end up having 7 players on the bench. This doesn’t make a coaches life easy to distribute minutes among players.

So players end up having to compete amongst their teammates for court time. This article is going to share with you 12 tactics you can use to increase the amount of court time you receive each game.

But before we get into the list of tactics, there are 3 rules you must keep in mind and follow when seeking more playing time...

Rule #1 – Stop the Excuses

Excuses and complaining aren’t going to get you more time on the court even if they’re justified.

You must focus your energy on the things that are in your control.

These things in your control include: your attitude, the amount of shots you make every

day, your fitness level, etc.

Rule #2 – Be Patient

You must understand that earning more playing time is not something that's going to happen overnight.

You can't implement a few of the tips I'm about to share with you and expect that you're instantly going to get an extra 10 minutes a game on the court.

It will take time. You need to keep working hard, working smart, and focusing on the tips below.

If you do this your opportunity will come.

Rule #3 – Always Put the Team First

Even though this article is focusing on increasing individual playing time, when it truly comes down to it you must always want what's best for the team.

The team is always the number one priority.

Even if you believe you're unfairly stuck on the end of the bench you should always be cheering and encouraging your teammates during games.

You should always be the first to rush over and help a teammate up after they've taken a charge, always make the extra pass and pass up a good shot for yourself for a great shot by a teammate. Make your teammates better.

Don't be a player that cares more about their individual stats than the success of the team.

Here are the 12 simple tactics to get more playing time...

1. Attend Every Practice

Attending every practice is the first step to prove to the coach that you're committed to the team and you're serious about improving your abilities as a basketball player.

If you start to miss a few practices here and there without a valid explanation, not only will the coach notice, but your game will show it too.

All great coaches have a practice outline that progresses throughout the season. If you miss a couple of practices in a row you might find you've missed out on learning crucial plays or offensive/defensive concepts which can put you at a severe disadvantage compared to your teammates that attended.

If something unavoidable comes up that forces you to miss practice, make sure you call your coach as soon as you can and let them know that you won't be able to attend.

2. Talk to the Coach

A common mistake players make is sitting back and assuming they know why they're not receiving much playing time. Don't take the risk that you're wrong.

Set up a meeting with the coach or ask them for a few minutes of their time before or after practice or whenever it's most convenient for them.

This can be a tough conversation to have depending on the attitude of the coach of your team and their opinion about playing time.

In my opinion, coaches should **always** be open to discussing playing time with their players and parents of their players as long as it's done appropriately. There are some coaches out there that flat out refuse to have discussions about playing time and I think it's a complete disservice to their players.

But do remember, when having this conversation, players and parents must be willing to accept what they might not like to hear.

“My door is always open to talk about playing time. If you want to talk about playing time, be prepared for the truth” – Brad Stevens

During the conversation you **must** make sure that the questions you ask aren't coming across as aggressive or being asked with a poor attitude. Don't speak with an angry tone and remember that your body language says just as much as your words do.

Here are a couple of questions you could ask:

1. What can I do to help the team?
2. What areas of my game do I need to improve on?
3. What's holding me back from getting more minutes on the court?
4. What do you think my strengths are as a player?

The worst thing you could do is argue with the answers you receive. Take the answers on board even if you disagree with them. Don't make an example of this quote by Larry Brown...

“Kids today don't know the difference between instruction and criticism” – Larry Brown

Asking these questions will prove to the coach that you do want to help the team and are committed to improving your game also.

3. Know Your Game

Coaches love players that know their strengths and weaknesses and adjust their game accordingly.

If you're a post-up big man, halfway through the fourth quarter of a close game is not the time for you to work on your outside shooting. During practice and individual workouts is when you should be improving your weaknesses.

The main skill that relates to knowing your game is shooting and your shot selection. Where can you make shots consistently from on the floor?

If you find yourself constantly shooting from spots you aren't comfortable from, it won't be long until you'll be sitting extended minutes on the bench.

To further prove the point, this is why some big men who can't make a shot outside of the paint to save themselves often lead the league in shooting percentage. The only time they shoot is when they've got a layup or a dunk. They understand that they can't shoot from outside so they don't do it.

Once you've worked hard enough in practice to develop your shooting and can consistently make a shot from a certain range, only then should you be taking that shot in a game situation.

4. Be Willing to do the Dirty Work

This quote from Brad Stevens is the reason why coaches love players that are willing to do the dirty work...

The difference between a good defensive team and a bad defensive team is as little as 3 possessions – Brad Stevens

Games are constantly won and lost by only a couple of possessions.

If you're a player that is willing to make the tough plays like the ones on the following list, your coach will want you on the court...

- Dive on loose balls
- Crash the offensive boards.
- Take a charge.
- Sprint on every play.
- Get deflections.

A player who makes tough plays like these can get a team an extra couple of possessions every game.

If games are constantly decided on only a couple of possessions, what coach wouldn't give a player like that extra minutes every game?

5. Always Look Interested

Do you look like you want to be part of the team when the coach is explaining something at practice?

Do you look interested in the basketball game when you're on the bench? Or are you slouched back in your chair with your mind wandering somewhere else?

Sure you can look around the gym and while the coach is talking and clearly hear everything they're saying, but do they know you're listening?

Show the coach you're listening by keeping eye contact whenever they're talking.

Look engaged. Don't give the coach a reason to believe you're not listening.

Coaches love players that are coachable and willing to learn. That all starts with eye contact when the coach is talking.

6. Stay Ready

If you're working really hard on your game then the opportunity to contribute will come at some point. When it happens you must be ready to make the most of your opportunity. Prove to the coach that you're deserving of extra minutes on the court.

Don't sit on the sidelines when you should be warming up because you know you'll only play a couple of minutes. Prepare for them to give your best effort when you're on the floor.

While the game is on make sure you stay intuned in the game from the bench. Work out what the opposition is doing and how you can best play against them given your strengths and weaknesses.

7. Work Really, Really Hard

Is there a better way to earn more playing time than becoming a better basketball player than the teammates you're competing against?

Understand that it's difficult to increase your time on the court without improving your ability to contribute while you're on the court.

This means you can't work out half-heartedly... if you want extra minutes on the court you're going to have to work really, really hard on your game.

The biggest problem you'll face is lack of motivation due to your lack of playing minutes. Players have to stay confident that the hard work they put in will pay off and their time will come.

Get to practice early and stay back late. Don't just muck around in that time, really focus and work on improving. Take game shots from game spots and game speed, work on your dribbling skills, anything that's going to improve you as a player.

Tip: Coaches DO notice who's getting to practice early and staying back to get in some extra reps.

Talk to your coach and find out what they think your weaknesses are and how you should best go about improving them.

If you're a poor shooter, put time into your shooting with [these shooting workouts](#). If your ball-handling should be improved, check out [these dribbling drills](#).

Give 100% throughout every single practice and the same goes for when you're working out individually. Prove to the coach with your work ethic that you're deserving of more minutes on the court.

8. Don't Give the Coach a Reason to Not Like You

Just like everyone else, coaches do hold grudges and play favorites whether they like to admit it or not. Some coaches more than others.

Sure it probably won't be obvious on the surface, but you can guarantee the coach is always playing favorites in the back of their mind.

This can be for a number of things, such as:

- Not liking the way you talk to your parents.
- Messing around at training.
- Not listening to instructions.
- Bullying other players on the team.
- Not contacting them when you won't be at practice.
- Answering back to the coach.

If the coach then faced with the option of subbing in the kid they like or the kid they don't like, who do you think they're going to choose?

It's harsh but it's true. Don't give the coach a reason to hold a grudge against you.

9. Improve Your Level of Fitness

I've seen plenty of good players that have their minutes reduced simply because they didn't have the level of fitness required to stay on the court for an extended period of time while continuing to be productive.

The great John Wooden said these two great quotes about conditioning...

“The better conditioned team will probably win in the long run” – John Wooden

and

“When the legs go... the heart soon follows” – John Wooden

The same goes for individual players.

A well conditioned player that is able to go 100% mentally and physically will received more minutes than a less conditioned player of the same ability.

When players are tired they commit silly fouls, don't box out, don't sprint back on defense, take bad shots, and other similar things that will put their team at a disadvantage to win the game.

Coaches don't want tired players on the court.

Some ways you can improve your fitness are through your diet, improving your sleeping habits, jumping rope, and running sprints.

10. Listen to the Coach

Sounds simple enough, but many players fail to do it.

In order to get more minutes on the court you must understand who it is that allocates the minutes and determines how much playing time you receive every game... the coach.

It's not your parents, brothers and sisters, or your friends that you have to impress with your play, it's the coach.

If your coach is telling you not to shoot the ball from three and your father is telling you to shoot the three, who do you think you should listen to?

If your coach is telling you to crash the boards on every possession, get in and do it! Do everything you can to make the person that decides your minutes happy with your play.

11. Become a Great Defender

The awesome thing about striving to become a great defender is that there's not much competition.

Every player want to shoot three's. Everyone wants to score 30 points a game. But no one wants to put in the effort to hold an opposing player that averages 25 points to 10 points.

If you want extra minutes on the court, you should be that player.

Coaches understand the importance of having a great defender at their disposal better than most. It's a luxury to have someone that you can call upon to go out and limit the oppositions best scorer or slow down someone that has got hot during the course of the game.

Holding the opposing teams best scorer to 15 points below their average is as beneficial to the team as you scoring 15 extra points.

The best ways to become a better defender is simply to guard the best players you can find. If you're playing a pick up game, take on the strongest opponent and try your best to limit their scoring.

One on one games are also great for improving individual defense. Especially if the player you're playing against is better than you!

12. Improve your Time Management

How will managing your time get you more minutes on the court? Because the number one excuse I hear from players who don't often work out individually is that they can't find time to do so!

These players need to start managing their time better.

Coaches are fully aware of how busy players lives can be. With multiple sports, education, employment, homework, and everything else, they have a lot to fit into every week!

I always recommend to my older players that they start scheduling their time each day. If they dont, there will be a lot of wasted time on tv shows, xbox, and other unproductive

things. Don't get me wrong, these activities are fine in moderation, but based on what I've seen, most players spend far too much time on them.

While improving all other areas of your life, starting a schedule will show you where the free hours are in your day in which you can start really working on your game!

Conclusion

By following these 12 tactics players can definitely work their way towards increasing their playing time.

Here's a summed up list of the post:

- 1. Attend every practice.**
- 2. Talk to the coach.**
- 3. Know your game.**
- 4. Be willing to do the dirty work.**
- 5. Always look interested.**
- 6. Stay ready.**
- 7. Work really, really hard.**
- 8. Don't give the coach a reason to not like you.**
- 9. Improve your level of fitness.**
- 10. Listen to the coach.**
- 11. Become a great defender.**
- 12. Improve your time management.**

21 Life Lessons Kids Learn Through Youth Sports

 basketballforcoaches.com/life-lessons/



'Use youth sports as a medium to teach young players life lessons'.

Youth sports are going to teach young players a lot more than how to shoot a basketball or how to use a pick-and-roll, there are a lot of life lessons players will learn on their journey through participation in youth sports.

These life lessons are by far the most important part of participation in youth sports. Not winning a few basketball tournaments or making a highly competitive team.

Let's be honest, players have a very, very slim chance of playing professional sports. I don't say this to be harsh or pessimistic, but to emphasise the importance of focusing on how you can help every single player you coach. Not just the 2 or 3 in 10,000 that end up playing professionally.

You can make a difference in their lives long-term by helping them learn the 21 important life lessons listed below that I believe all kids learn through youth sports.

Exclusive Bonus! Download the '21 Life Lessons Kids Learn Through Youth Sports' article so that you can print it and hand it out to your team! ([Download Now](#))

1. It's Okay to Make Mistakes

There will be many times when players make mistakes during games or practice. Whether that be losing the basketball in a dribbling drill, turning the ball over during a game, or taking a bad shot.

Coaches have to reassure their players that it's okay to make these mistakes, they're learning experiences.

A good coach will challenge the players to evaluate the mistake themselves with questions such as *‘Why do you think that happened?’* and *‘What could you do next time to change the outcome?’*.

As long as players are learning from their mistakes, they should be pushing themselves and making as many mistakes as they can.

2. How to be a Leader

Throughout a youth sports season all players should have the opportunity to be a leader on their team.

This could be as simple as making a different player responsible for warm-ups before each practice, allowing the players to make decisions, or rotating the captain of each game.

If given these opportunities to lead, players will become much more confident leading others and develop leadership skills that most kids rarely have the opportunity to learn.

3. How to be a Follower

Just as it’s important to learn how to lead others, it’s also incredibly important that players learn how to be lead by others.

Having a coach is in a lot of ways similar to having a boss. The coach is an authority figure that will be giving instruction, praise, and criticism to the player.

By experiencing how to follow, players will learn how to take instructions, how to respectfully question authority, and even patience if they disagree.

This will give them plenty of lessons as to how they want to lead in the future.

“If you want to lead the people, you must learn how to follow them” – Lao Tzu.

4. Body Language Speaks Volumes

Body language says a lot about how a person is feeling and what they’re thinking.

I’ve found a lot of players display poor body language without even realising it and youth sports is a great medium to address that since most coaches won’t accept it on their team.

Players will quickly learn that if they throw their hands in the air in disgust because a teammate fumbled a pass, it’s a poor display of sportsmanship and they’ll quickly find themselves on the bench next to the coach.

Similarly, while on the bench players better make sure they’re displaying positive body language.

It’s well known that body language is one of the main criteria that recruiters look at when evaluating players so it’s best to get it under control while the players are young.

5. How to Control Emotions

Youth sports can be frustrating. Not only for the players, but for parents and coaches too.

There will be games when the referees don't seem like they even have a whistle in their mouth. Every player will experience games where the basketball just won't go in the ring.

When these things happen, players will learn that getting angry or frustrated about it doesn't help the situation and inevitably impacts performance.

There will be times when players get so worked up that they receive a technical foul which can be a great learning experience for a player if handled correctly by the coach.

Experiencing feelings of frustration and anger and learning how to control them will help players in all aspects of their lives.

6. Setting and Achieving Goals

I'm a big believer in goal-setting in all aspects of life. Everyone should do it.

Youth sports is a great place to learn how to set goals and determine how to achieve them with no repercussions if they fall short or fail.

Players will learn that setting goals gives you a target to reach for and adds motivation while on the journey to achieving them.

They'll then learn the important step of figuring out how you're going to reach those goals by breaking them down into achievable steps.

You can't just set goals and cross your fingers that they'll come true, you need to work out a plan and work hard to make them come true.

I first started setting goals in youth sports and now set them in all aspects of my life. Hopefully the players you coach will be the same.

7. Success Requires Hard Work

Players will learn that the best players are usually the players that have worked the hardest on improving their game. While talent definitely plays its role early on, sooner or later it's the hardest workers that rise to the top.

This will show them that if they want to become great at anything, whether that be the guitar, learning a foreign language, then it's going to take hard work. And a lot of it.

There are no short cuts. There's no magic words. Being great at something takes hard, consistent work.

As the team begins to see their hard work paying off, make sure to point out to them that it's their consistent, hard work that has led them to these improvements.

This would also be a good time to point out how they will see similar improvements if they work hard at anything else they want to do or achieve in life.



8. How to Win/Succeed with Class

In youth sports there is definitely a right and a wrong way to win.

I've seen some disgusting acts of sportsmanship from players and coaches on winning teams. Mocking their opponents, refusing to shake hands, and other forms of horrible behaviour.

Good coaches will teach their players how to be proud of their achievements without putting down their opponents.

This often involves shaking hands after the game with the referees and opposition players and giving positive comments to each players such as 'good game' or 'nice shooting'.

Although, how a players acts after a game should be the same regardless of a win or a loss.

9. How to Lose/Fail with Dignity

Youth sports is the ultimate environment for players to experience the emotions and feelings that come from failure and defeat since there are no long-term consequences of losing.

This can be after losing a grand final, being cut from a team they really wanted to make, or missing a game-winning shot.

Good coaches will teach players to lose with dignity and respect, and that there is always a learning experience to come out of every loss or failure.

Players should always shake the hands of the referees and the opponents after every game and not blame the loss on external sources like the referees or the court conditions.

One of the best things I like to do after a loss is to first ask the team what they can learn from the loss. What should we have done differently? Where do we need to improve in order to be better next time? Allow them to evaluate the loss.

10. Success Requires Sacrifice

There's only a certain amount of time in each day and players will soon realise that they can't do everything. They'll have to sacrifice certain things to spend more time on what they consider more important.

This requires players to determine their priorities which is a great skill for later in life.

Players will realise that if they're determined to put in the work to be a great basketball player as well as keep up with their studies, then they won't be able to attend every party that their friends do. They simply won't have time.

They'll be forced to use their time more productively. This might mean instead of spending another night out with their friends, they're in the gym working on their shot.

This lesson will serve them well when they get to exams and have to make studying a priority.

11. Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Everyone has different strengths and weaknesses.

It's important for all players to know what they're good at and what they struggle with so that they can address their weaknesses and play to their strengths.

This allows players to understand how they can best contribute to the team during games and what areas of their game they should be working on.

I'm a big believer that this skill of self-evaluation is super important.

One of the best ways to teach this is to hand out a piece of paper near the start of each season and get the players to write down what they believe are their 3 biggest strengths and 3 biggest weaknesses.

Keep them confidential and sit down with each player and go through them and explain how best they can help the team using their strengths and share with them different ways they can improve their weaknesses.

12. Being Healthy is Important

Players will have a far greater chance of staying fit and healthy later in life if they play youth sports at a young age.

This is because they develop skills and movements that will carry-over to other sports, going to the gym, running, or other forms of physical activity when they're older.

Children that aren't involved in youth sports typically won't be confident enough in themselves or their physical ability to become active.

While this is a lesson that most players won't realise until they're older, don't be afraid to stress the importance of looking after yourself through regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and eating healthy.

13. You Must Discipline Yourself

Improving your skills on the basketball court means having the self discipline to work hard on the things you need to work on. Not necessarily the things that are the most fun.

Here are a few fantastic quotes on self-discipline from great minds...

“Discipline is doing what has to be done, when it has to be done, as well as it can be done, and doing it that way all the time” – Bobby Knight

“The only lasting form of discipline is self-imposed discipline” – Dale Brown

“Discipline yourself, and others won't need to” – John Wooden

By disciplining themselves to work on their game, players will see results that will motivate them and they'll be glad they put in the effort to get better.

This will teach players that it's important to choose what's best for the long-term instead of seeking instant gratification.

14. How to Deal with Pressure and Stress

Whether we like it or not, there can be a lot of pressure in youth sports.

Some of this is attributed to overbearing parents who unfairly demand excellence of their children on the basketball court, while some of it is simply the normal pressure of close and intense games.

Youth sports allows players to learn how to deal with the nerves and stress they feel in these situations in a safe environment.

There will undoubtedly be times where players are overwhelmed by the occasion and the pressure will get to them resulting in tears or simply not wanting to play anymore.

This is all a learning experience and will help them get comfortable with pressure situations they'll encounter later on in life like public speaking or sitting their first exam.



15. You're Responsible For Yourself

Youth sports is one of the first places where children start to take on some serious responsibility.

I always impose a rule early on that it's the players responsibility to bring a drink bottle and their basketball to practice. It's not their parents responsibility to remember for them.

Players will also learn that they are responsible for their actions and for their own improvement.

I don't expect the parents to have to force their players to complete a few ball-handling drills after school each day. This will create unnecessary conflict between the player and their parents.

I emphasise at practice that if they want to improve their game then it's up to themselves to make it happen.

16. Life Isn't Always Fair

This is a tough rule for players to learn at an early age but one that is gradually taught nonetheless.

Injuries happen. There will be missed foul calls. Parents will arrive at the wrong stadium and their child will miss the game.

Things will happen and players have to learn to accept them and move on because most of the time, sulking about it isn't going to change anything.

For those unfortunate enough to experience the full power of this lesson, we've all heard of at least one player that has worked their butt off for months to get ready for a season and then within the first week of pre-season end up blowing out their knee which leaves them sidelined for the season.

Life is tough sometimes.

17. Together Everyone Achieves More

T – Together

E – Everyone

A – Achieves

M – More

A bit corny, isn't it? But it couldn't be more true!

A team will always be more successful if everyone's on the same page and the players are all focused on achieving the same goal.

One single player that deviates from this and only cares about their own points or other statistic is enough to derail a team.

Players will learn that their best chance of success will be through cooperation with their teammates and that this is the same on the court, in the classroom, or professionally.

They'll also gain social skills by interacting with and meeting new people with similar interests which will carry-over into all of their relationships.

They'll learn how to deal with conflicts between teammates, how to interact with a number of different personality types, and even how to get along with people they don't like.

18. There Will be Tough Times

Perseverance is a skill that's important for all players to learn at an early age.

There will be setbacks. They will fail. There will be obstacles they must overcome.

“If you're trying to achieve, there will be roadblocks. I've had them; everybody has had them”
– Michael Jordan

Players will experience the emotions that come with these obstacles and failures and will learn how to push through them and not quit when it gets tough.

Teach your players that when times get tough and they feel like quitting to stop looking too far ahead and start thinking step-by-step.

Instead of “I'm never going to be as good as them”, change it to “What can I do today to improve where I currently am?”.

Then it comes back to consistent hard work and being patient. Remember, success doesn't happen overnight.

19. How to Manage Time Efficiently

Depending on age, most youth sports players have a lot of commitments that they must juggle. Attending school, homework, sports, family, friends, employment, and possibly other activities.

This leads to an overly packed schedule for most players. The only way to get it all done is to prioritise and manage your time efficiently.

As players get old enough to start managing their own time, I encourage parents to allow their children to start developing time management skills by planning their days themselves.

They'll be forced to prioritise what's most important in their life and sacrifice what they consider less important.

Obviously this is done with parental assistance but it's a fantastic skill to work on for their future.

20. Respect Everyone

Through their youth sports journey players will learn the importance of respecting those around them. Not just their coaches and the referees, but also their teammates, the opposition, and everyone else involved.

For this respect to be instilled in players, there must be consequences for acting in a disrespectful manner like putting down a teammate or mocking an opponent.

Coaches can't give empty threats or it will be hard to establish respect. The players must know that when you say you're going to do something, you mean it.

A few ways players can show respect is by not talking when someone else is talking, shaking hands with the opponents and referees after the game, and retrieving the basketball for the referee when it goes out of bounds.

Players must learn that the amount of respect they show others can't be determined by their levels of frustration or the outcome of a basketball game.

The overriding principle of respect being "Treat others how you want to be treated".

21. Focus on What You Can Control

Coaches must make it clear that there are only two things that players can control at all times: their effort and attitude.

There's simply no point sulking over things that you can't change.

Too short? Get out there and work on your handles.

Not as athletic as one of your teammates? Work on anticipating where the pass will be made or where the rebound will land.

This also goes for things that happen during the game.

Think you got fouled when you turned the ball over? The referee didn't call it so there's no point complaining. Get back on defense and contest the shot.

Missed an open shot? It happens! The only thing you can do about it now is get after the rebound or get back on defense.

Players must learn that there's no point dwelling on things that are out of their control. Move on and focus on the things you can control.

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Conclusion

Without taking away from the competitiveness of the sport, coaches must understand that the life lessons learned by players on their youth sports journey are much more important than the final score of a basketball game.

As coaches, it's our duty to do our best to instill as many of these life lessons in our players as we can.

Here's a quick recap:

- 1. It's okay to make mistakes.**
- 2. How to be a leader.**
- 3. How to be a follower.**
- 4. Body language speaks volumes.**
- 5. How to control emotions.**
- 6. Setting and achieving goals.**
- 7. Success requires hard work.**
- 8. How to win/succeed with class.**
- 9. How to lose/fail with dignity.**
- 10. Success requires sacrifice.**
- 11. Know your strengths and weaknesses.**
- 12. Being healthy is important.**
- 13. You must discipline yourself.**
- 14. How to deal with pressure and stress.**
- 15. You're responsible for yourself.**
- 16. Life isn't always fair.**
- 17. Together everyone achieves more.**
- 18. There will be tough times.**
- 19. How to manage time efficiently.**
- 20. Respect everyone.**
- 21. Focus on what you can control.**

To finish this post I'll leave you with a few quotes...

“The world doesn’t need more good basketball players, it needs more good husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers”.

“Basketball teaches students lessons that they can’t learn in a classroom”.

23 Qualities of a Great Teammate

 basketballforcoaches.com/great-teammate/



Being a great teammate is far more important than being a great player.

Let's face it...

Chances are that you will never coach a player who goes on to play professional basketball at a high level (the chances are slim).

And if you do, the number will pale in comparison to the number of players you coach who will *never* play any basketball professionally.

But every single one of the players you're coaching are going to grow up, get a job, and will be expected to be a contributing member of their community.

So how can we best prepare our players for the rest of their lives?

By teaching them how to be great teammates.

Many of the qualities that players develop on their journey to being a great teammate will help their future out tremendously.

In fact, every one of the 23 qualities of a great teammate listed below are the exact qualities that make someone a great co-worker.

Your players might not recognize the importance now, but they will one day.

And they will thank you.

Here are 23 qualities all great teammates possess...

1. A great teammate develops real relationships with their teammates

Great relationships between teammates is an important foundation for the success of any team.

Success does not necessarily mean winning (although it includes it), but rather the enjoyment had by those involved on the team throughout the season and looking back on it.

To develop deep and real relationships between teammates, players must get to know their teammates as more than people they throw around a basketball with on the court a few times a week.

Players must get to know who their teammates are as people outside of basketball. That's where true relationships and trust develops.

This involves learning about their family, their likes and dislikes, who their favorite NBA team is, who their favorite NBA players are, etc.

It's the responsibility of every player on the team to be willing to seek out this information and also to share themselves with others.

Players will quickly find out that being connected off the court often leads to being connected on the court.

2. A great teammate brings their teammates together

As a great teammate is focusing on developing real relationships with all players on the team, it will quickly become obvious that others aren't always focused on doing this.

This isn't necessarily because they're bad teammates... Rather, they might feel too shy, they might already have a few teammates they're comfortable with, or they simply don't realize the importance of building real relationships with all teammates.

Great teammates do their best to bring together teammates and give them an opportunity to build a better relationship.

Here are a few examples of how you could do this:

- Invite teammates to the local swimming pool.
- Invite teammates over for a BBQ or dinner.
- Invite teammates for extra shooting practice.
- Invite teammates to the movies.

The worst thing that can happen on a team is when little 'cliques' of teammates form. This leads to the team being divided into small groups of 3 or 4 people who only hang out with each other.

Strive to develop a real relationship with all your teammates and help them do it too!

3. A great teammate is willing to play any role on the team

(Disclaimer: For youth basketball, I believe in even playing time for all players until the final 5 minutes of the game.)

A great teammate is willing to play any role on the team that gives their team the best chance of being successful.

The players that are willing to do this have a 'team-first' attitude and sacrifice their own goals and accomplishments for what's in the best interest of the team.

'We' before 'Me'.

When discussing role on the team, I prefer to break it down into two different categories to stop players from getting confused between the two.

a. The amount of minutes you play each game.

Being willing to accept a reduction in minutes while keeping a great attitude is crucial for all basketball players.

If you keep progressing to different levels of basketball, unless you're a LeBron James or Michael Jordan it is almost an absolute certainty that at some stage in your basketball career you'll find yourself stuck at the end of the bench.

Players averaging 30 points and 10 rebounds a game in high school often find themselves relegated to the end of the bench playing 2 minutes a game when they begin their college career.

The exact same thing happens when players enter the NBA. They often go from college basketball superstars to battling for a position on an NBA roster and potentially quickly forgotten about.

This will happen to all players at some point. Be ready for it when it does.

A great teammate is willing to embrace their new role without losing their enthusiasm for the game.

Even if you feel like you deserve more minutes or that you're a better player than a teammate receiving more time than you, you must accept the coach's decision and continue to give 100% effort when your opportunities do come.

b. Your role when you're on the basketball court.

The other type of role that may change is what a player is required to do and focus on during games.

There are many players that are high-volume scorers in high school, but when they get to the college level, their new team doesn't need their high-volume scoring.

Rather, they might be great a defender and are required to lock down the opponents best player.

The most important thing for players to remember is that the role they play is going to be constantly changing throughout their basketball playing days.

Be willing to embrace each and every role you receive and **remember to play for the name on the front of the jersey, not the one on the back.**

“Players have to buy into your system and be willing to accept the role, you, as the coach, have assigned to them.” – Chuck Daly

“You must be unselfish and accept the role that helps the team the most.” – Tom Crean

“We believe in people executing their role and caring about the team more than anything individually.” – Gregg Popovich

4. A great teammate always gives their maximum effort

Every player must understand that the effort they give at practice and during games is 100% in their control at all times.

Coming off the bench and only playing 5 minutes a game? **Give maximum effort.**

Your team's down by 30 points in the 4th quarter? **Give maximum effort.**

You're at practice at 8am on a Sunday? **Give maximum effort.**

There's simply no excuse to ever give less than your best. If you do, you're letting your teammates and coaching staff down.

Every player can have a bad shooting night. No player should ever have a bad effort night. Effort is always a choice.

“Sometimes, things may not go your way, but the effort should be there every single night.” – Michael Jordan

“I can live with about anything, but not lack of effort. If you want to play in the game, you must give me 100 percent.” – Roy Williams

“Effort is fully replenishable. There is no need to save any of it. Leave every bit you have on the playing field.” – Mike Krzyzewski

5. A great teammate works hard to improve their game

While a great teammate doesn't have to be the hardest worker on the team as some coaches often say, a great teammate must be willing to work hard to improve their game outside of team practices.

When you commit to playing a team sport, you commit to improving your game individually for the betterment of the team.

If you don't continue to improve as a basketball player, you're letting your teammates and coaching staff down by not doing your best to fulfill your potential as a basketball player.

Doing this also has the added benefit that it will improve your role on the team and allow you to contribute more to the team's success.

When your teammates see you working hard and improving your game, they'll want to do the same!

6. A great teammate always leads by example

A great teammate doesn't always lead with their words, but they always lead with their actions.

You can't expect others to be great teammates if you're not willing to lead the way and prove to yourself and others that you are one.

Here are a few examples how a player can lead by example:

- Be the first one in the gym and the last one to leave.
- Give 100% effort at all times.
- Listen to your coach when they're talking.
- Mentally preparing themselves before practice and games.
- Being on time.
- Have a positive, energetic attitude.
- Not talking back to the referees.
- Hustling back on defense.
- Diving on the floor for loose balls.
- Being prepared to take charges.
- Staying engaged on the bench.
- Encouraging other teammates.
- Seriously, this list could go on forever...

Never underestimate the importance of your example.

7. A great teammate is always prepared before practices and games

To be a great teammate you must ensure you're prepared for every practice and every game.

By doing so, your teammates and coaching staff can be confident that you're ready to perform at your very best when you step on the court.

Here are a few ways you to make to make sure you're prepared:

- Always make sure you're properly stretched and warmed up before the start of practice or a game.
- If you have them, put in the time to study scouting report on your next opponent.
- Properly stretch and cool down after practices and games to ensure that the next time you play your body will be recovered.

- Ensure you consume the healthy food and adequate liquids before practices and games.
- Know your team's playbook like the back of your hand. Study it. Know all the movements and actions of all the players on the floor.
- Know the importance of your pre-game routine and follow it so that you're mentally ready when it's time to play.

"It's in the daily preparation. The willingness to be the first guy at practice and the last one to leave. Taking the time to get extra shots up. Studying the game. Watching film. Taking care of your body." – Derek Fisher

"I don't believe in luck. I believe in preparation." – Bobby Knight

"We understand what goes into winning and that the battle is won or lost long before its fought. It comes from preparation." – Tom Thibodeau



8. A great teammate understands their own strengths and weaknesses

Being able to self-evaluate your game to determine what your strengths and weaknesses are is crucial to being a great teammate.

To put it simply; **you must know what you're good at and you must know what you need to improve.**

Once you determine these, focus on doing what you're good at during games, and focus on and commit to improving your weaknesses during practices and your own time.

You'll never be a great teammate if you're throwing up three-point shots during a game when you know you're a poor three-point shooter.

A player like Dennis Rodman is a world-class rebounder and a player who understood that him shooting from the outside wasn't something that was going to help his team win (except oddly in the 1991 – 1992 season with Detroit).

So he didn't do it. He focused on his strengths.

That's what all players need to do.

By doing the things you're good at and not doing the things you're bad at, you're being a great teammate and putting your team in the best position to be successful.

“The key to any game is to use your strengths and hide your weaknesses.” – Paul Westphal

“I know the strengths and weaknesses of my teammates. I make my passing decisions accordingly.” – Steve Nash

9. A great teammate always has a positive and energetic attitude

A great teammate is consistently positive regardless of the situation and always has a high amount of energy and enthusiasm.

Nothing is more detrimental to a team than negativity.

Every player must know that if they are negative, it will always spread. That's why teams have to avoid it at all costs. And when it does happen, address the negativity and come up with a solution immediately.

Conversely, **all great teammates know that their positivity and enthusiasm will rub off onto the other members of the team.**

Even if they don't feel fantastic that day, they are able to put all the negativities behind them when they step into the gym and become a positive and fun source of energy.

When the intensity of a practice is down, they never hesitate to do all they can to lift the intensity and create a fun and competitive environment.

Whether the team's down by 30 points or it's an 8am practice session, a great teammate always stays positive and appreciates the opportunity they have to play the game of basketball.

“Any guy who can maintain a positive attitude without much playing time earns my respect.”
– Magic Johnson

“I’m looking for players who make their teammates better. You do that with enthusiasm and passion.” – Mike Krzyzewski

“Promise to be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.” –
John Wooden

10. A great teammate always displays positive body language

Body language is something nearly all players overlook the importance of.

How often do you see a player roll their eyes at an official, coach, or teammate, and then when they’re called out on it, they yell *“But I didn’t say anything!?”*.

It happens all the time.

So please, please listen and understand this: **Body language is everything.**

A player will communicate more of their true feelings through their body language than what they say when they speak.

For those looking to get recruited to colleges; body language and interaction with teammates is always listed very high on the list of what college coaches look for when they’re scouting.

Here are a few examples of negative body language:

- Rolling your eyes.
- Throwing your hands up in the air after a teammate makes a mistake.
- Mouthing curse words.
- Sighing and looking down after a teammate’s mistake.

Here are a few examples of positive body language:

- Clapping for a teammate.
- Giving high-fives.
- Standing up from the bench after a great play.
- Pointing at a teammate after receiving a great pass.

11. A great teammate has a sense of humor and has fun!

No matter what level of basketball you’re currently playing, having fun must always be a high priority.

Even Gregg Popovich, the coach of one of the most consistently great teams for nearly two decades, constantly emphasizes the importance of the Spurs having fun and keeping a sense of humor...

“Having a sense of humor is huge to me and to our staff because I think if people can’t be self-deprecating or laugh at themselves or enjoy a funny situation, they have a hard time giving themselves to the group. – Gregg Popovich”

To be a great teammate, you must contribute to keeping the team environment fun, light-hearted, and enjoyable at all times.

You must be willing to take the occasional joke or two post-game after you missed a wide open layup or did something funny during the game.

There’s not much point playing basketball if you’re not enjoying it!

12. A great teammate holds themselves and others accountable to the commitment they made to the team

When you sign up to a team, you must understand what that commitment entails.

- You’re committing to attend practices.
- You’re committing to attend games.
- You’re committing to improve your game outside of practice.
- You’re committing to attending film sessions.
- You’re committing to memorizing the playbook.
- You’re committing to volunteer when the team needs you.

Basically, you’re committing to a lot.

Great teammates understand the commitment they have made and are willing to hold themselves accountable to these commitments.

Great teammates are also willing to hold their teammates accountable to the commitment they made to the team.

Holding others accountable is never easy. It takes a strong-minded teammate to be willing to take a teammate to the side and politely remind them of the commitment they made to the team.

But the first step is always holding yourself accountable. Don’t even think about holding anyone else accountable until you’re able to do it yourself.

“The most important quality I look for in a player is accountability. You’ve got to be accountable for who you are. It’s too easy to blame things on someone else.” – Lenny Wilkins

“If you don’t have accountability you will not improve.” – Brad Stevens

“On good teams, coaches hold players accountable, on great teams players hold players accountable.” – Joe Dumars

13. A great teammate understands how to deliver praise and criticism

Knowing how to deliver praise and criticism to a teammate without offending them is one of the most important traits of a great teammate.

Here is the big rule that all players must remember:

Criticise teammates in private. Compliment teammates in public.

(Disclaimer: Criticising teammates in private is best done by senior members of the team in the older age groups. This shouldn't happen in youth basketball. Leave it to the coach.)

When you see one of your teammates doing something that's negatively affecting the team, instead of yelling at them in front of their teammates and the coaching staff, say something to them in private.

This could be in regards to basketball related things such as not making the extra pass on offense or non-basketball things like talking negatively about another player.

Ensure that you don't make a big deal out of it and that if they want to walk away you allow them to, but look them in the eye address the subject.

While they often won't say it, the player will appreciate you bringing up the subject in private rather than making a big deal about it in front of the entire team.

When it comes to delivering praise to your teammates, a great teammate will do this often and do it in front of the entire team.

When a teammate makes an extra pass or completes a great play, never hesitate about praising them for it in front of the team.

It will raise the confidence of the player, strengthen the relationship between you two, and there's a much higher chance that they'll make the same team-first play in the future!

"Shout praise and whisper criticism." – Don Meyer

"A group becomes a team when each member is sure enough of himself and his contribution to praise the skills of the others." -Norman Shidle

"You can't let praise or criticism get to you. It's a weakness to get caught up in either one." – John Wooden

14. A great teammate is willing to accept feedback from their teammates

Just as being a great teammate involves you knowing how to deliver feedback to your teammates, you must be willing and open to accept feedback from them too.

Whether you're giving or receiving feedback will often depend on your role on the team. You might go from giving feedback to teammates in high school to receiving feedback from teammates when you're playing college basketball.

A great teammate is always open to feedback.

Don't get defensive when they're talking to you. Pay attention to what they're saying and then apply it.

Even if you disagree with their feedback and choose not to follow it, don't act negatively towards them or you'll risk hurting a relationship with a teammate.

Always hear them out.

15. A great teammate supports others when they're struggling

To be a great teammate you must truly care about the other members of your team.

If you see any of your teammates looking down, you should always be willing to take a few moments to check that they're okay and see if they need a friend to talk to.

This is best done in private as a lot of players will feel embarrassed and laugh it off if this question is posed to them in a public setting.

Even if they say they're fine, they'll appreciate the gesture of you asking them and it will deepen the relationship that you've developed with them.

If they do say something's wrong, be willing to be a good listener and hear what's on their mind and possibly provide a few words of support to lift their spirits.

A few kind words or simply being asked if they're okay can mean the world to a player who is having difficulties at school or at home.

16. A great teammate never places blame or finds excuses for a loss

How many times have you heard a player make an excuse after losing a close game?

"The courts were slippery!"

"The referee didn't call the foul!"

"Jimmy should have boxed out his player!"

"Sam should have made the open shot!"

A great teammate never makes up excuses or points blame to a single play after the team loses a game.

They understand that a game of basketball is long and full of plenty of mistakes that accumulate to decide the final score of the game.

More importantly, they understand that keeping a great team environment and having fun are much more important than securing the win.

Never create a negative environment and hurt relationships with teammates by pointing blame!

17. A great teammate is reliable, honest, and trustworthy

I decided to include all three of these characteristics together because being reliable and honest eventually leads to being trustworthy.

Let's focus on each of them separately...

a. Reliable

A great teammate is always reliable. If they say they're going to do something, you can guarantee that it's going to get done.

If they say they will be at practice 30 minutes early, they'll be at practice 30 minutes early.

b. Honest

There's no worse feeling for a player than not being confident whether their teammate is telling the truth or not.

A great teammate must always be honest. If you make a mistake, own up to it.

c. Trustworthy

If you can be a reliable and honest teammate, that will lead to your teammates and coaching staff being able to trust you.

Your teammates must be able to trust that you're 100% committed to the team and have bought into what the team's trying to do.

"Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the 'me' for the 'we'." – Phil Jackson

"We are unselfish and we trust each other." – Tim Duncan

"When players trust and believe in each other, it's a simple thing. But that really is something that makes a team great." – Bob Huggins



18. A great teammate respects the game, everyone involved, and the facilities

When most players think about respect, they only think about respecting the head coach as they are the adult and person who decides their court time.

But when it comes to being a basketball player, there is much more to respect than that just the head coach.

- Players must respect the coach.
- Players must respect their teammates.
- Players must respect their opponents.
- Players must respect the supporters.
- Players must respect the officials.
- Players must respect the facilities they're playing in.
- Players must respect the game of basketball.

Without respect, you can never be a great teammate.

19. A great teammate keeps themselves in great physical condition

If you don't do your best to keep yourself in great physical condition, you're letting your teammates down.

This doesn't mean you need to be 2% bodyfat and able to run a marathon, but it does mean your body should allow you to give your best effort when you're on the floor.

Here are a few things you can do to keep your body in great shape:

- Eat relatively clean throughout the season.
- Eat a nutritious meal on game-day that will give you the energy to compete.
- Hydrate your body before games and practices.
- Get enough sleep each night.
- Stay strong by regularly going to the gym.
- Block out time for cardio training throughout the week.

Players must be aware that all things mentioned above are 100% in their control.

Every player can keep their body in great physical condition and ready for competitive games of basketball if they choose to.

20. A great teammate consistently encourages their teammates

This might tie lightly into some of the other points I've mentioned throughout the article, but it can't hurt to emphasize its importance again.

A great teammate is a constant stream of encouragement and support for their teammates.

Encouraging others at practice and during games raises the intensity of practice, strengthens your relationships with those players, and lets your teammates know that their hard work and team-first play doesn't go unnoticed.

A great teammate should be encouraging everyone. Congratulating and praising players that are making great plays as well as encouraging players who are struggling to perform better.

And the best thing? Once you start encouraging players and being vocal, your teammates will often do this too!

Sometimes all it takes is some positive encourage from a teammate to change the mindset of a player during practice or a game.

21. A great teammate gives extra help to inexperienced or new players

The teammates that need the most encouragement and help are often the new or inexperienced players.

A great teammate will give special attention and encouragement to these players to make them feel more comfortable on the team.

Here are a few ways to do this:

- Hang out with the new player before practice or a game.
- Catching up with them outside of basketball.
- Helping them through drills and plays they're unfamiliar with.
- Giving them extra words of encouragement.

It can be a massive confidence boost for these players if they know one of the senior or more skilled players on the team has their back.

22. A great teammate is engaged and positive when they're on the bench

One of the most obvious places you can see which players are good teammates and which players aren't is when they're on the bench.

Sitting back, complaining about a lack of playing time, and looking disinterested are clear signs to all coaches, players, supporters, and recruiters that you're not a good teammate.

Even if you believe deep in your heart that you deserve more playing time and you're frustrated about your lack of it, you must stay engaged and positive on the bench.

No exceptions.

Great teammates understand how much the energy of the bench influences the outcome and enjoyment of the game being played.

Here are some of the things great teammates do when they're on the bench:

- Sit forward and stay engaged in the game.
- Call out screens being set by the opposition.
- Call out opposition plays or defensive changes.
- Cheer and encourage their teammates.
- Notice the tendencies of the player you'll be guarding.
- Find holes or weak links in the defense you can take advantage of.

"You can tell a lot about a recruit by just watching how they warm up and how they act on the bench." – Rick Majerus

"Players that have energy when they're on the bench are far more likely to impact games in a positive way when they're in the game." – Tom Crean

23. A great teammate understands the importance of being a great teammate

Last but certainly not least, a great teammate understands the positive impact that being a great teammate has on the team and the overall happiness of the season.

- Life-long friendships will be developed.
- The season will be enjoyable for everyone.
- A great environment for players to foster their love of basketball.

- Fond memories to look back on.
- Greater chance of the team being successful.

Conversely, a great teammate understands what the consequences are of being or having negative teammates.

- The team will have poor team chemistry.
- The season will be less fun for everyone.
- There will be less learning throughout the season.
- Memories you look back on negatively.
- Less chance of the team being successful.

Conclusion

The most important thing that all players must understand is that they do not need to be a great player to be a great teammate.

And everyone (regardless of talent, age, size, or skill) can be a great teammate.

You don't need to possess all 23 qualities to be considered a great teammate, but you should strive to achieve them all.

In summary...

1. A great teammate develops real relationships with their teammates
2. A great teammate brings their teammates together
3. A great teammate is willing to play any role on the team
4. A great teammate is willing to play any role on the team
5. A great teammate works hard to improve their game
6. A great teammate always leads by example
7. A great teammate is always prepared before practices and games
8. A great teammate understands their own strengths and weaknesses
9. A great teammate always has a positive and energetic attitude
10. A great teammate always displays positive body language
11. A great teammate has a sense of humor and has fun!
12. A great teammate holds themselves and others accountable to the commitment they made to the team
13. A great teammate understands how to deliver praise and criticism
14. A great teammate is willing to accept feedback from their teammates
15. A great teammate supports others when they're struggling
16. A great teammate never places blame or finds excuses for a loss
17. A great teammate is reliable, honest, and trustworthy
18. A great teammate respects the game, everyone involved, and the facilities
19. A great teammate keeps themselves in great physical condition
20. A great teammate consistently encourages their teammates
21. A great teammate gives extra help to inexperienced or new players
22. A great teammate is engaged and positive when they're on the bench
23. A great teammate understands the importance of being a great teammate

Coaches: I'd love for you to share this blog post with your players and other coaches.

The other option you have is to choose one of the 23 qualities listed above and spend 5 minutes talking about it with your team before practice.

I promise you... players learning these qualities is well worth 5 minutes of practice time.

27 Ways to be an Awesome Youth Sports Parent

 basketballforcoaches.com/youth-sports-parent/



Shouting abusive comments, stomping their feet, yelling at the referees, mocking the coach; we all know a negative youth sports parent when we see one.

These images are never a good sight at a youth basketball game. The other parents sitting in close proximity feel embarrassed to be associated with them and their own child watches on in bewilderment at the actions of their parent. There's really no place for a parent that acts this way in youth sports.

Sports are competitive and it's easy for parents to get caught up in the game just like the players and coaches do. Every parent wants their child to have success and it gives parents a rush of excitement to see it happen.

Unfortunately, this adult fuelled competitiveness and the innate parental desire to see your child to succeed has led many parents forget what is really important in youth sports.

On the other hand we have parents who come to games, sit happily on the sidelines encouraging their kid, and appreciate the enjoyment their child is having no matter what numbers say on the scoreboard.

These are the parents we need more of.

Here are the 27 ways to be an awesome youth sports parent...

1. Remember that winning isn't important

It really doesn't matter if the coach doesn't start the game with the five best players on the court.

It really doesn't matter if the referee called a block when it should have been a charge call.

It really doesn't matter if the coach drew up a poor play at the end of the first half and it resulted in a turnover.

There are many aspects to youth sports that are far more important than your child's team winning the basketball game.

If your only concern is winning, stay away from youth sports.

2. Focus on your child's enjoyment

If winning's not the most important, what is? Your child's enjoyment.

How much fun your child is having should be the primary concern of all parents.

Does your child love attending practice? Does your child speak highly of the coach? Do they look forward to every game they play?

It's better for a child to play on weak team that emphasizes enjoyment, development, and allows the players to develop a passion for the game of basketball, than a great team that forces players to extra trainings they don't want to attend, the coach treats them like NBA players, and the most important aspect of every game is that they dominate the opponent.

Because what will happen on this 'great' team? They'll win, probably a lot, but many of the players will quickly start to loathe the game of basketball.

3. Don't pressure your child to perform

It's all too common to see players being pressured to train more, play harder, score more points, play better defense, and everything else you can think of that a player can 'do better'.

It costs large amounts of money and time to play on a youth sports team and unfortunately it's not uncommon for parents to remind their child of this with comments such as: *"You know it cost us an arm and a leg to come on this trip. You better make sure it's worth it"*.

When under this pressure, playing isn't fun anymore, it's serious. It becomes stressful for the player knowing that if they don't live up to the parent's and coach's expectations then they're not good enough.

The result? Since sport isn't fun anymore, they quit.

4. Don't try to live out your own dream through your child

If you find that you care more about your child's sporting achievement than they do, it's probably time to take a step back.

A lot of parents have regret about missed sporting opportunities when they were younger and vow not to let their son or daughter miss out like they did.

Let them create their own path instead of following the one you design for them in your head.



5. Understand your child (probably) won't play professionally

Wondering what the chances of your high school player receiving a college scholarship or playing in the NBA are?

I [published this article](#) based on research not too long ago but to save you from reading it I'll sum it up on one sentence...

It is highly, highly unlikely your child will make a career out of playing sports professionally.

The exact figure? 2 – 3 out of every 10,000 players.

With that in mind, treat youth sports like your child won't be going pro. Allow them to love the game and learn without the added pressure of making it to the big leagues.

6. Allow your child to choose their own sport

Don't force your child to play the sport that YOU love.

Just because you were a basketball superstar in high school and have loved the game passionately since you could walk doesn't mean your child wants to follow the same path.

Fun is the biggest motivator for children playing youth sports. If you force them to play a sport they don't enjoy it won't be long before they burn out and quit.

Allow them the opportunity to explore their own sporting interests even if you don't share them.

7. Allow multi-sport participation

If possible for your family, allow your child to play more than one sport.

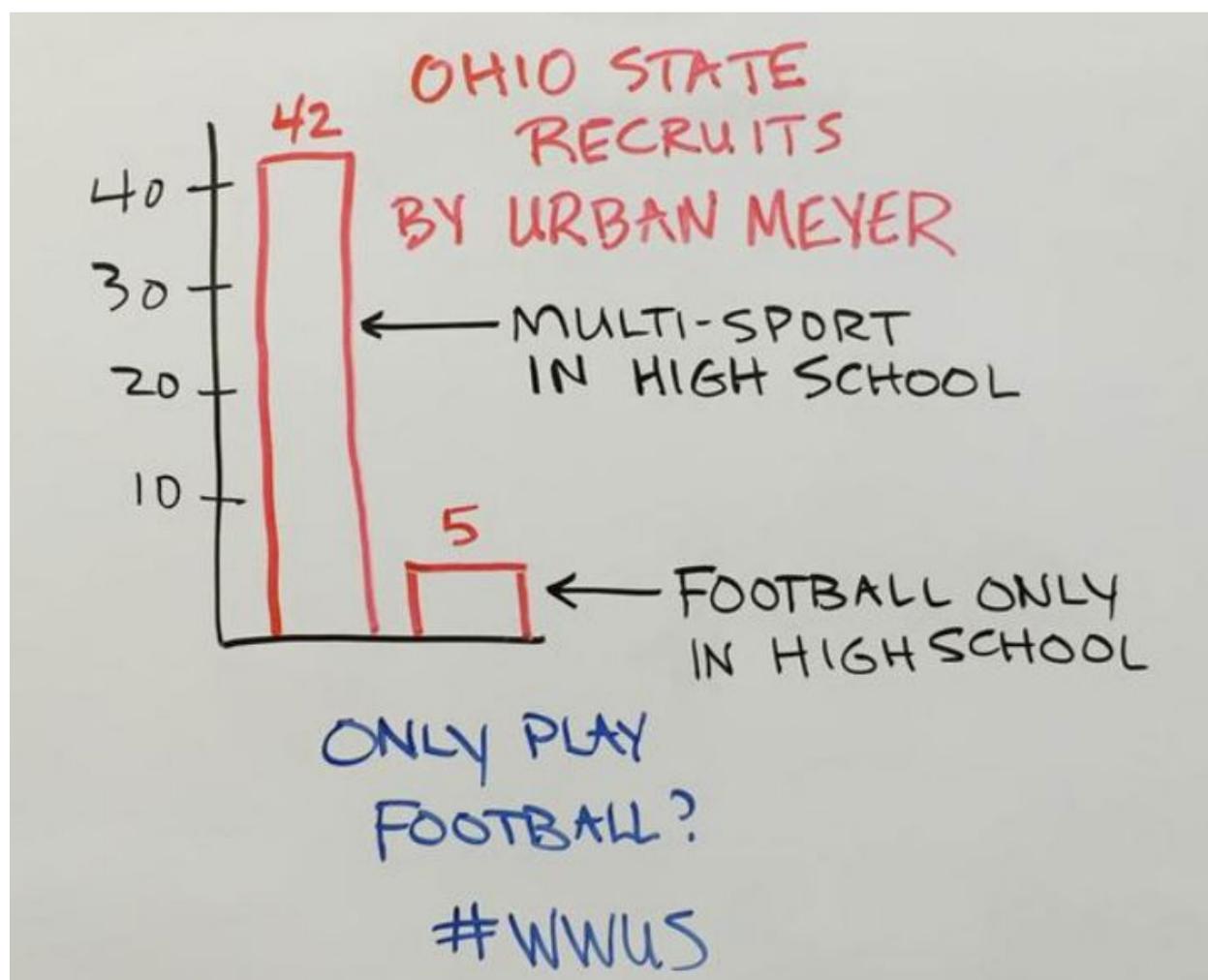
There has recently been a large amount of research and articles posted on the benefits of playing more than one sport. Listed below are a few articles that talk about the subject.

The Perils of Single Sport Participation – Changing the Game

Should Youth Athletes Specialize in Basketball – Basketball For Coaches

There's nothing worse than a parent that forces their child to specialize in a single sport because they think that's the only way they'll make it to the highest level.

As just one example, the last argument in favour of multi-sport participation was an image shown below shared by [@ohiovarsity](#). Showing out of all the Ohio State recruits by legend Urban Meyer, 42 of them were multi-sport athletes and only 5 of them specialized in football.



Still think your child should specialize?

8. Find the right coach

Unfortunately not everyone has this option. If you're on a high-school team you shouldn't change schools just to get a new basketball coach (though it happens).

Parents always look at me funny when I tell them to find the right coach. Some of them feel changing teams is a 'cop out' and that they just need to deal with the coach they've got.

While I'm against players transferring from team to team in order to get on the team with the highest chance of winning, there's nothing wrong with changing teams if your child's current coach isn't right for youth basketball.

Let me make this clear: Whether the team is winning or not isn't important. What is

important is whether or not the coach is right for youth basketball.

These are just a few of the questions you should ask yourself about your child's current coach:

- Does your child enjoy playing for the coach?
- Does the coach talk to them like they're kids?
- Does the coach care about the players?
- Is the coach coaching for the right reasons?
- Is the coach only focusing on the best players?
- Is the coach treating the season like the NBA playoffs?

If you feel the coach isn't right for youth basketball, don't hesitate to find a new team.

9. Let the coach do the coaching

If you're not the coach, don't coach.

The biggest problem with parents coaching their own child from the sidelines is that the player will end up with the coach telling them to do one thing and the parents telling them to do something else.

This places the child in the horrible position of being forced to choose who they're going to make happy and who they're going to disappoint.

This is pressure no child should ever have to deal with in youth sports.

If you really can't help yourself from coaching, volunteer to coach the team at the start of the season.

If you're not willing to coach the team for the entire season, stick to encouraging them from the sidelines, not coaching.

10. Don't be afraid to raise issues with the coach

Too often parents will refuse to ask to meet with the coach and discuss a problem they have. Instead, they choose to share the problem with other parents and friends while also commenting on how horrible the coach is. This doesn't achieve anything and just makes the problem worse.

If you ever have an issue, set up a meeting with the coach to ask your question and discuss it. This question can range from *"why isn't my player receiving much court time?"* to *"why do the players to run so much at practice?"*.

If your question is approached the right way, all good coaches will be happy to answer and discuss your concerns.

The only thing you must keep in mind is that you must be willing to receive an answer you might not want to hear.

11. Never undermine coaching decisions

Never express to your child that you disagree with the decisions made by the coach. It will only lead to your child losing trust in the coach and questioning every decision the coach makes in the future.

No coach should have to deal with that.

This will make it much harder to get all players to buy-in and get everyone on the same page.

Instead, if there's a coaching decision you disagree with and you think it's important enough that it warrants discussion, set up a meeting and talk to the coach about it.

12. Allow your child to be coached

If you trust in the coach, you must allow them to coach your child.

It's impossible for a coach to do their job if every time a coach makes a player run or raises his voice at a player the parent is going to step in and save them.

This reminds me of the highly controversial quote by Patrick Murphy:

"Uncoachable kids become unemployable adults, let your kids get used to somebody being tough on them. That's life, get over it."

This is a great quote but only applies to coaches that are tough on their players in the right way and truly care about their players. A 'tough love' coach holds their players accountable and teaches them tough life lessons.

This does not apply to coaches that verbally abuse their players. There is no place for that in youth sports.

If you know the coach cares about the players, then allow your child to be coached with 'tough love'.

13. Volunteer to help the team

Youth sports largely depends on the contribution of willing parents.

The more people willing to lend a hand, the easier it will be for everyone and happier the team will be.

Volunteering to help the team may involve selling raffle tickets, receiving donations at the door, filling drink bottles for the players, carrying a bag of basketballs, anything. Your help will be appreciated.

This is a great way to get to know other parents, players, and the coach, which will make the season much more enjoyable for you.

14. Display good body language at games

The first thing you must realize is that if the coach was to ask any player where their parents are sitting to watch the game and they'll be able to immediately turn around and point you out.

They know where you are and they will look at you many times throughout the game.

Your body language clearly shows how you're feeling and if yours is poor, you can bet that it's going to impact how much they enjoy the game.

Don't throw your hands in the air when your child misses an open layup. Don't put your head in your hands when one of their passes results in a turnover. If you do, what do you think will happen to their confidence? It's going to plummet.

As frustrating as youth sports can be at times, we all have to understand it's a game played by children and we must stay positive throughout the game.

If you ever catch your child looking over at you at any point during the game, you should be smiling and showing them that you enjoy being there.



15. Encourage positive life lessons

Youth sports is fantastic medium to teach long-lasting life lessons to the next generation of children.

At the start of the article we talked about knowing what's important. Winning isn't, the life lessons learnt from youth sports are.

We need to make a conscious effort to praise what's important.

I'll give you a few examples below...

15a. Commitment

Remind your child about the commitments that they've made to the team.

When they joined at the start of the season they knew that it involves attending practices and games. Now that they've made that commitment, they don't get to skip practice just because they don't feel like going.

Let your child know that if they don't want to play the next season, that's fine. But they've made a commitment for this season and they need to follow it through until the end.

15b. Sportsmanship

Praise your child when they show acts of sportsmanship.

Here are just a few examples of sportsmanship throughout a basketball game:

- Helping someone off the ground after taking a charge.
- Encouraging teammates from the sidelines.
- Shaking hands after the game.

On the same path, this also means talking to them sternly when they act unsportsmanlike for such things as receiving a technical foul.

It is a privilege to play basketball and players must know that.

15c. Perseverance

It's not easy to be good at something. It takes a lot of hard work.

Your child will learn this through hours of practice with the team and by themselves practicing shooting or dribbling drills.

As a parent, it's great to let your son or daughter know that you're proud of them for putting in the hard work to improve their game.

16. Don't force them to practice extra

While the player made a commitment to team practices and should be held accountable, most don't commit to practicing extra outside of that time and therefore should never be forced to.

If they are, it will rapidly lead to resentment of the sport and negative feelings towards the person forcing them to train. And that's the last thing we want to happen.

Remember that the main goal is participation in youth sports. If they want to go outside and work on their shot alone to get better, they will.

There's nothing wrong with hinting "*why don't you go outside and practice a few shots?*" when they're bored and asking for things to do, but never force them to do it.

I've heard of parents that force their child to go out and make a certain amount of shots every day after school. What do you think this is going to lead to? An NBA contract? No. It will lead to them quitting the sport they love.

17. Don't compare your child to other players

Comparing your child to other players on the team is setting yourself and your child up for disaster.

The first huge complication with doing so is that children develop at different rates.

Every association has that one player that seemed to be a man among boys at a young age because they developed so quickly. They were a foot taller than everyone else and dominated at will.

But then what happens? Everyone eventually starts to catch up and the player that relied on being bigger, stronger, and faster than everyone else doesn't have that advantage anymore.

Another reason is that the players will always have different levels of interest in the sport.

While your child may only be playing for fun and to make friends, the neighbour's child may have ambition to get selected by the high-school team.

It can be difficult to stop yourself comparing your child to another, but we all have to stop.

18. Never act like this...

How can we expect players to enjoy the game if this is happening on the sidelines...

<http://youtu.be/7XYQfiSpssA>

<http://youtu.be/SsMrIsfpnig>

<http://youtu.be/H7FN2KVXFNM>

Disgraceful behaviour.

19. Know your role at the game

"It always amazes me that spectators want to coach, coaches want to officiate, and officials just want to watch the game" – Lou Holtz

At the game there will be four main roles:

1. Player – they play the game
2. Coach – they coach the game.
3. Referee – they referee the game.
4. Spectator – they watch the game.

Parents usually fall into the fourth category: a spectator.

Not a player (adults playing against kids would be weird), not a referee (we already have people to do that), and not a coach (the team already has a coach).

Just watch, support, and encourage.

20. Don't stand out from the crowd

If you're a spectator of the game and regularly find yourself standing out from the crowd of other parents, you probably need to reevaluate how you watch a youth basketball game.

Countless times I've witnessed parents jumping up and down in the stands, constantly shouting out to their child, abusing referees and other players; this is all simply embarrassing their child.

They don't need the added pressure you're putting on them from the sidelines.

Sit back and enjoy the game.

21. Never yell at the referees

Does this even need to be said? To most parents it doesn't, but unfortunately it does need to be said to some.

The first thing to remember is that most of the referees in youth sports aren't very experienced. Often they're just young kids who help out for a bit of extra money.

We must remember that this is youth basketball and not the NBA.

We don't expect our players to make 100% of their shots so how can we expect referees to make the right call 100% of the time?

22. Treat your child the same after a win or a loss

Don't let the outcome of the game determine the way you treat your child on the car ride home.

Your child must know that whether they win or lose doesn't change the way you love them or the way you feel about them.

While you may know that you still love them unconditionally regardless of the outcome, it can be easy for a child to get confused if you're elated and caring after a win but unhappy and reserved after a loss.

Show your child that your love for them is not based on winning or losing a game of youth basketball.

23. Don't make excuses for your child

When your child is feeling sad or frustrated about a loss or poor personal performance don't find excuses to make them feel better.

After most close losses in youth sports you'll usually find parents making excuses like 'the court was too slippery', or 'the referees were favouring the other team'.

All this does is teach the players not to be accountable for the outcome of the game or their performance, and instead find an external force to blame the loss on.

Steve Henson puts it best in [this great article](#)...

“Athletics is one of the best ways for young people to take risks and deal with failure because the consequences aren’t fatal; they aren’t permanent”.

Allow your child to experience failure and learn to deal with it through youth sports.

24. Don’t force your child to discuss the game

Sometimes after a tough loss or a bad game individually your child needs time to themselves and would prefer not to discuss the game.

Never force them to talk about it.

The best thing you can do in this situation is allow them to have their space or talk about something other than the game they just played.

Remember that they would prefer you to be mum or dad than a basketball expert.

25. Ask the right questions

The questions you ask after the game will show the child what you believe is most important.

If you ask *“How many points did you score?”* it emphasizes to the child that the amount of points they score individually is the most important part of the game.

Instead ask *“Did you have fun?”* or *“Did you enjoy the game?”*.

And don’t forget that you should be asking them the same questions regardless of a win or a loss.

26. Cheer for all players on the team

Make sure you’re showing support for all players and not just your own child.

In no way are you obligated to cheer for other players, it’s just a nice thing to do and shows that you’re supporting the whole team.

This will always have a great impact on the other parents and coach and in turn you will be much better liked by everyone associated with the team.

27. Don’t bribe your child

Nope, I’m not joking. This actually happens. And you’ll probably be surprised how often it happens, too.

I’ve seen parents pay their child per point they score. If they win they get to go to the beach for the day. The list is endless with rewards for performance.

The argument for the parents that pay their children for their performance is usually ‘it’s motivation’...

The problem with this is that the child becomes extrinsically motivated. Meaning that they’re motivated by money or rewards instead of being motivated by improving their game,

helping the team, and having fun.

I repeat: It is not 'motivation' to pay your child to score points in their youth basketball game.

Conclusion

Youth sports is about the kids. Not the adults.

Parents treating a local under 12's basketball game like it's game 7 of the NBA finals has to stop.

To put it simply, youth sports is an environment to learn, stay healthy, make friends, and have fun. Our number one goal should be to keep children playing youth sports.

Parents need to remember that their actions play a big role in whether a child enjoys and learns from their youth sporting experience or not.

Ps. Don't get me wrong, I'm not blaming the parents for every problem in youth sports. I'll be making a similar post for coaches and players soon so make sure to sign up to get notifications when they're published!

31 BASKETBALL DRILLS & GAMES



For Kids

C O A C H M A C

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Introduction

Hey there,

I'm Coach Mac and I want to take a second to thank you for downloading a copy of 31 Basketball Drills and Games for Kids eBook.

I want to let you get to the basketball drills and games as soon as possible, so I'll keep this quick...

On the following pages are the drills I use most often when I'm coaching or training a youth basketball team.

Although many these drills can be used for basketball players of all ages, all of them are perfect for teaching kids the game of basketball and assisting them to improve their skills.

I encourage you to spend some time going through this eBook, find the drills that you think would work best for your team, and then implement them at your next practice.

For each drill I will explain how the drill works, its purpose, how to set it up, the instructions behind running the drill, different variations you can use, and coaching points for each drill.

With a total of 31 great drills in this book, you should always have fresh drills and games that your players will love and that will help them improve.

I truly hope this eBook will assist you at improving your practices and will also help you become a better coach.

Good luck!

- Coach Mac

Shooting Drills





PERFECTS

How the Drill Works:

The drill begins with three lines a few feet out around the basket. Players shoot focusing on form and aiming to swish the ball through the hoop, then rotate to the next line.

Purpose:

A great shooting warm up drill that allows players to work on shooting with the proper form and allows coaches to watch each player and then provide feedback about how they can improve their technique.

Setup:

- Every player needs a basketball
- Set up three lines around the basket. On both sides and at the top.
- Even number of players in each line.

Instructions:

1. The first player in the first line shoots the ball, rebounds their shot, and joins the next line.
2. As soon as the first person's shot has been made or missed, the first person from the second line shoots, rebounds, and joins the third line.





3. Then the first person from the third line shoots, rebounds, and joins the first line.
4. This cycle continues so that no one will ever be shooting at the same time.

Scoring System:

- Everyone counts their individual makes and misses.

or

- The team counts number of makes and misses together.

or

- Team makes a certain amount of swishes.

Variations:

Distance - As the players develop you can start moving them further away from the basket. Form must always be perfect though.

No Line Rotation - I've used this drill with some young players that keep getting mixed up with when to change lines and which one to change to. If you'd prefer you can have the players return to the same line after each shot to make it easier.

One Hand Shooting - Can run this drill using one hand only to shoot the ball. This ensures that players aren't pushing the ball with their off-hand as well.



Coaching Points:

- Players must be shooting with perfect form every time.
- Hold follow through until the ball has at made it through the hoop or missed.
- Coaches should be viewing each players shooting form from different angles.
- Ask players to hold the basketball unless they're shooting.
- Emphasize to your players how important it is to develop good form on your shot!



21 CONES

How the Drill Works:

Place 21 cones at the baseline of one end of the floor and split the players up into two teams at the other end of the floor. Players shoot and are 'rewarded' a cone if they make the shot which they must sprint to the other end of the court to receive. The team with the most cones at the end of the game wins.

Purpose:

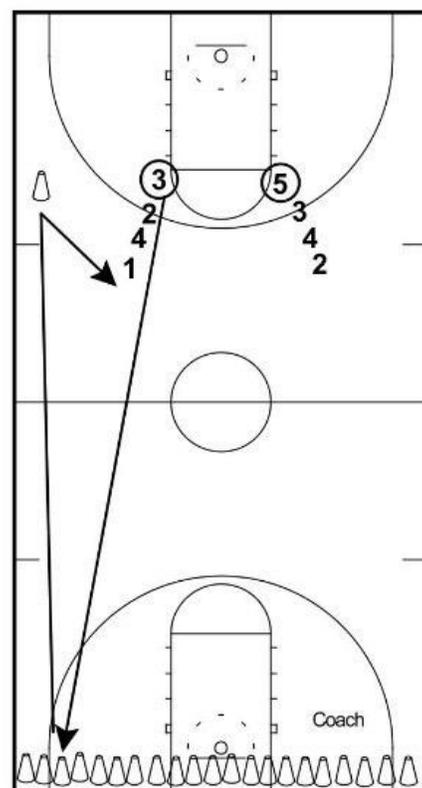
It's a fun variation to a normal shooting drill that keeps players interested and excited. Also works on shooting under pressure.

Setup:

- Place 21 cones at the opposite end of the court.
- Split your group up into two teams.
- One basketball per team.

Instructions:

1. Players start shooting on the coach's whistle.
2. On every make by a team, the person who shoots must rebound the ball and pass it back to the next person in line before running down to the other end to receive a cone for their team.





3. The player then places the cone in their teams 'safe-house' near their line and joins the end of the line.

Scoring System:

- The team that finishes with the most cones at the end of the game wins!

Variations:

Increase or Decrease Cones - I've used this drill with both 13 or 33 cones as well. Use any number of cones as long as it's an odd number so there's a winner.

Shooting Position - Usually adults will shoot three-pointers but youth teams can shoot from the elbow or anywhere else on the floor.

More Groups - Instead of playing with only two groups, you can create up to 4 groups and place the cones in the middle of the court instead.

Coaching Points:

- Make sure players rebound the ball after a make instead of running straight away to get a cone!
- Don't allow teams to just let their best three-point shooters shoot. Everyone has to take it in turns.
- Take note of who your best shooters under pressure are! You'll need to know come game-time!
- If you don't have cones, you could use tennis balls or anything else similar.



PIVOT SHOOTING

How the Drill Works:

Players start in two lines on the baseline. Each player takes it in turns passing their ball out to a coach or parent and then following the pass to receive the ball back in a jump stop. The players then square up to the basket before taking a variety of shots.

Purpose:

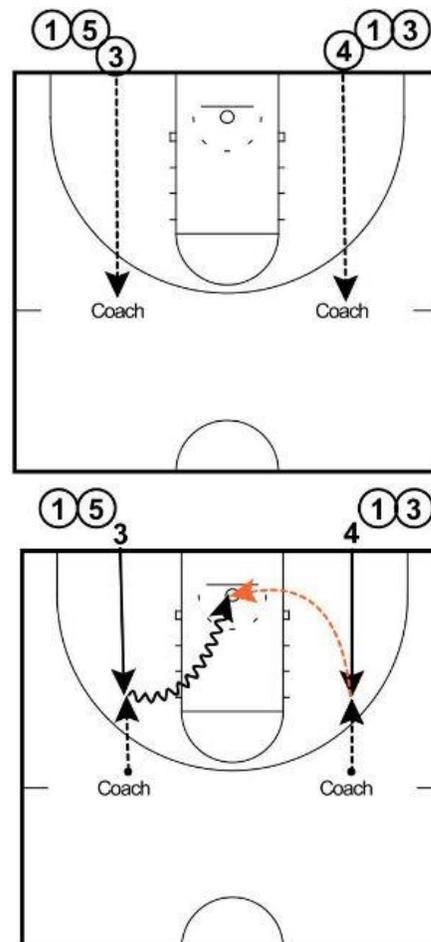
Teaches players to square up to the ring, works on pivoting, and also allows the players to put up a lot of shots.

Setup:

- Two lines of players on the baseline.
- One coach or parent at the top of each line.
- Every player has a basketball.

Instructions:

1. The first player in each line passes their basketball out to the coach in front of them.
2. As soon as the coach catches it, the player cuts hard straight out to them and receives the pass in a 2 foot jump stop facing the passer.





3. The players then must pivot and square up to the ring before shooting or driving to the basket.
4. After rebounding their own shot, the player joins the opposite line.

Variations:

Different Shots - Jump shot, layup, one-dribble pull-up, step-back, pump fake and drive, etc.

Catching Position - Decide the catching position depending on the age/skill level of your players. Really young players can catch as close as the block and older players can catch at the high post or the wing.

One Group - If you have less than 5 players use one group instead of two.

Coaching Points:

- Players must catch the ball in a two-foot jump stop so that they can pivot with either foot.
- Remind the players that the higher they jump before the jump stop, the more off-balance they're going to be when they land.
- Watch out for travels. This is a shooting footwork drill.
- Players must call for the basketball and show target hands when approaching the elbow to receive the pass back.
- When pivoting, players shouldn't come out of their low stance.



CHASE DOWN LAYUPS

How the Drill Works:

Two lines of players on the baseline at each end of the court. The offensive player starts with an advantage and sprints the court and must lay the ball up while under pressure from the defensive player.

Purpose:

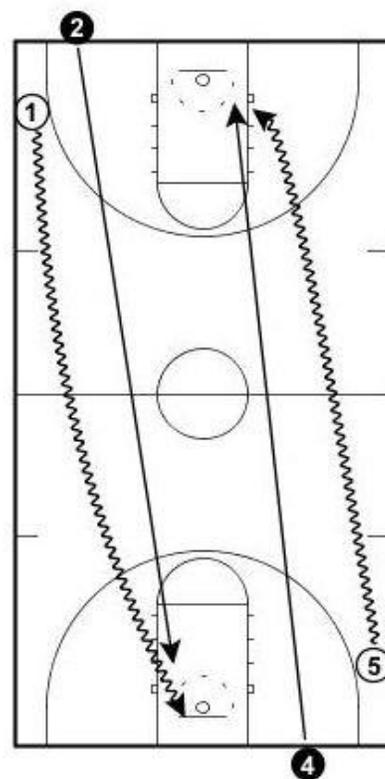
To allow players to practice layups at full speed while under pressure from a defender. This drill also works on chase-down defense.

Setup:

- Two lines of players on the baseline at each end of the court.
- Players in the offensive line all have a basketball.
- A coach at each end of the court to start the drill.

Instructions:

1. Coach starts by bringing the offensive player out a few steps depending on how fast they are compared to the defense to give them the fast break advantage.
2. On the coach's call, the offensive and defensive players sprint the floor.





3. The offensive player's goal is to make the layup and the defensive player's goal is to challenge the layup without fouling.
4. After the make or miss, both players join the end of the lines at their current end of the floor.

Variations:

Opposite Side of the Floor - Perform the drill from the other side of the floor so that the players have to dribble and make a layup with their left hand.

Competitive - Play until a player makes a certain amount of layups.

Coaching Points:

- Offensive player should be taking long steps on the layup to be under control and balance, and then jumping high on the second step before laying the ball in.
- Offensive player must drive in at the correct angle and not be fading away towards the baseline because they're scared of contact or getting blocked.
- All teams must be practicing this drill on both sides of the floor so that your players are working on their opposite hand.
- Defensive player shouldn't be flying out of bounds. If they challenge and offense misses the layup, they should be there for the rebound.
- The defensive players must do their best to avoid contact.



PRESSURE

How the Drill Works:

Players take it in turns shooting free-throws. If the player before you makes the free-throw you are under pressure and must make the shot or you are out of the game.

Purpose:

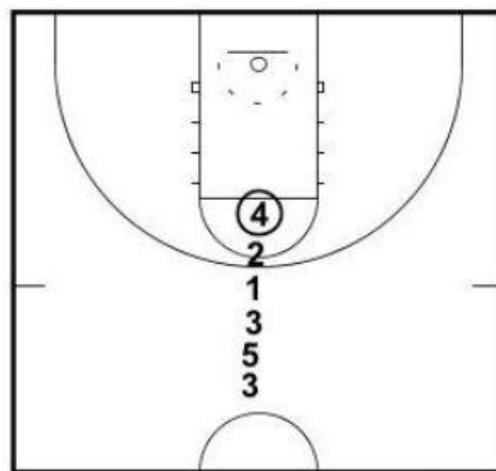
As the name suggest, pressure is designed to put the players under pressure at the free-throw line to simulate the pressure of an in-game free-throw.

Setup:

- All players participating lining up in a straight line from the free-throw line.
- One basketball at the front of the line.

Instructions:

1. When the player in front of you makes a shot you are under pressure.
2. If you miss a shot while under pressure you're out.
3. If you make a shot while under pressure, the pressure continues on to the next person until someone misses.





4. Once someone misses the pressure shot and goes out, there is no pressure until someone makes another shot.

Variations:

Jump Shots - While this was created as a free-throw drill, there's no reason you can't use it to put pressure on other shots on the court. You can use this drill on any shot.

Pressure Continues - Traditionally, when the player under pressure makes the shot the pressure is cancelled out. A way to make the game quicker is once someone makes a free-throw the pressure never cancels. The first person to miss is out.

Coaching Points:

- Make sure the players are going through their full free-throw routine.
- Don't allow players to put each other off at practice. I find this leads to players getting angry at each other and ruining the game.
- Keep in mind this drill involves a long line which we're against for youth basketball practice. I don't recommend using this in the middle of practice but just at the end as something fun as the players cool down.



31

How the Drill Works:

Each group will be competing against each other to be the first group to reach 31 points. The players will each take three shots - one from the 3-point line, one from outside the key, and one inside the key - and have the potential to score 6 points before passing to the next player in the group.

Purpose:

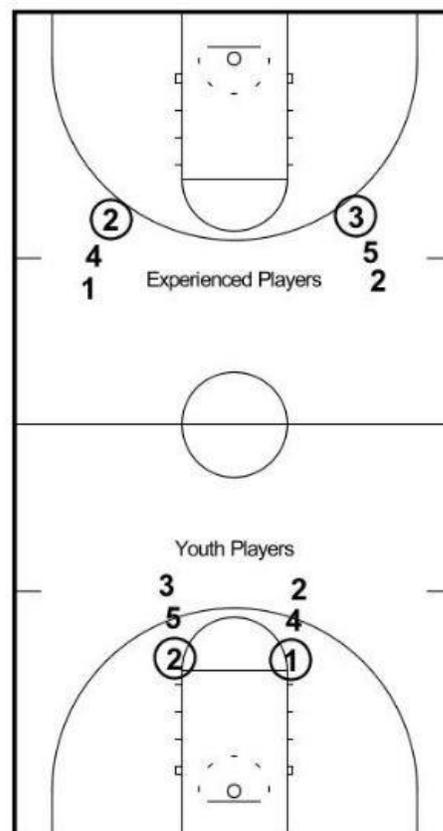
To work on shooting from all different spots on the basketball court while under pressure and at game speed.

Setup:

- Split the players you have up into 4 even groups and get them to form a line outside the 3-point line on each wing.
- 3 - 5 players in each team.
- First person in each line needs a ball.

Instructions:

1. On the coach's whistle, the first person in each line will take a shot from the three-point line. If they make it, their team receives three points.





2. Irrelevant of whether the shot is made or not, the shooter will get the rebound, retreat outside of the key, and take another mid-range jump shot. This shot is worth two points.
3. The player will again rebound their shot, and this time they're allowed to take a shot inside the key. This shot is worth one point.
4. They then rebound the ball once more and pass it to the next player in the group who repeats the same process.

Scoring System:

- The game has no time limit. The goal is to score 31 points as a group. When a group reaches 31 points they call out '31' and are the winning team.
- The points are scored as follows:
 - Three-point shot - 3 points
 - Outside the key - 2 points
 - Inside the key - 1 point
- Each player has a maximum of three shots each time it's their go.

Variations:

Youth Players - Instead of shooting from the three-point line, have each group start on the elbow. This means the first shot is from the elbow (worth 3 points), the second shot is from outside the key (worth 2 points), and the third shot is from inside the key (worth 1 point).

Different Target Amount of Points - Instead of playing to 31, you can play till 11, 21, or even 41.



Coaching Points:

- The players shooting form is paramount. Make corrections to any poor technique you see.
- Assign a designated player from each group to be the score keeper. I've noticed in the past if you don't they'll likely get mixed up. But when someone is given the role it makes it more important and they pay attention.
- Groups will rotate positions after a team wins that round. I usually get my teams to play four rounds so they will shoot from each wing on the court.
- Make sure players are hustling after each rebound so their teams gets to take as many shots as possible.

Dribbling Drills





DRIBBLING LINES

How the Drill Works:

All players start on the baseline with a basketball. The coach then instructs them to perform different dribbling moves as they dribble up and down the court.

Purpose:

This is a simple drill to teach the basics of dribbling to new players.

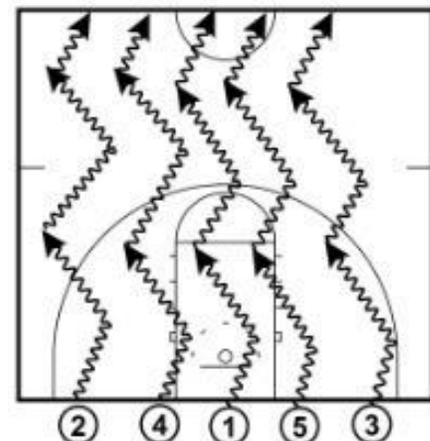
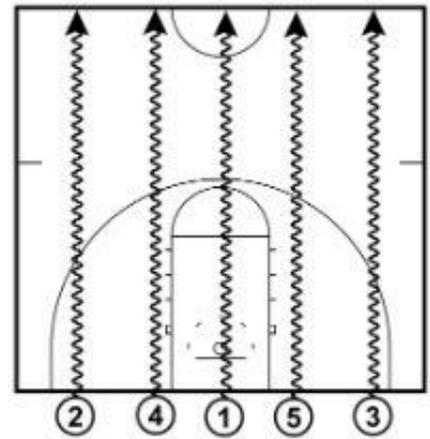
It's a good way to introduce new moves without overwhelming them and will also help to improve the technique of the movements players already know.

Setup:

- Every player must have a basketball.
- All players lining up along the baseline. If you have more than 8 players, create two lines.

Instructions:

1. The first thing you must do is explain the dribbling move you want them to perform. The best way is by demonstration.
2. Then the coach calls out 'go' and the players either dribble to half-way or full-court and back performing the dribble move.





3. Each trip down the floor, change which type of dribble move the players use.

Variations:

Dribbling Moves - Here are a few of the different dribbles I like to use with beginner players...

- Right hand up, left hand back
- Crossovers
- Behind-the-back
- Through-the-legs
- Dribble low
- Dribbling backwards

Coaching Points:

- Players must keep their heads up at all times.
- Once they develop good technique, focus on the players pushing off with their outside foot when making a move.
- Write down the dribbling moves so that you don't forget them. I always do!



DRIBBLING KNOCKOUT

How the Drill Works:

All players dribble around in a small area and the goal is to knock other players' basketball out of the area while keeping your own basketball alive.

Purpose:

A great drill to work on dribbling skills and protecting the basketball all while evading other players in a tight space.

Setup:

- The first thing the coach must do is determine the area the players will be dribbling in. This will depend on the amount of players you have but will usually be the three-point line or the 1/3 court line.
- All players must have a basketball.

Instructions:

1. On the coaches call, all players try and steal the ball away from each other while keeping their own dribble alive.
2. When a players ball is knocked away out of the designated area, they are then out and must go and stand on the sideline and wait till the rest are finished.





3. Coaches must watch and if a player either travel or double-dribbles, they are automatically out.
4. As the group gets smaller and smaller, you should move them to a smaller space like only the key area.
5. The last one in wins!

Variations:

Weak-Hand Only - To make this game much harder and to work on weak-hand dribbling, play a game of dribble knockout in which all players are only allowed to dribble with their non-preferred hand.

Coaching Points:

- If a player fouls someone else, travels, or double dribbles, they're out. It's the coach's job to keep an eye out for these things.
- Constantly remind players to keep their head up.
- Have a designated area for players that get out or you'll end up with kids everywhere!



COLLISION DRIBBLING

How the Drill Works:

Players are all in a small playing area and must dribble around dodging each other without losing their basketball and without accidentally hitting someone else's basketball away.

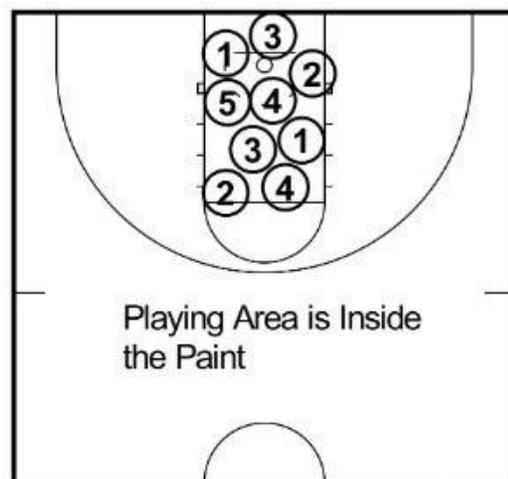
Purpose:

This drill is used to teach players to dribble in confined spaces and to keep their heads up. Players also learn to be creative with their dribble since there's not much space to dribble.

Setup:

All players have a basketball.

- The coach decides on the playing area depending on the size of the group. The playing area could be the key area, an area set out by cones, the three-point line, etc.



Instructions:

1. On the coach's call, all players will start dribbling around each other in the small space aiming to keep their dribble under control.
2. If anyone loses control of the basketball, they simply retrieve it and enter back in the game.



Variations:

Competitive - You can allow players to try and knock each other's basketballs out of play. This variation is known as 'Dribble Knockout'.

Weak Hand Only - One way to increase the difficulty of this drill is to only allow players to dribble with their weak hand.

Coaching Points:

- Don't allow players to all dribble in the same direction or it will be too easy.
- Keep reminding the players to keep their heads up!
- Encourage players to use both hands. Not just their strong hand.



SCARECROW TIGGY

How the Drill Works:

Players all start in the half-court. There are one or two taggers and everyone else has a basketball. The taggers must run around trying to tag players dribbling. If tagged, the dribblers must stand as 'scarecrow' until another dribbler frees them by rolling a basketball through their legs.

Purpose:

This drill is great for developing dribbling skills because the players must keep their heads up and focus on the taggers and not put their head down and watch the dribble.

Setup:

- The coach selects one or two players to be the taggers depending on the size of the group.
- Preferably these taggers have different coloured singlets on so that other players can quickly identify them.
- All other players have a basketball and are standing in the playing area.

Instructions:

1. When the coach calls out 'Go', the game begins.





2. The taggers must run around and attempt to tag all the players dribbling a basketball.
3. When tagged, the dribbler must stand with the basketball on their head and their feet apart.
4. When a player is tagged, other dribblers must attempt to free them by rolling their basketball through the tagged players legs.
5. Scarecrow Tiggy never has a winner unless the taggers happen to get everyone out at one time (this doesn't happen often).
6. Every couple of minutes change who the taggers are until everyone has had a turn.

Variations:

Elimination - To make this game more competitive, you can try the variation where once players are tagged they're out and must sit on the sideline until there is one dribbler left who is the winner.

Coaching Points:

- Players are not allowed to throw the ball between a teammates legs, the ball must be rolled.
- Dribblers are not allowed to travel, double dribble, or any other violation. If they do, they're out.
- Change up the amount of taggers and the size of the playing space depending on how many players you have.



DRIBBLE TAG

How the Drill Works:

Every player starts the game with a basketball. The coach selects one or two players who are the taggers and they must attempt to tag everyone out. When you've been tagged, you must sit on the sideline or the baseline and wait until the next game.

Purpose:

Similar to scarecrow tiggly, this drill is great for improving dribbling skills because the dribblers have to focus on the taggers and not their dribble.

Setup:

- The coach first decides on the playing area which will depend on the amount of players you have.
- All players start the game with a basketball.
- The coach selects one or two players to be the taggers.

Instructions:

1. On the coach's call, the taggers must dribble around the playing area attempting to tag the other players.
2. The other players must dribble around without committing a dribbling violation and avoiding getting tagged.





3. If a player does get tagged, they are out and must sit down out-of-bounds and wait for the next game.

Variations:

Taggers Don't Dribble - If the taggers are having a lot of trouble getting other players out, consider allowing them to run around without dribbling.

Two Balls - If you have enough basketballs for two each and your players are skilled enough, give each player two basketballs that they must dribble while the taggers only have to dribble one.

Coaching Points:

- If the taggers are struggling to tag anyone, consider allowing them to run around without having to dribble a basketball.
- Vary the size of the court and amount of taggers depending on the amount of players you have.
- If a dribbler commits a dribbling violation, they are automatically out.



SHARKS AND MINNONS

How the Drill Works:

Sharks and Minnows is one of my favorite drills for youth basketball. The aim of the game is for the minnows (dribblers) to dribble from baseline to baseline without getting tagged by the sharks (taggers).

Purpose:

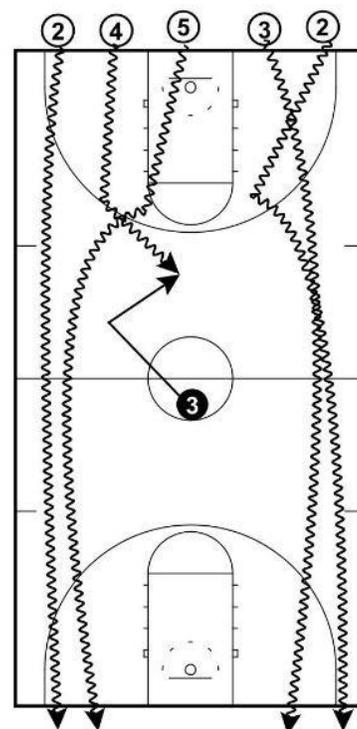
A super fun drill that forces the dribblers to keep their heads up and dodge the defenders in front of them.

Setup:

- All players have a basketball and line up along the baseline.
- The coach selects one or two players to be taggers. Taggers don't have a basketball and are preferably in a different coloured singlet.
- The taggers stand in the middle of the court.

Instructions:

1. The game starts when either the taggers or coach call out 'go'. On this signal, all the minnows (dribblers) attempt to dribble from one side of the court to the other without getting tagged by the sharks.
2. If a shark does tag them, they must stand in the spot they were tagged, place the basketball between their feet, and





now are scarecrows. If a minnow comes within reach of them, they can tag them to get them out.

3. The last minnow that hasn't been tagged is the winner.

Variations:

Taggers Dribbling - Depending on the age and skill of your players, decide whether you want the sharks to be dribbling a basketball or not.

Number of Sharks - Adjust the number of sharks to the skill level of your team and who you're selecting as the sharks.

Coaching Points:

- As always, if there's a dribbling violation by a minnow they are immediately out.
- Scarecrows must hold the ball between their feet at all times and stay on balance. This stops them moving too far and cheating.
- Implement a time limit if players are taking too long to get from one side to the other.



2. The other players must follow the leader as they dribble around the court while staying in a single file.
3. After a minute or so, send the leader to the back of the line and the next player in line becomes the new leader.
4. The drill is over once all players have had a turn at being the leader.

Variations:

Two Basketballs - If your team is advanced enough and you have enough basketballs to accommodate everyone, you can give each player a second basketball to dribble.

Dribble Moves - If your team finds dribbling on the lines too easy, incorporate dribble moves each time the players turn. The leader performs any type of dribble move and the rest of the players must perform the same one at the corner.

Coaching Points:

- If the player that's leading is better than their teammates, ask them to slow down so the others can keep up with them.
- No overtaking another player unless they lose their basketball and leave the line.
- Make sure the players are dribbling with their opposite hand too!

Passing Drills





PARTNER PASSING

How the Drill Works:

Each player finds a partner and has one basketball between the pair. They line up on lines opposite each other and must practice performing different kinds of passes.

Purpose:

A great drill for teaching the absolute basics of passing. Allows the coaches to easily evaluate and make corrections to the form of different players.

Setup:

- Everyone starts by finding a partner.
- Once in partners, grab one basketball between two.
- Designate two parallel lines that all players should line up on.

Instructions:

1. The coach tells the players which pass they'll be practicing first and then tells them to start passing.
2. Coaches must now go around and check the technique of each individual player and make corrections when it's necessary.
3. Every couple of minutes the coach should call out a different kind of pass and all the kids change.





Variations:

Different Passes - Here are the basics to start with

- Chest pass
- Bounce pass
- Overhead pass
- One-handed push pass - right hand.
- One-handed push pass - left hand.

Distance Apart - If your players are strong enough, get one of the pair to take a couple of steps back so that the pass must be made further.

Coaching Points:

- Make sure you mix up which type of pass you want them to perform (bounce pass, chest pass, one-handed push-pass, ect).
- Don't allow players to be silly and throw the basketball too hard at their partner. It will end up with blood noses.
- Make sure all coaches are teaching the same passing technique so the kids don't get confused.



STATIONARY KEEPINGS OFF

How the Drill Works:

Players are stuck in a stationary positions spread out around the playing area and must pass it to one another without letting the defenders get a steal or deflection.

Purpose:

The purpose of this drill is to teach the importance of spacing to players by not allowing them to sprint at the basketball. It also teaches quick decision making on the catch.

Setup:

- All players should spread themselves out within the playing area. The size of the playing area will depend on how many players you have. Usually half court.
- The coach is the only one that needs a basketball.
- The coach then selects one or two players to be the defenders.

Instructions:

1. To start the drill, the coach throws the basketball to one of the offensive players.
2. Now the offensive team must pass the basketball around trying to keep it away from the defenders who are allowed to run around attempting to get a deflection.





3. If the defenders get a deflection the ball goes back to the offensive team and they start again.
4. After a minute or so change the defenders until everyone has had a turn at defending.

Variations:

Offensive Players Can Move - You can allow the offensive players to move to see how it goes. If the group is young and inexperienced, it will be a good teaching point because everyone will run towards the basketball and it will be much harder.

Coaching Points:

- Allow the defenders to sprint around wildly. They'll have fun.
- Encourage the offensive team to make quick decisions when they receive the basketball.
- Make sure everyone is getting a turn to pass on offense. If they're not, join in the game and pass them the basketball.
- Players must be calling for the basketball.



PIGGY CIRCLES

How the Drill Works:

Piggy circles is similar to piggy-in-the-middle except we use the three circles on the court as the boundary. In groups of 4, there are 3 passers outside the circle and 1 defender inside the circle. The offensive players must pass to each other without letting the defender deflect the basketball.

Purpose:

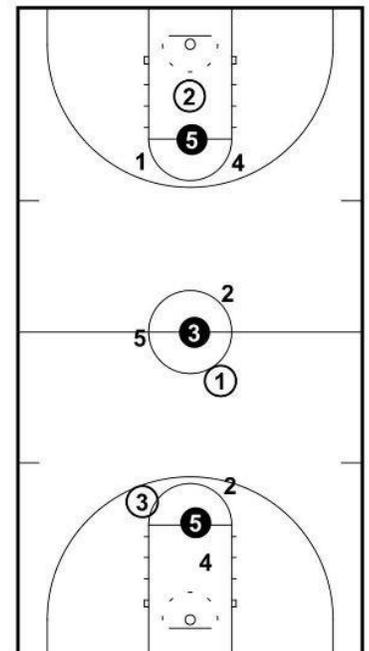
This drill will develop passing skill and will teach your players the importance of pass fakes and how to execute them properly.

Setup:

- Start by getting players in groups of four players. The maximum amount of players that can run this drill on one court is 12 at a time.
- The group of four will only need one basketball.
- Each group of four is designated a circle and must decide the 3 offensive players and 1 defensive player.

Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the 3 offensive players passing the basketball to each other. They must stay stationary in their spots.





2. The defender is allowed to move around the circle but cannot tap the basketball from a player's hands.
3. After one minute, each group switches to a new defender until each player has had a turn at being the defender.

Variations:

4 Offensive Players - You can try running this drill with 4 offensive players. Whether it will work or be too easy depends on the age and skill level of your players.

Coaching Points:

- Be careful about kids being silly in this drill. Since it's such a short distance, passing the basketball too hard could lead to injuries if players can't catch well.
- Make sure the offensive team is utilizing pass fakes to put off the defender.
- The defender must be active with high hands and quick feet.



COUNT 'EM UP

How the Drill Works:

This drill involves two even teams competing against each other in a game of keepings off. This is a more advanced drill of the keepings off game. Players are allowed to move around within a specific playing area and the goal is to make a certain amount of passes. No dribbling or shooting is allowed.

Purpose:

This drill works on getting open using change of pace and change of direction, denying the offensive player, and making smart passes to limit turnovers.

Setup:

- First you must split your group up into two teams as even as possible. If possible, these teams should be wearing different colours.
- The drill only requires one basketball and should start with the coach.
- Depending on the amount of players you have, set a playing area and decide how many passes are required to be awarded a point and explain that to both teams. Usually this will be played in the half court.



Instructions:

1. To start the drill, all players must match up against someone from the opposition.



2. When everyone is matched up, the coach passes the basketball to one of the players on the floor and the game begins immediately.
3. For this example we'll say the offense is trying to make 15 consecutive passes. If they reach this goal, they receive one point and then it becomes the opposition's turn.
4. If the opposition gets a deflection or the ball out of bounds or gets a steal, the offensive team does not receive a point and now the defense has the basketball.
5. This continues until a team reaches a certain amount of points.

Variations:

Beginner Version - The beginner version of this drill is called 'Stationary Keepings Off' and it's on page _____. The difference is that there are less defenders and the offensive players can't move.

Less Defenders - If you want to make the game a bit easier, take away a defender or two so that the defense is scrambling and there is always one offensive player open. This forces the offense to space properly.

Coaching Points:

- Encourage players to set screens for each other and use body fakes to get open.
- Encourage the best players to play against each other and challenge each other.
- Spacing is of the utmost importance. Don't allow players to sprint at the basketball.



CONTINUOUS 3 ON 2

How the Drill Works:

This is a full court continuous 3 on 2 drill. Three players attack two defenders and regardless of if the offensive team scores or turns the basketball over, the two defenders outlet the basketball to a line at mid-court and then attack three on two at the other end of the court.

Purpose:

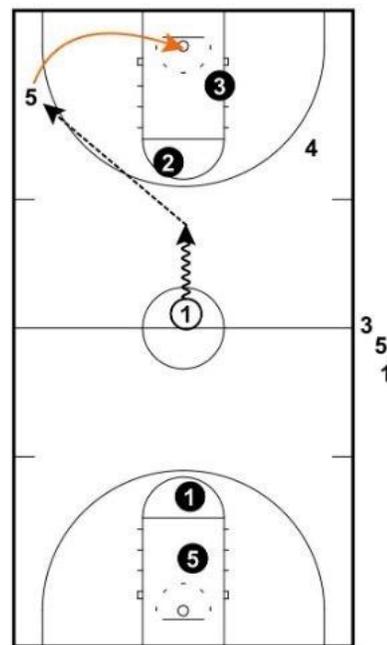
By always having an extra offensive player the players learn that they must space the court well to get an open shot each trip down the floor. This is one of my favourite drills for improving decision making.

Setup:

- The drill starts with 3 offensive players in the middle of the court, 2 defenders in each half court, and the rest of the players standing in one line out of bounds at the half court line.
- Only one basketball is needed for this drill.

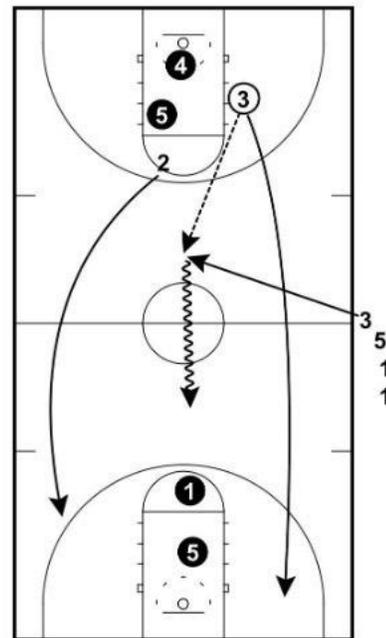
Instructions:

1. The three offensive players attack two defenders at one end of the court and will either score or the defensive players will get the basketball.





2. Once the two defensive players get the basketball (either by steal, rebound, or because the offensive team scored), they outlet to the next player in line at half way who sprints in to help advance the ball.
3. The two defenders now become offensive team and they get an extra player from the sideline to give them 3 players. They now attack towards the other end of the court 3 on 2.
4. As for the 3 previous offensive players, 2 of them become the next defenders and 1 of them joins the end of the out of bounds line.
5. This process repeats for a set amount of time.



Variations:

Continuous 4 on 3 - The exact same process as what's written above except that instead of 2 defenders there are 3, and instead of 3 offensive players there are 4.

Coaching Points:

- Make sure the offensive players are staying spaced on the floor so that they can get open looks.
- There's no reason the offensive team shouldn't be taking an open shot.
- If you want to make the drill more advanced, don't allow the players to dribble the basketball.



FOUR CORNERS

How the Drill Works:

The coach will create a large square using four cones and assign a line of players to each cone. The players then dribble in, jump stop, pivot, and pass to the next line before joining the end of it.

Purpose:

This is a great drill for working on jump stops, pivoting, and passing. It will also allow the coach to watch closely and give feedback on all footwork movements.

Setup:

- The coach must first create a large square in the half-court by placing four cones an even distance apart. There must also be another cone or D-man in the exact middle of the square. You can see where I recommend placing these cones in the diagram.
- Split your team up into four groups and send each group to a cone. The cones will be the starting position for each line.
- The person at the front of each line has a basketball.



Instructions:

1. The first thing the coach must do is tell the players which way they'll be passing (either right or left) and which kind of pivot they should use.



2. When the coach calls out 'go', each player with a basketball dribbles in towards the middle cone, performs a jump stop a couple of feet away, pivots, and then passes to the next line before joining the end of it.
3. The next player in the that catches the basketball does not start until the coach has called out 'go' again.

Variations:

Different Pivots - Teach both front and reverse pivots to your players and get them to practice using both of them under control.

Different Passes - You can use different types of passes throughout the drill to change things up.

Coaching Points:

- Each player must be pivoting the same direction so that two balls don't end up being passed to one line. Do make sure to reverse the direction half way through the drill.
- Use front and reverse pivots and make sure players aren't traveling.
- Explain to the players it's better to jump stop with a small hop. The higher they jump, the more off-balance they'll be when they land.



RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

How the Drill Works:

This drill involves players dribbling up and down the court and the coach calling out 'Go' and 'Stop'. When the coach calls out go, the players dribble. When the coach calls out stop, the players perform a jump stop. Can also add pivots.

Purpose:

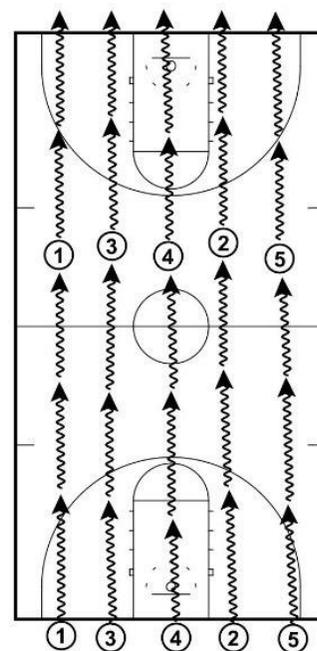
This is a perfect drill for teaching the jump stop and pivoting. It's one of the few drills I use with all youth basketball teams.

Setup:

- The drill starts with every player line up along the baseline holding a basketball.
- If you have more than 10 players, I recommend creating two lines.

Instructions:

1. Everyone starts on the baseline in triple threat position.
2. The coach will then lead the players up the court by calling out 'go' and 'stop'. On go, the players begin dribbling at a comfortable pace towards the opposite end of the court. When the coach says stop, the players must immediately perform a jump stop.





3. This continues until the players reach the other end of the court.
4. Once your players are comfortable with the jump stops and are performing them correctly, you can make the drill more advanced by adding pivots.
5. You can either say 'pivot' and allow them to pivot either way. Or you can be specific and say 'right foot pivot' or 'left foot pivot'.

Variations:

Pivots - Once the players have got experience using the jump stop, consider adding both front and reverse pivots to the drill.

Stride Stop - Instead of using the normal jump stop, have your players stride stop.

Coaching Points:

- Players must not jump too high on the jump stops.
- Make sure players in good stance when they land after the jump stop. Knees bent and head up.
- If adding pivots, make sure players don't raise out of their stance when pivoting.



EXPLODE, PIVOT, PASS

How the Drill Works:

The drill involves players starting on the sideline, taking 2 hard dribbles away from the sideline, performing a jump stop and a pivot, and then passing back to the next player in line.

Purpose:

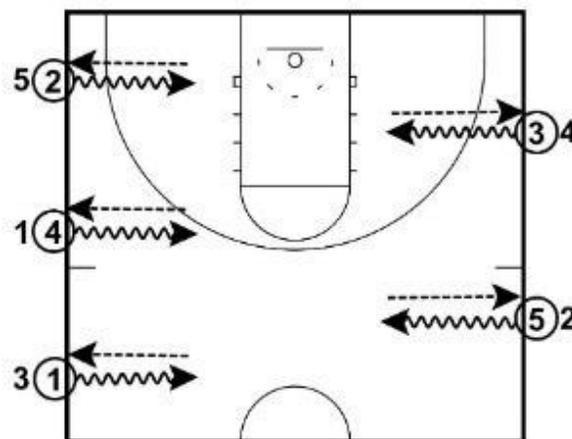
This is a great drill to work on a number of different key footwork skills from exploding off the dribble, to jump stops on balance, to learning how to stay low while pivoting.

Setup:

- Players get into groups of 2 or more. I prefer 3 players in each group if possible.
- Each group has one basketball and should start in a straight line behind either the sideline or the baseline.

Instructions:

1. The player starting with the basketball must begin the drill behind the line in triple threat stance.
2. Their first action is to take two explosive dribbles out from the line and then perform a controlled jump stop.





3. After the jump stop, the player pivots 180 degrees until they're facing their group and makes a strong chest pass to the next person in line. They then jog to the end of the line.
4. The three main things coaches are looking at are:
 - No traveling when exploding off the dribble.
 - A controlled jump stop.
 - A controlled pivot.
5. This process continues for a set amount of time.

Variations:

Amount of Players in Group - The amount of players in each group can vary from 2 - 5.

Coaching Points:

- The player receiving the basketball should be starting in a low stance and showing target hands.
- Players must explode out with the dribble. Don't allow them to go half-speed.
- Switch up which kind of pivot the players use. It can be forward or reverse, and with their left or right foot.

Defense Drills





DEFENSIVE MIRRORS

How the Drill Works:

Two players line up on two parallel lines and then the defensive player must mimic their offensive partner's movements by sliding up and down the line. The offensive players attempts to evade the defender.

Purpose:

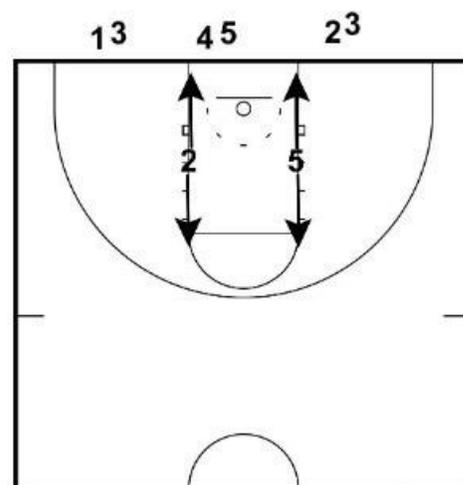
A drill that works on reaction times, will teach your team that they are quicker in a low defensive stance, and will help them with their defensive footwork.

Setup:

- Everyone starts by finding a partner and standing in pairs behind the baseline.
- If you have another coach, it's best to use both ends of the court.
- For this example, we'll use the parallel lines of the key, but if you have two other parallel lines on your home court, you can use them too.
- Coach should have something to keep time during the drill.

Instructions:

1. The first pair comes out and sets themselves up directly opposite each other on the two parallel lines of the key.
2. The coach then assigns one of them the offensive player and the drill begins immediately.





3. The goal of the defensive player is to stay directly in line with the offensive player. The offensive player must work hard to try and separate themselves from being in line with the defender by sliding up and down the line of the key.
4. After 15 seconds, the coach calls out 'switch' and the two players swap roles.
5. After 30 seconds they step behind the baseline and two new players come in.

Variations:

Duration - Instead of 15 seconds each, you can make your players slide for more or less time.

Coaching Points:

- Players must stay in a low defensive stance with their hands out wide the entire time of the drill.
- Encourage the offensive player to use head fakes and quick changes of pace to throw the defender off.
- Make sure you cover what good defensive stance is before running this drill.



DEFENSIVE SPECIALIST

How the Drill Works:

Defensive Specialist is a continuous drill that works on the different defensive movements players will make on defense including closeouts, defensive sliding, back-peddalling, and sprinting.

Purpose:

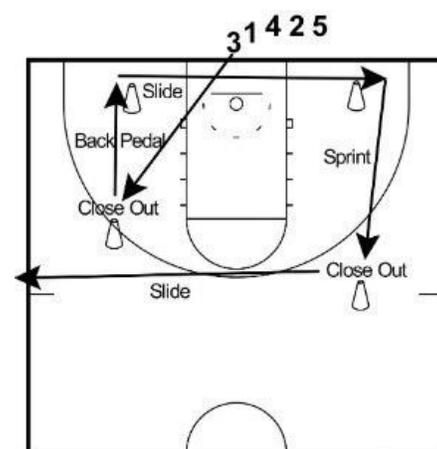
Since this drill covers all the most frequent movements players will make on defense, it's a great drill to get them used to these different movements.

Setup:

- Since it's hard to explain where the cones and movements are by writing, I encourage you to take a look at the image associated with this drill for better comprehension.
- You will require four D-men or cones for this drill.
- All players begin in a straight line on the baseline.

Instructions:

1. Players perform this defensive course one-by-one.
2. The first movement is a sprint and then close out to the cone in front. The player then back-pedals around a cone directly behind them, and then slides across to the other side of the court.





3. When the first defender slides past the line, that triggers the next player in line to start the drill.
4. When the first defender has slid around the cone on the other side of the court, they again sprint to close out, and then once again slide to the opposite side of the court before returning to the end of the line.
5. Depending on the amount of players you have, run this drill for 3 – 5 minutes.

Variations:

Different Course - You can easily change the course by differing the placement of the cones. Make sure to focus on the main defensive movements.

Coaching Points:

- Players must be sprinting and sliding at 100% effort throughout the entire drill.
- Hold the close out for a second or two before moving on.
- Make sure all defensive footwork is done well since this is a very important part of the drill.



ONE ON ONE

How the Drill Works:

Players compete against each other one-on-one from either the free-throw line or the three-point line. The offensive team are only allowed a certain amount of dribbles so that they're effective with the basketball.

Purpose:

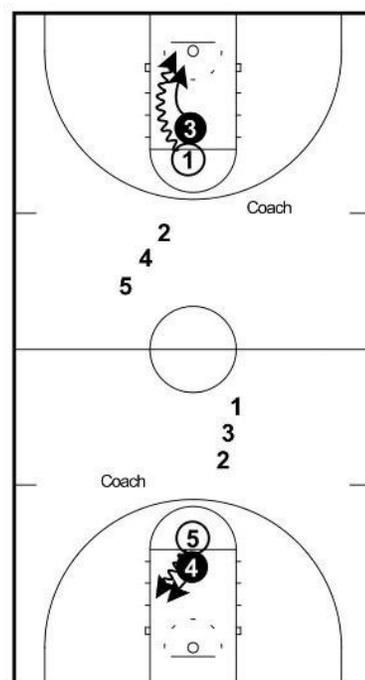
By playing one-on-one, we're forcing the on-ball defender to have to 'guard their yard'. There's no help defense coming. They're on their own and must stay in front and challenge the shot.

Setup:

- One offensive player on the three-point line.
- A defender with a basketball standing between the offensive player and the basket.
- The rest of the players forming a line at the top out of the way.

Instructions:

1. To start the drill, the defender hands the basketball to the offensive player. By handing the basketball to the offensive player, it ensures that the defender is challenging themselves by starting up close to the offensive player instead of standing back playing lazy defense.





2. The offensive player then has a maximum of 2 or 3 dribbles to attack the ring and get a clear shot.
3. After either a make or a miss, a new offensive player comes in, the previous offensive player switches to defense, and the previous defender joins the end of the line.

Variations:

Distance From Basketball - Whether you start the drill at the three-point line or the free-throw line will depend on the age of your players. If they can't shoot three's yet, start on the free-throw line.

Coaching Points:

- Make sure you enforce the rule of 2 or 3 dribbles maximum depending on which you decide. We don't want to allow the offensive player to waste dribbles and time.
- Encourage the defensive player to get up close and play hard defense. It doesn't matter if they get beat a couple of times while they're working on defending.
- Make sure players are using good footwork and good fakes.



ZIG ZAG SLIDES

How the Drill Works:

Players are required to slide from side to side up and down the court. They do this using drop steps and defensive slides.

Purpose:

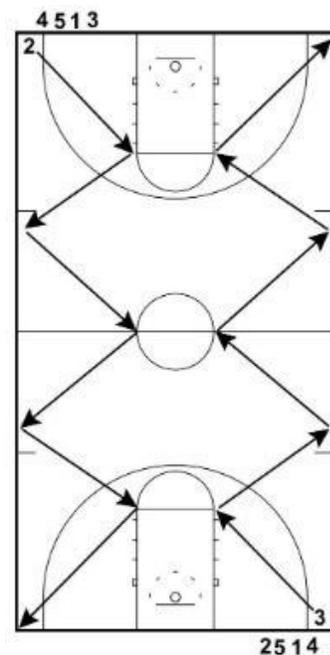
To teach players the basics of defense. This involves learning how to defensive slide properly and also using the drop step to change direction.

Setup:

- The drill begins with all players on the baseline lining up on one of the corners. No player should have a basketball.
- No player should have a basketball.

Instructions:

1. The first player will defensive slide from the corner to the high post and perform a 90-degree drop step so that they are now sliding back to the opposite sideline.
2. This process of sliding from one side to the other and drop stepping continues until the player reaches the opposite baseline.
3. They come back down the opposite side of the court using the same principles.





Variations:

Add an Offensive Player - To make the slides more game-like, add an offensive player who must dribble from side-to-side and the defensive player must stay in front of them using slides and drop steps. They're not allowed to steal the basketball.

Compete at Half Way - If you do decide to add an offensive player, if the players are used to sliding and have the correct technique, allow them to play one-on-one from half way. The defense must use the defensive principles taught in the drill.

Coaching Points:

- Teach all players how to defensive slide and drop step at the beginning of the drill.
- Make sure players are in a low stance and don't have their legs straight.
- Players should never cross their feet!

Fun Drills





WAR

How the Drill Works:

War is a great drill to incorporate fun small-sided games into your practices. It's a series of small-sided games between two teams that can be played in both the full court and half-court.

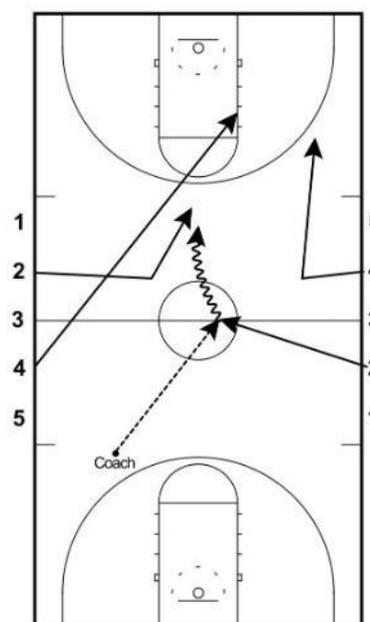
This is always one of the most favorite drills no matter what level I'm coaching.

Purpose:

Small-sided games are awesome for developing youth players. They get more opportunities to score, more touches, etc. And this game is lots of fun!

Setup:

- The drill is set up by splitting your group into two teams and lining each half up along opposite sidelines.
- For example, let's say there are 12 players total and 6 players on each team. You will give each individual player on each team a number from 1 – 6.
- The drill requires one basketball and it always starts with the coach.



Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the coach throwing a basketball out into the middle of the



court and calling out a few numbers between 1 and 6.

2. If the coach wants to play games of 3 on 3, they might call out "1, 4, and 5!" If this happens, numbers 1, 4, and 5 from both teams come out and play a game of 3 on 3 until a score occurs.
3. The coach can play games with any number of players from 1 on 1 to 6 on 6.
4. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins!

Variations:

Amount of Players in Each Game - You don't have to stick with a certain amount of players each time. Throw in some games of 1 on 1 and 5 on 5 as well. Keep them guessing and having fun!

Two Half-Court Games - Instead of playing one full court game with your whole team, split them up and play two games, one in each half. This is a great variation for large teams.

Coaching Points:

- Try to match the best players up against each other.
- Throw the basketball out to the advantage of one side each time because you don't want players running into each other as they scramble for the basketball.
- The coach calling out the numbers must keep a fair idea of how many turns each kid has had to make it even.
- Finish off the drill by calling everyone in!



GOLDEN CHILD

How the Drill Works:

Players are split into two even teams. One shooting team and one dribbling team. The dribbling team's goal is to try and make as many home runs as possible while the shooting team's goal is to make shots to stop the running team.

Purpose:

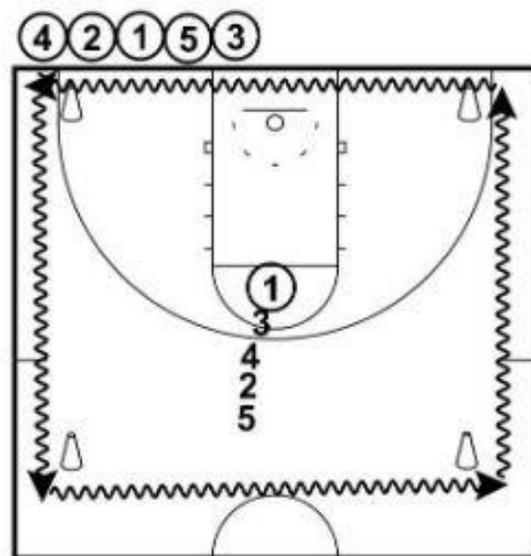
A drill that will inject a lot of fun into any practice while working on shooting with pressure and dribbling at a high speed.

Setup:

- Split the team up into two even groups. One starting on the corner (dribbling team) and one starting on the free throw line (shooting team).
- All of the dribbling should have a basketball. One basketball for the shooting team.
- Place cones to mark where the dribbling team must run around.

Instructions:

1. When the coach says to start, the first player on the dribbling team starts dribbling around the bases while the first shooter puts up a shot.





2. If the shooter makes the shot, the dribbling player must immediately freeze where they are and the next dribbler in line starts running around the bases. If the shooter misses, they must rebound their own shot and pass it to the next player before joining the back of the line.
3. For every dribbling player that gets around all the bases and to the finish line, their team receives one point.
 - This process continues until the last player who is known as the 'golden child'.
 - When the golden child starts dribbling everyone they pass who has been frozen is allowed to continue dribbling behind them and potentially make it home to receive a point. This is added pressure to make the final shot.
4. After the golden child has run add up the points the dribbling team made and swap over.

Scoring System:

- The only time a team can earn points is when they're the dribbling team.
- The dribbling team receives one point for every dribbler that makes it all the way around and back to home base.

Variations:

No Basketballs for Dribbling Team - If you have a young team and are just looking to have fun, the dribbling team can just run around the bases and try to get home without dribbling a basketball.

Two Lines of Shooters - If the players are having a hard time making a shot and getting people out, create two lines of shooters instead of one and double their chances.



Vary Shooting Distance - Change the shooting distance depending on the age and skill of your team. Young players might shoot from only a few feet out while older players can shoot three-pointers.

Coaching Points:

- Players must rebound their own shot and pass it back to the next person in line. No cheating by having a rebounder.
- Make sure the frozen dribbling players move to the side so that they don't trip the next dribbler or get in the way.
- Vary who is the golden child because all players will want to be it!



ELIMINATION

How the Drill Works:

Everyone lines up in a single line. The first two players have a basketball. Players must shoot until they get it in. If the person behind you scores before you, you're out.

Purpose:

Practice shooting the ball under pressure and following the shot for a rebound while having a lot of fun. This is a great drill I usually run at the end of practice because the players love it.

Setup:

- For this drill all you need is two basketballs.
- Designate a spot the players will take their first shot from.
- You can have as many players as you want. There is no limit. The more players you have, the funner the game will be.

Instructions:

1. To begin the drill, the first player in the line shoots from the designated spot.
2. As soon as the ball leaves the shooter hands, the second player can shoot the ball.





3. If the second player gets a basket before the first player, the first player is out.
4. If the first player makes a shot before the second player, then they quickly rebound the ball and pass it back to the next person in line.
5. The goal of the game is to receive the ball and make a shot before the person in front of you.

Scoring System:

- If the player behind you scores before you do, you're out.

Variations:

Shooting Spot - Change the spot the first shot is taken from. Free throw for younger players and you could make it the three point line for older players.

Coaching Points:

- If the player misses and gets the rebound, make sure they're using their correct hand to make the layup.
- Don't allow the players to intentionally miss the first shot so they can get a quick rebound and put it back in.
- The person next in line should be down in a stance and ready to receive the ball.
- This drill is meant to be fun for the kids, keep it entertaining!
- As the coach, don't be afraid to join in! Or even the parents.



CORNERS

How the Drill Works:

Players start in two even lines on opposite corners of the court. There are no teams. The first players in each line are against each other to be the first to make two layups at opposite ends of the court. The player that loses is out.

Purpose:

A fun game that all players love. Works on layups and dribbling at full speed while under pressure.

Setup:

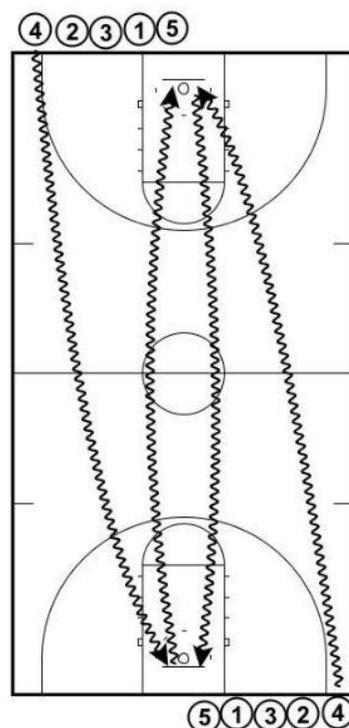
- Split the team up into two groups and send each group to an opposite corner of the court.
- One basketball at the front of each line.
- Coach has a whistle or a loud voice.

Instructions:

1. When the coach blows the whistle, both players dribble as fast as they can to the opposite end of the floor to make a layup.
2. After they make the shot, they must rebound their own shot and dribble to the opposite end of the floor again and make another layup.
3. The first player to make two layups is the winner and joins the end of the line. The player that loses is out and must sit in the middle of the court and wait for the others to finish.

Variations:

Opposite Hand - Switch the sides of the court for each time and then they must dribble and perform a layup with their left hand.





Different Shot - Instead of layups players must make a shot from outside the key. For older players they might have to make a shot from outside the three-point line.

More Layups - For the last two players (the grand final), sometimes I've had them make 3 or 4 layups instead of 2.

Coaching Points:

- The biggest problem with this drill is the amount of standing around the players do when there's a large group. But since every practice the players beg me to play this game, I figured I better include it!
- I've occasionally had a silly kid who's out and while sitting in the middle tries to trip or steal the ball from one of the players dribbling. Watch out for that.
- Don't allow players to throw the ball out in front of themselves or else the dribbling part of the drill will be pointless.
- Encourage players to slow down on the layup and jump up high while under control instead of sprinting too fast and throwing it hard off the backboard.



SMALL SIDED GAMES

How the Drill Works:

Depending on the amount of players you have, create small-sided games of anything from 2 on 2 to 4 on 4. Then let the kids play and learn!

Purpose:

There are many benefits to small-sided games that are listed here (<http://www.basketballforcoaches.com/reasons-small-sided-games/>). To share some of the major benefits: More touches, more opportunities to shoot, easier decision making, etc.

Setup:

- Use both halves of the court and create two small-sided games depending on how many players you have.
- Explain to each team that they must advance the ball to a certain line (either half-court or the third line if you have one) before they can score.
- One basketball per game.

Instructions:

1. Start the game and let them play!
2. Make adjustments and team changes when you need to, but I recommend trying not to interrupt too much.





Let the players learn from their own mistakes by experience.

Variations:

Games of Different Sizes - Make sure to vary the sizes of the games to give kids exposure to different scenarios.

Coaching Points:

- Let them have fun!
- Stop the game if you see a mistake 3 times in a row. Until then let the kids experiment and learn on their own as much as possible.
- Stress the importance of spacing.



GAME WINNER

How the Drill Works:

Every player takes a single shot from a distance far outside their comfortable shooting range. Players that make this shot get a reward.

Purpose:

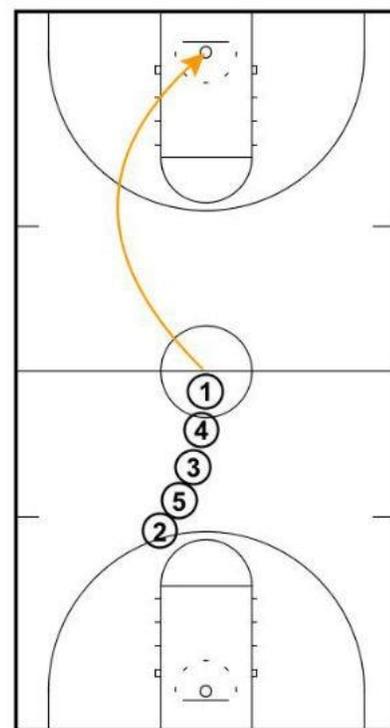
A great drill to finish off practice with. The players always look forward to this drill in practice and it always causes everyone to finish practice laughing and with a smile on their face.

Setup:

- All players line up in one line far out from their comfortable shooting range.
- All players have a basketball.

Instructions:

1. One by one, the players take it in turns taking one shot each from this distance.
2. Players that make the shot are entitled to a reward of some sort.





Variations:

One Winner - If two or more players make the shot and you only want one winner, have them shoot again until one of them makes the shot.

Distance of Shot - For older players we usually use the half-way line. For youth players, it varies. Really young players can shoot from the three-point line if they'll struggle to get it in.

Coaching Points:

- This drill is meant to be fun to conclude practice. Make sure you're joking around with the players.
- Make sure there's no one under the ring that will get hit from a wild shot attempt.
- Make sure you take a shot too!



Conclusion

Thank you again for taking the time to check out 31 Basketball Drills and Games.

I hope what you've read in the previous pages will assist you in improving your youth basketball practices.

Feel free to print off the drills and take them to your practices.

It's my wish that these drills to help as many players and coaches as possible.

If you did come across this eBook without subscribing to my email list, please head over to www.basketballforcoaches.com and subscribe to my email list there (I'll send you heaps of cool basketball coaching advice!).

If you have any questions on anything contained in this email feel free to reach out and contact me.

The best way to get in contact with me is on Twitter at @bballcoachmac. Shoot me a tweet and I'll be sure to get back to you soon!

If you'd like to contact me directly, you can send me an email at coachmac@basketballforcoaches.com. I personally read and reply to every email I receive :)

Thanks for reading and I look forward to connecting with you in the future.

- Coach Mac

33 Basketball Plays To Dominate Any Defense

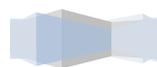


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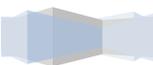
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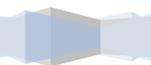
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Man-to-Man Basketball Plays



1-4 Quick Floppy

Overview of the Play:

This play allows a team to get open looks on the perimeter early in an offensive possession. This happens by running an immediate 'floppy' out of the 1-4 set where both guards cut off screens to find open space.

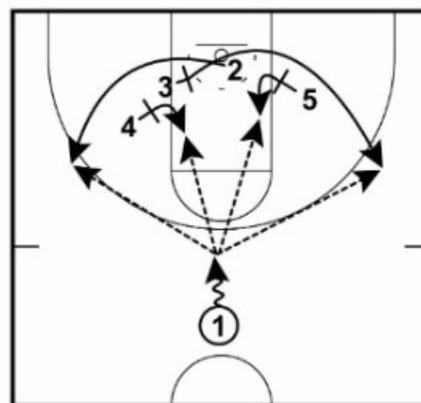
Key Personnel:

- This is a versatile play as every player can potentially get a shot out of it.
- Preferably your 2 and 3 are good shooters.
- The point guard must be a good decision maker to find the open player.

Instructions:

Setup: The play starts in a 1-4 high set.

1. 1 dribbles down the floor and calls out the name of the play..
2. 2 and 3 cut along the baseline with 2 stopping close to under the rim.
3. 4 and 5 turn and trail once 2 and 3 have cut past them.
4. 3 sets a screen just inside the paint as 4 and 5 set screens a foot outside the low blocks on their respective sides.
5. 2 now has the option of using the staggered screen or the single screen. For this example, 2 uses the staggered screen and cuts to the perimeter.
6. Once 2's defender has passed through the screen, 3 will cut off the screen the opposite side to 2. For this example, 3 cuts off the single screen by 5.

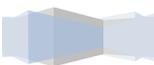


(If 2 were to use 5's single screen, 3 would turn and cut to the perimeter off 4's screen.)

7. After screening, 4 and 5 immediately duck in and look to receive the quick pass for the layup. Often 4 or 5's defender will be forced to help on the player cutting to the perimeter which leaves 4 and 5 on smaller defenders.
8. The point guard has now had 4 great passing options which lead to quick open shots.
9. If 2 or 3 catch on the perimeter, the closest post player immediately attempts to get a low seal while the other post player clears to the high post to give them space.

Coaching Points:

- The players must know who the initial cutter is going to be so that the the guards know who must set the screen.
- The point guard must be a great decision maker at the top of the key. There will be open looks from this play... your point guard must be able to make the pass on-time and on-target.



Back Screen Post

Overview of the Play:

One of my favorite plays for catching the defense off guard getting a quick post up. This occurs on a back screen out of a staggered screen to an open block. If the post isn't open, there's a staggered screen for a weak side shooter.

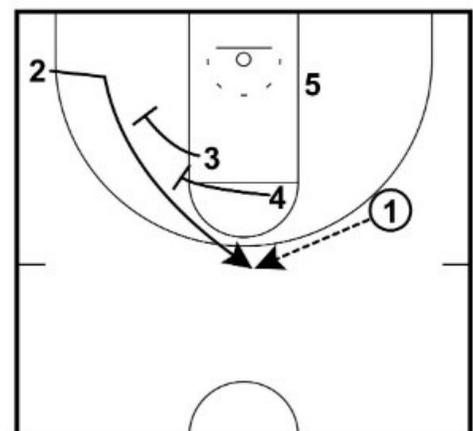
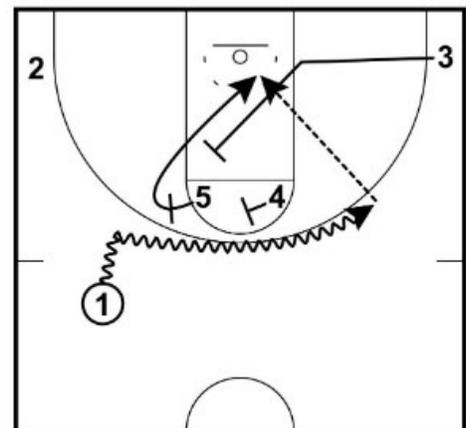
Key Personnel:

- A great post player at the 5 position. The key goal of this play is to get a quick and clear post up.
- 2 should be your team's best shooter.

Instructions:

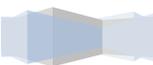
Setup: The play starts in a 3-out 2-in formation with the posts on the elbows and the wing players in the corners.

1. 1 starts the drill by dribbling their defender down one side of the floor to create good screening angle.
2. 3 walks their defender down to the low block.
3. 4 and 5 set a staggered screen for 1 as they dribble around the top of the key.
4. As 1 is dribbling off the screens, 3 sprints up and sets a strong back screen on 5's defender.
5. 5 immediately rolls to the basket looking for the pass for the quick layup. If that's not open, they establish deep post position.
6. If 1 can't get the basketball into the post, 3 and 4 set a staggered screen for 2 who cuts to the top of the key ready for the open shot.



Coaching Points:

- Start the play with your best shooter on the same side as the best post player.
- If 3's defender stays in the key to deter the pass, 3 can pop to the top of the key off a quick screen by 4 for the open shot.



Chaos

Overview of the Play:

This play involves flooding one side of the floor and using a hand-off and double screen to get a guard dribbling into the key. The lack of help-side defense and having only your best shooter on the opposite side of the court often leads to easy scoring opportunities.

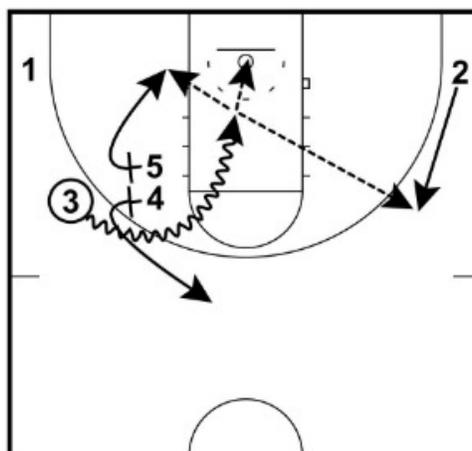
Key Personnel:

- 2 must be the team's best shooter.
- 3 should be a player with a high basketball IQ that can finish at the rim.

Instructions:

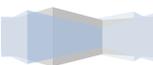
Setup: The play starts in a horns set with post players on the elbows and guards in the corners.

1. The play begins with 1 dribbling towards the wing.
2. The player in the corner of the ball-side wing (3) cuts to the top and receives the dribble hand-off. 1 then clears out to the ball-side corner.
3. As the hand-off is happening, 4 and 5 start making their way towards the wing.
4. As 3 receives the basketball, 4 and 5 must be in position to set an immediate double screen which 3 uses and drives into the middle of the key.
5. 2 lifts to the wing as their defender is probably playing low which will leave them open for the catch and three-point shot.
6. 5 rolls to the rim and 4 clears to the top of the key as safety.



Coaching Points:

- It's very important that 4 and 5 get to their screening positions on time. If they're late, it's difficult for the play to be effective.
- 2 must wait until 3 is driving off the screen before lifting to the wing.



Diagonal Post

Overview of the Play:

A box set play designed to get the basketball to the best shooter coming off the staggered screen or a pass into a player on the low post.

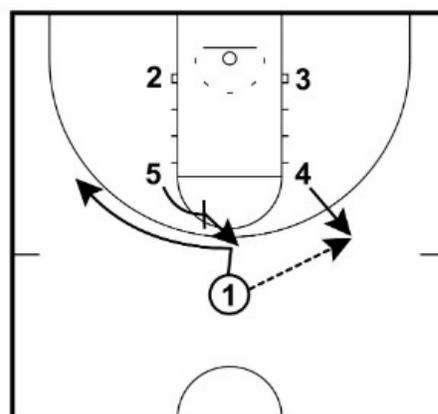
Key Personnel:

- 3 should be the team's best 3-point shooter.
- 4 should be your best low post player on a player with a mismatch down low.

Instructions:

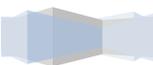
Setup: This play begins in a box formation with 4 and 5 on the elbows and 2 and 3 on the low blocks.

1. The play begins with 4 popping out to the lot and receiving the pass from 1.
2. 1 then receives a flare screen from 5 and flares out to the wing.
3. 5 pops to the top of the key and receives the pass from 4 and immediately swings the ball to 1 on the wing.
4. 2 turns and sets a diagonal screen on 4's defender as 4 cuts to the ball-side low block looking for the quick layup or post up opportunity.
5. 2 and 5 then set a staggered screen for 3 as they cut to the top of the key looking for the catch and shoot.
6. We now have the option to post up with 4 or get the pass to 3 at the top of the key for the shot.



Coaching Points:

- As always, the timing of the screens is incredibly important. If they're too early, the defender will have a lot of time to recover and the shot won't be open.
- The flare screen at the start of the play is occasionally open. 4 must keep an eye on that option and make the skip pass if it's open.
- An easy way to remember which side to pass the basketball is to remember that the first post player passed to will be the one posting up.
- As a variation, the guard that starts on the ball-side low block can set a cross screen instead of a diagonal screen. This will mean that they'll be the ones coming off the staggered screen.



Double Curls

Overview of the Play:

UCLA curls attempts to get open layups at the basket by keeping the lower key open and running guards off screens towards the ring. If the first two players can't get open, the play ends with a traditional wing pick and roll.

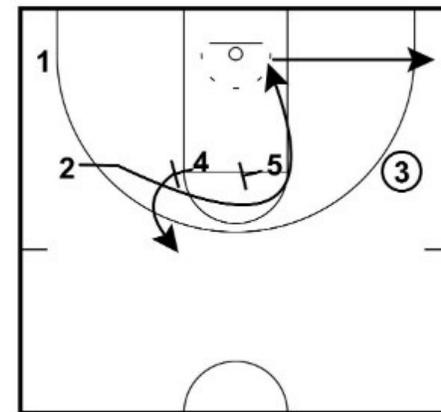
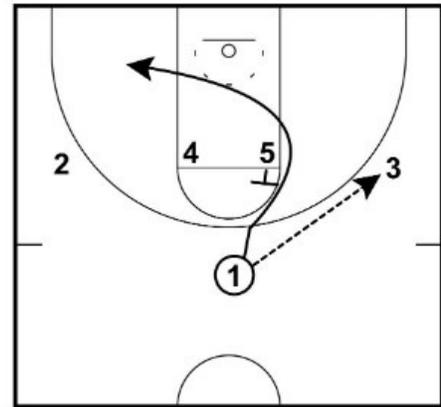
Key Personnel:

- A well-rounded play that doesn't require any player to have a specific skill-set.
- The player that receives the basketball on the wing (3) should be able to attack and make good decisions out of the pick and roll.

Instructions:

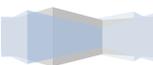
Setup: The play starts in a 1-4 high formation.

1. 1 passes to 3 on the wing.
2. 1 then performs a UCLA cut off 5's screen looking to receive the pass for the open layup. If it's not open, 1 clears out to the weak side corner.
3. 4 and 5 then set a staggered screen for 2 who curls towards the ring looking to receive the pass for the open layup also. If they don't receive the pass they clear out to ball side corner.
4. 4 pops out to the top after screening to create space.
5. 5 then sets a pick and roll for 3 who attacks the rim hard looking to score or create a play for a teammate.



Coaching Points:

- This is a great play because it keeps the post defenders out of the paint. On the pick and roll, the only inside defender will be the defensive point guard.
- The players curling to the rim should be leading with a hand where they want the basketball and calling for it if they're open.



Flex Warrior

Overview of the Play:

This play involves numerous screens and many open shot opportunities. I recommend this play to high school and older teams because timing, screening angles, making the right play, and being able to shoot from the outside are all very important.

Key Personnel:

- Your point guard and shooting guard should be able to consistently make an open outside shot.
- Your center must be able to set strong screens at the correct angles with good timing and it's a plus if they have a post game too!

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a horns set with your wing players level with the lower blocks.

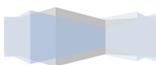
1. The play starts with 1 passing to either of the two post players on the elbow. Preferably the side with the best shooter on the wing.
2. 1 then cuts down the center of the lane and sets a flex screen for 2.
3. 2 can cut either high or low off the flex screen and looks for the pass from 4 and the easy layup.
4. 5 sets a down screen for 1 for a screen the screener action. 1 cuts to the top of the elbow or slot looking for the catch and shoot.
5. After screening for 1, 5 immediately sets another screen for 2 who cuts out to the wing.
6. If 1 wasn't open for the shot, they must swing the basketball to 2 who should be open on the wing for the shot.



7. After screening 2's player, 5 attempts to get a deep seal in the paint. If 2 wasn't open, they can pass in for the score.

Coaching Points:

- The play can be run either side of the floor, but the point guard should attempt to pass to the side of the team's best scorer.
- Screens must be set with the correct timing and angles.
- Shot selection is crucial. Your players must read what the best shot is and be willing to pass up an 'okay' shot for a 'great' shot.



Horns Basic

Overview of the Play:

A very simple play out of the horns (1-2-2) formation. Involves a guard receiving the basketball on the wing and then receiving an on-ball screen. On the opposite side of the floor there's a down screen set to keep the defense occupied.

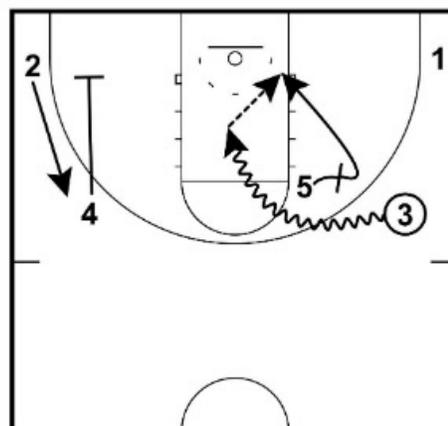
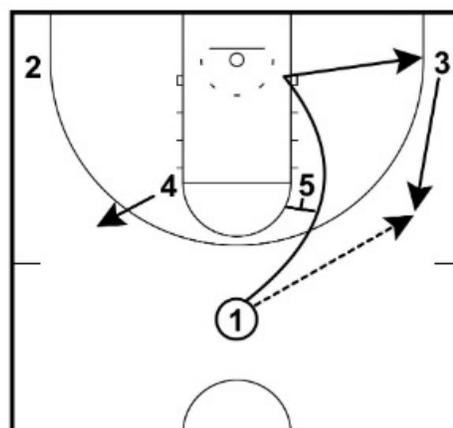
Key Personnel:

- 3 should be a good decision maker out of the pick-and-roll.
- 5 should be the team's strongest pick-and-roll post player.

Instructions:

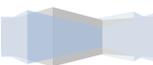
Setup: The play starts in 1-2-2 set with the post players on the elbows and the guards in the corners.

1. The play begins with 3 cutting up to the wing and receiving the pass from 1.
2. 1 UCLA cuts off a screen from 5, and if they don't receive the pass for the layup, 1 clears out to the ball-side corner.
3. 5 sets an on-ball screen for 3 who drives into the lane looking to create.
4. On the weak-side of the floor, 4 down screens for 2 to make the help defense move.
5. 5 rolls to the rim out of the pick-and-roll.
6. 3 now has numerous opportunities and must make the best basketball play.



Coaching Points:

- A very simple but effective play that can be used for all levels of basketball.
- If 2's defender is on split-line, 4 shouldn't screen inside the key and congest it with players. Instead, 2 should simply lift to the wing and will be open for the pass and shot.
- 5's on-ball screen must be set on the correct angle to make it effective. Don't allow the opposition to simply slip under the screen.



Iverson Ram

Overview of the Play:

The play involves both wing players exchanging sides and then leading into a pick and roll. The play does a great job of creating space with a post player screening for the on-ball screener before clearing out.

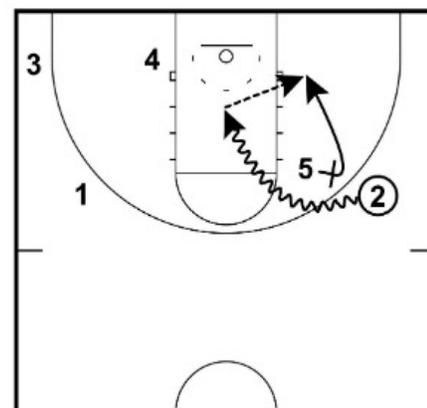
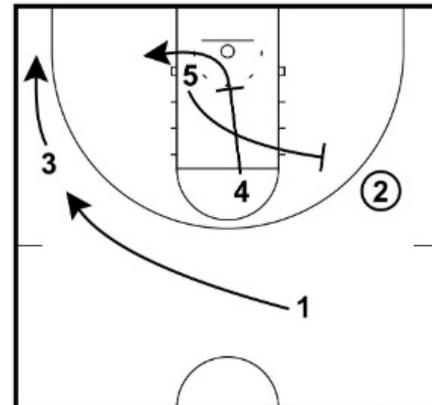
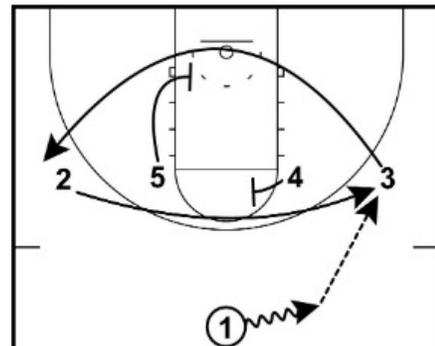
Key Personnel:

- The player you want handling the basketball in the pick and roll should be in the 2 position.
- The player you want screening in the pick and roll should be in the 5 position.

Instructions:

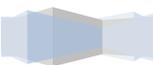
Setup: Players set up in a 1-4 high formation with the post players on the elbows.

1. The play begins with the two wing players exchanging sides. 2 will go over top receiving a screen from 4.
2. 3 will go under receiving a screen from 5 on the low block.
3. 1 opens up the angle with a dribble and makes the pass to 2 as they come off of 4's screen. Occasionally this will be open for 2 to turn and drive to the rim.
4. 1 then clears out to the opposite wing to create space and 3 rotates down to the corner.
5. 4 screens down on 5's defender as 5 sprints up and sets an on-ball screen for 2.
6. 2 dribbles off 5's screen and makes the best basketball play to create a score.



Coaching Points:

- It's very important that 5 sprints to set the on-ball screen. With 4 screening their player, it gives the player with the basketball a lot of space to create without a help defender.
- 1 signals which wing player will go over by dribbling to one side of the floor. The side of the floor dribbled to always goes under the screens.



Piston Elevator

Overview of the Play:

This is a great play for getting a quick three-point shot. The two guards will look like they're exchanging wings but your best shooter will quickly cut to the top of the key off an elevator screen for the three-point shot.

Key Personnel:

- A great shooter on the wing who will run the baseline cut.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a 1-4 high formation.

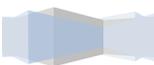
1. The play starts with 1 dribbling towards one side of the court.
2. 3 Iverson cuts off the screens set by 4 and 5 on the elbows while 2 baseline cuts to the middle of the key.
3. Immediately after setting the screens on the elbows, 4 and 5 set a elevator screen for 2.
4. 2 shoots through the screens to the top of the key for the catch and shoot three-pointer.



Coaching Points:

- The player who 1 dribbles at will always go over top of the screens. Therefore, 1 must make sure they don't dribble towards the better shooter.
- There should be no slowing down by 2 in the key. They must make a quick change of direction and burst through the elevator screen. For this reason, 2 should wait an extra second before starting their baseline cut.

- 4 and 5 must 'close the gate' after 2 has cut through to screen 2's defender. That's why it's important for 2 to quickly change direction and create separation so that the post players have time to step closer.
- If 4's defender predicts the pass and cuts it off, 4 should dive to the hoop for the layup.



Quick Pick

Overview of the Play:

This play is designed to get a quick pick and roll with the player that receives the pass on the wing. There are other actions in the play that will create good spacing and occupy the opponents.

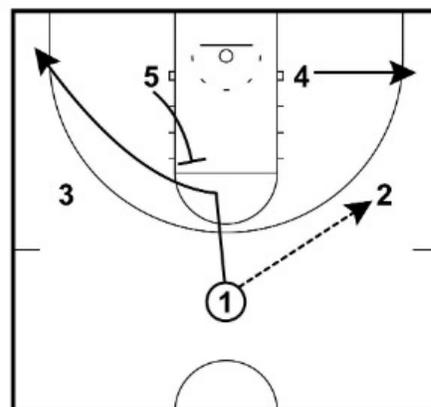
Key Personnel:

- The player who receives the pass on the wing (2) should be the player you want in the pick-and-roll.
- Preferable that 1 and 4 can consistently knock down the three-point shot.

Instructions:

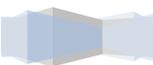
Setup: The play starts in 1-2-2 set with the post players on the blocks and the guards on the wings.

1. The play begins with 1 passing to whichever wing player the team wants to be involved in the pick-and-roll.
2. 1 cuts through the key off a screen from 5 and clears out to the weak-side corner.
3. 4 clears out the key to the ball-side corner.
4. 5 then sets an on-ball screen for 2 on the wing.
5. At the same time, 3 sets a down screen for 1.
6. 2 dribbles down the middle of the key and is required to make a play. They can either attack the rim or use one of the shooters in the corner.
7. After setting the on-ball, 5 retreats and is required to play safety.



Coaching Points:

- Focus on the timing of the screens. The down screen for 1 must be set as 2 is dribbling off the pick-and-roll.
- Put your best decision-maker in the 2 position. If executed correctly, one of the defenders will be forced to rotate leaving someone open.
- Great play to use when you need a quick score.



UCLA

Overview of the Play:

This man-to-man play is named after the initial UCLA cut made by the point guard. The play is designed to get your point guard an open shot on the wing off a double screen while the wing player performs a pick and roll.

Key Personnel:

- The point guard (or a player who initiates the offense) must be a good shooter.
- The wing player that receives the basketball must be a good decision maker and preferably can shoot the midrange shot and also finish at the rim.

Instructions:

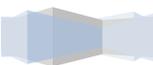
Setup: The play begins in a 1-4 high formation.

1. The play starts with 1 passing to either 2 or 3 on the wing (2 in this example).
2. 1 then makes a UCLA cut off the screen by 5 looking to receive the pass for the layup.
3. If 1 isn't open on the cut, 5 steps across and sets another screen for 2.
4. As this is happening, 3 and 4 walk their players down towards the weak side low block to set a double screen for 1.
5. 2 uses the screen from 5 and attack the middle of the floor. After the pick, 5 rolls to the rim.
6. As 2 is dribbling off the screen, 1 cuts hard off the double screen from 3 and 4 and gets open for the open shot.
7. 2 now has three options: They can pass to 1 for the jump shot, attack the rim or pull up for the shot themselves, or pass to 5 rolling towards the rim.



Coaching Points:

- One of the advantages of this play is that it can be run on either side of the floor.
- Off the double screen, 1 should cut to a distance that they can shoot from. If you're coaching a young team, they shouldn't cut outside the three-point line.
- Make sure 5 sets the pick and roll screen on the correct angle that allows 2 to attack the rim.



X-Cross

Overview of the Play:

X-Cross is a unique play with many scoring options. The name of the play comes from the opening cuts made by the guards. This play is guaranteed to get your team open shot opportunities.

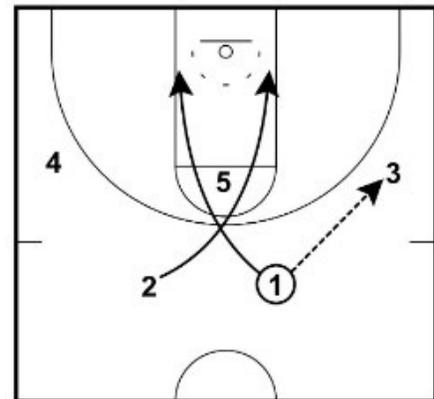
Key Personnel:

- There is no specific personnel needed as there are scoring opportunities for nearly all players.

Instructions:

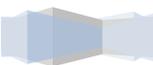
Setup: The play starts in a high 2-3 formation.

1. The play begins with either of the top two guards making a pass to a wing player. For this example, 1 passes to 3.
2. After the pass, 1 and 2 then cut off 5 towards the opposite blocks. 1 should always cut first and then 2 follows. 3 should watch both of these cutters and if they're open pass them the basketball for the open layup.
3. 4 then cuts to the top of the key using 5 as a screen and 1 pops out to the wing.
4. 3 swing the basketball to 4 who immediately passes to 1 on the wing.
5. Immediately after passing, 3 cuts baseline using a flex screen from 2. 1 must look inside and see if they can pass to 3 for the easy layup.
6. If 3 isn't open, 4 and 5 set a staggered down screen for 2 who cuts to the top of the key for the open shot.



Coaching Points:

- 5 must hold their position on the high post as 1, 2, and 4 use them as a screen. If 5 moves, a moving screen may be called.
- If possible, the first pass to the wing should go to the player you want coming off the flex screen.



2-3 Zone

Basketball Plays



23 Flare

Overview of the Play:

A quick hitter to use against a 2-3 zone to get your best shooter an open shot off a flare screen on the wing.

Key Personnel:

- 2 should be the best shooter on the team.
- 1 must be able to make an on-point pass over the flare screen.
- 5 must be able to set a solid screen.



Instructions:

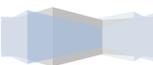
Setup: The play starts in a 1-3-1 formation with a player that can shoot in the corner on the same side as your best shooter.

1. The play begins with 1 take a few dribbles and passing to 2 on the wing. 1 then stays at the top of the key.
2. 5 steps to the strong-side elbow.
3. 2 immediately passes to 4 in the corner.
4. 4 passes back to 2 and begins walking their defender towards the rim.
5. 2 then takes two or three dribbles towards the top of the key forcing X2 to follow in order to deny the open shot.
6. 2 passes to 1 at the top of the key.
7. 5 immediately sets a flare screen for 2.
8. While this is happening, 4 has walked x4 towards the rim and sets a screen so that X4 can't contest the shot.
9. 2 uses the flare screen and 1 makes the pass over the top for the open three-point shot by 2.



Coaching Points:

- The flare screen set by 5 must be quick so that X2 is caught off guard.
- This play will only fool the defense once or twice a game so keep it in mind for special occasions where you need a three-point shot.



32 Lob

Overview of the Play:

This play is designed to get a backdoor lob for an athletic perimeter player. It involves moving the defense over and then screening the weak side low defender to open a lane for the lob pass and finish.

Key Personnel:

- A point guard that can throw an great lob pass.
- An athletic perimeter player to catch the lob pass and score either by dunk or layup.

Instructions:

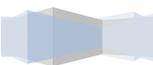
Setup: The play starts in a 3-out 2-in formation.

1. The play begins with 1 passing the basketball to the perimeter player that will not be receiving the lob pass (2).
2. 2 then dribbles towards the corner to force X4 to defend the basketball. This means X5 will guard 4.
3. At the same time that 2 dribbles to the corner, 3 slides down to the weak-side corner behind the sight of the defense.
4. 2 passes back to 1 on the wing.
5. Having forced the defense to rotate to one side, 5 established position behind X4 and nudges them up the lane to create space on the baseline.
6. 3 then cuts hard to the ring behind the screen from 5 and catches the lob pass from 1 for the easy score.



Coaching Points:

- Since this play is designed to catch the defense by surprise, don't use it more than once or twice each game.
- Lob plays can be a great way to get the crowd involved. If you have an athletic player that can finish, use this play to engage the crowd!



Baseline Swing

Overview of the Play:

A 2-3 zone play designed to get a shooter an open shot on the baseline from midrange or the three-point line. The play achieves this by forcing the baseline defender to play the wing and cutting a player baseline to the short corner.

Key Personnel:

- 4 must be able to hit the midrange or three-point shot.
- 5 must be able to set a solid screen.

Instructions:

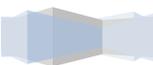
Setup: The play begins in a 4 out 1 in formation with the shooter in the corner.

1. The play begins with 1 passing to the wing on the same side as the corner player. For this example, that means 1 passes to 3.
2. 3 immediately passes back to 1 who is now a few steps to the right of the middle of the court.
3. As this is happening, 2 slides up from the wing to create space for 3 to cut to.
4. 3 then cuts all the way across the court under the high zone defenders to the opposite wing.
5. 1 passes to 2 and 2 passes to 3.
6. Since X2 defended 2 at the top, X3 must close out and defend 3 on the wing to prevent the open shot.
7. 5 screens X5 as 4 cuts baseline to the wide open space on the ball-side baseline.
8. 3 passes to 4 for either the midrange shot or the three-point shot.



Coaching Points:

- 5 must not telegraph that they're going to set a screen or X5 will fight through it early and be able to contest the shot.
- 4 must cut hard and quickly along the baseline for the catch and shoot.
- If you're going to use this play, make sure your players work on this shot during practice.



Doubles

Overview of the Drill:

This is a quick hitter play for your team's best shooter. The play starts by moving the defense and then your shooter will run off a double screen and receive the basketball for the open shot.

Key Personnel:

- 2 should be your team's best shooter.
- 1 must be able to make a good pass at exactly the right time to the shooter.

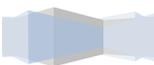
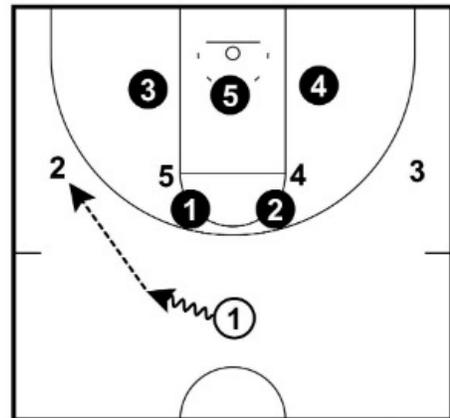
Instructions:

Setup: Begin in a 1-4 formation.

1. 1 will start the drill by making a pass to the team's best shooter (2) on the wing.
2. 2 passes back to 1 at the top of the key.
3. 2 immediately makes a deep cut behind the defense as 1 dribbles across to top of the key to create a better passing angle.
4. As 2 is cutting, 3 and 4 set a double screen on D4.
5. 1 then passes to 2 who shoots the open shot.

Coaching Points:

- This play can be run on either side of the floor.
- The shot can be a midrange shot or a three-point shot depending on the skill level and age of your players.



Pick Overload

Overview of the Play:

This 2-3 zone play is designed to get an open three-point shot on the wing or in the corner by overloading one side of the zone and forcing 2 defenders to guard 3 offensive players.

Key Personnel:

- A point guard (1) with good decision making skills. Should be able to hit a floater or midrange pull-up.
- Two players that can make the three-point shot at a high percentage - (2) and (3).

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a 1-3-1 formation.

1. The play begins with 1 dribbling to either side of the floor to drag the high defender in the zone X1 to the wing.
2. At the same time 3 slides down towards the corner to give 1 more space on the wing.
3. 5 steps out from the high post and screens X1.
4. 1 uses the screen and attacks the high post. If X2 doesn't slide across to stop dribble penetration, 1 can finish with a floater or midrange pull-up.
5. At the same time that 1 uses the screen from 5, 3 deep cuts along the baseline to the opposite corner.
6. If X2 does stop dribble penetration (as we expect they will), 1 passes to 2 on the wing who should be wide open for the three-point shot.



7. As X2 stopped the drive, the only defender that can contest 2's shot is X4. If X4 does sprint out to contest the shot, 2 passes to 3 on the baseline for the open three-point shot.
8. On the shot 1 immediately retreats and plays safety.

Coaching Points:

- It doesn't matter which side of the floor this play is run on since both wing players will be in shooting positions. 4 on the baseline can start on either side but must go to the ball-side when the ball is reversed.
- 5 and 4 must rebound on the shot.



Skipper

Overview of the Play:

This is a quick hitter designed to get a good shooter an open three-point shot from the corner off a skip pass. Due to the skip pass, this may be hard for young teams to execute, but high school teams and older will find a lot of success using this play.

Key Personnel:

- #3 should be able to make a strong skip pass.
- #2 should be the team's best three-point shooter.

Instructions:

Setup: Your team starts in a 1-3-1 set with the low post player on the same side as your best three-point shooter.

1. The play begins with 1 passing to 3 on the wing.
2. 5 sets a screen on the back side of D4.
3. 2 slides down to the corner behind 5's screen.
4. 3 makes the strong skip pass to 2 for the shot.

Coaching Points:

- When 5 sets the screen on the back side of D4, they need to make sure they don't do it until the pass is about to be made. If they do it too soon, the defense will instantly know what's happening and can fight through the screen.
- To make sure the ball isn't tipped, 2 should through an overhead pass. Make sure to practice this with your team at practice!



Swinger

Overview of the Play:

This play is designed to get a blindside pick-and-roll for your point guard at the top of the key. After using the pick-and-roll, the point guard has a number of options to give your team in the best opportunity to score.

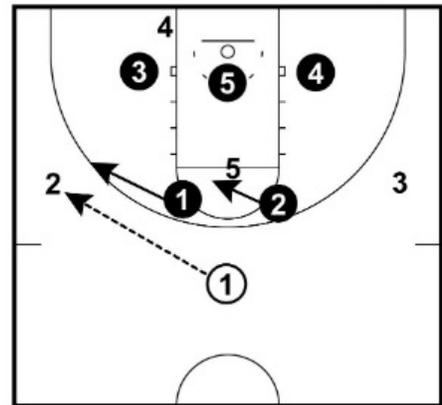
Key Personnel:

- 1 must be a great decision maker.
- 5 must be able to set a strong screen.
- 3 must be able to knock down the three-point shot.

Instructions:

Setup: Players start in a 1-3-1 formation with your best decision maker running the point guard position.

1. 1 passes to 2 on the wing to shift the defense.
2. Once the defense shifts, 2 passes back to 1 at the top of the key.
3. As this pass is made, 5 sets a blindside screen on D1.
4. 1 immediately uses the screen and attacks towards the rim.
5. As 1 is driving off the pick-and-roll, 3 slides down to the corner and 4 slides along the baseline to find a hole in the defense.
6. 1 now has three scoring options depending on what the defense does.



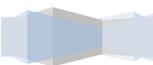
Option 1 - If no defender steps up to stop the ball, 1 pulls up for a jump shot.

Option 2 - If D4 steps out to defend, 1 passes to 3 for the corner three-point shot.

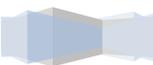
Option 3 - If D5 steps out to defend, 1 bounce passes to 4 for the baseline layup.

Coaching Points:

- 5 must set the screen on a good angle so that 1 can attack the rim. A lot of youth players set the screen on the side of the defender and they easily slip under it.
- 3 and 4 must be down in stance ready to catch and shoot when they receive the pass from 1.



BLOB Man-to-Man Basketball Plays



4-Low Flex

Overview of the Play:

From a 4-low formation, the ball is passed to the middle players at the top of the key. The play then involves a flex screen and pin down which provides two great open shot opportunities.

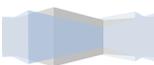
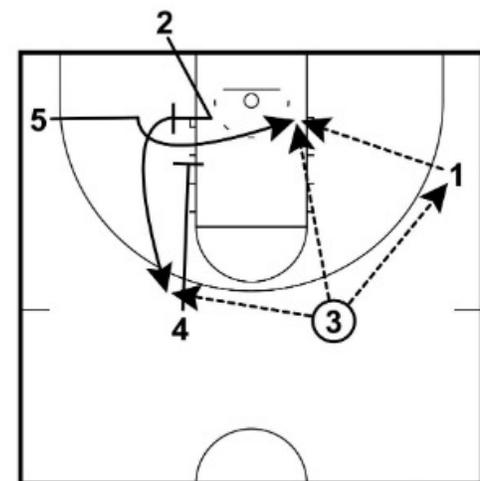
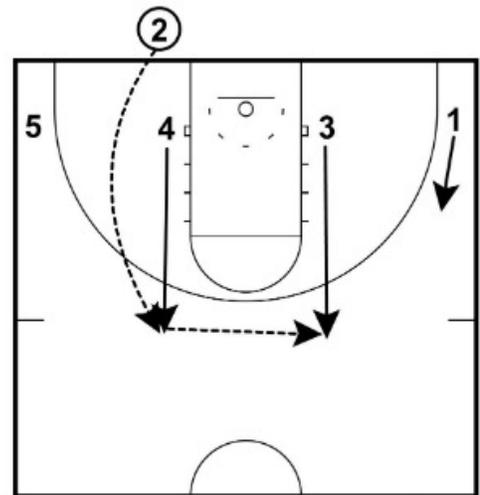
Key Personnel:

- Best shooter should inbound the basketball.
- Best post player should start outside the three-point line on ball-side.

Instructions:

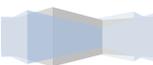
Setup: The play begins in a 4-low formation with the bigs on ball-side.

1. 4 cuts to the top of the key and receives the inbounds lob pass.
2. 3 waits an extra second and then cuts to the top of the key and receives the pass from 4.
3. 2 then steps inbounds and sets a flex screen for 5 who flex cuts looking for the pass and open layup.
4. We then use a screen-the-screener action as 4 sets a pin down for 2.
5. 2 cuts to the top of the key looking for the catch and shoot from a pass from 3.



Coaching Points:

- 3 must be able to make smart decisions with the basketball and hit the open player at the right time and on-target.
- It's important that every player sets strong screens during this play.



Box Gate

Overview of the Play:

The play begins in a box formation and involves your best shooter setting a simple back screen for a center to get open for a quick layup. The screener then uses a gate screen to open up a catch and shoot from the wing. The play finishes with an open post up by the center.

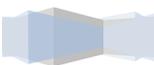
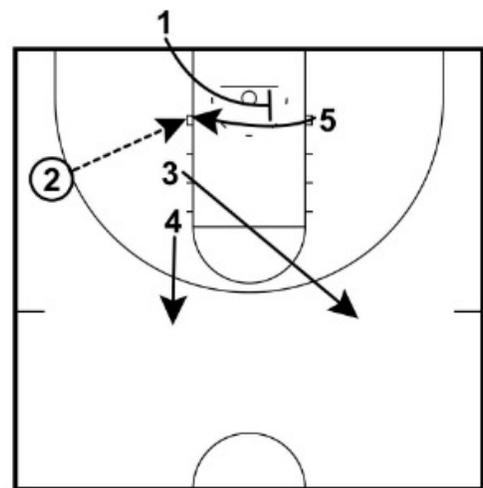
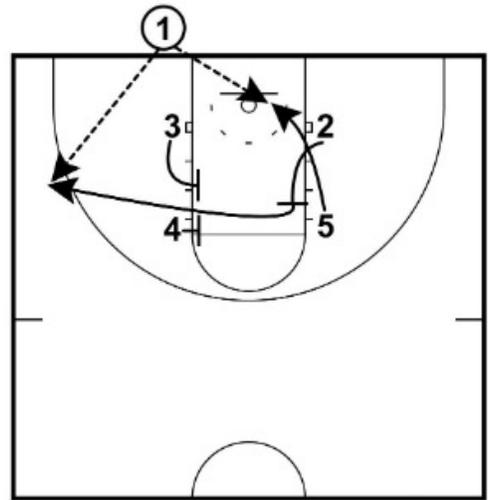
Key Personnel:

- Best shooter should start on the weak-side low block.
- Best post-up player should start on the weak-side elbow.
- Point guard should inbound the basketball.

Instructions:

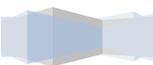
The play begins in a box formation.

1. 2 sets a back screen for 5 who cuts to the rim looking for the basketball.
2. As 2 sets the screen, that's when 3 starts to move up the side of the key. 3 can't move too early or the defense will read the play.
3. Immediately after setting the screen for 5, 2 sprints through a gate screen set by 3 and 4 looking for a catch and shoot on the wing.
4. After screening, 3 and 4 clear out to the top of the key.
5. 1 steps inside the court and sets a cross screen for 5 who looks to duck in for the pass or post up on the ball-side low block.



Coaching Points:

- The reason the point guard should inbound the basketball is so that the help on the cross screen is a small defender.
- 3 must wait until 2 is ready to sprint off the gate screen before moving. They should arrive at the same time.
- 1 must make the pass to 2's inside shoulder. If they pass to the outside of their body, it will be difficult to catch and shoot.



Box Floppy Gate

Overview of the Play:

A super simple gate screen play off a baseline inbound. The shooter passes the basketball in and then walks to the middle of the key where they'll receive a gate screen to one side of the floor and a normal screen to the other.

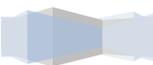
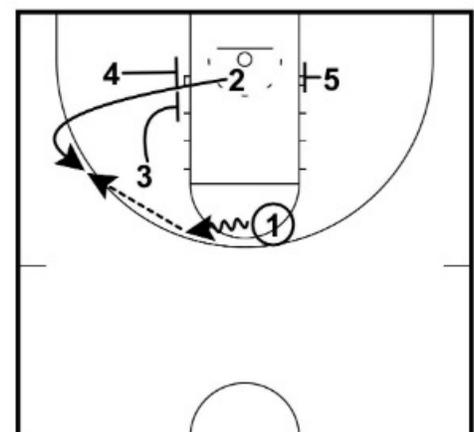
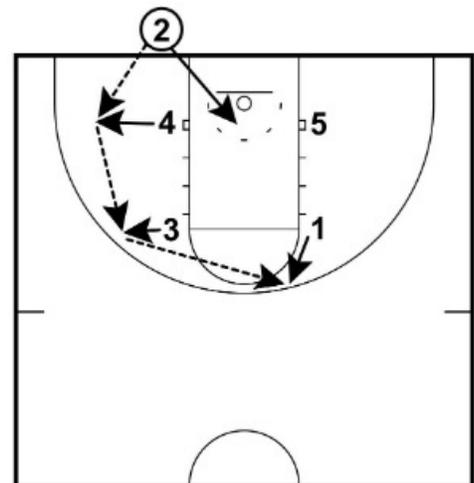
Key Personnel:

- Your best shooter should be inbounding the basketball.

Instructions:

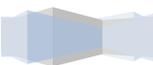
Setup: The play starts in a box formation with the shooter inbounding the basketball.

1. The play begins with 4 stepping off the low block to receive the pass.
2. 4 then swings the basketball to 3 who immediately passes to 1.
3. By this time the shooter (2) has walked their player into the middle of the key.
4. 4 and 3 then set a gate screen on the low block which 2 sprints through to get open for the shot.
5. It's 1's responsibility to use the dribble to improve the passing angle.
6. If the defender cheats the gate screen, 5 sets a screen on the opposite low block which the shooter can use also.



Coaching Points:

- The gate screen provides the primary scoring opportunity. Only after you've run the play a few times and the defender cheats should the shooter look to use the single screen from 5.
- This is a great play for youth basketball due to its simplicity.
- The shooter should give a small 'nudge' to their defender before cutting through the gate screen to create separation. This must be taught to the players so that they're not called for a pushing foul.



Duke

Overview of the Play:

This play is designed to get great open midrange and three-point shots around the perimeter. If none of the shots are open, the team can either post up one of the bigs or set a ram screen for the perimeter player.

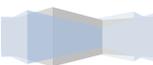
Key Personnel:

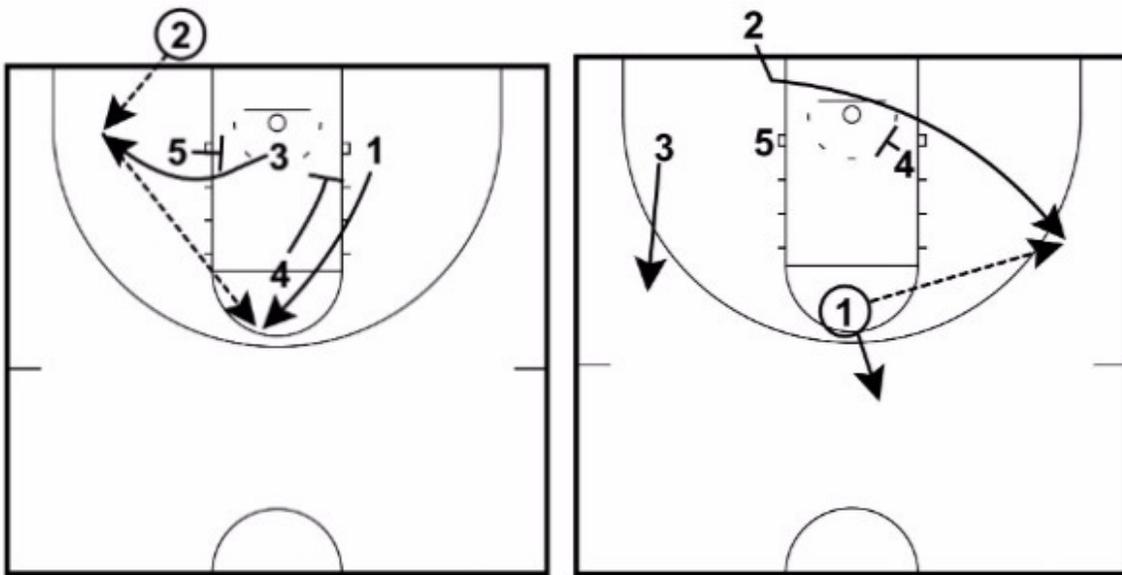
- This play works best if 1, 2, and 3 can hit an open outside shot.
- 2 should be the team's best creator out of a pick-and-roll.
- 5 should be your team's best post player.
- 4 should be your team's best screener.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins with one player on the free-throw line and 3 players lined up on and between the low blocks.

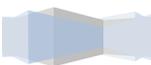
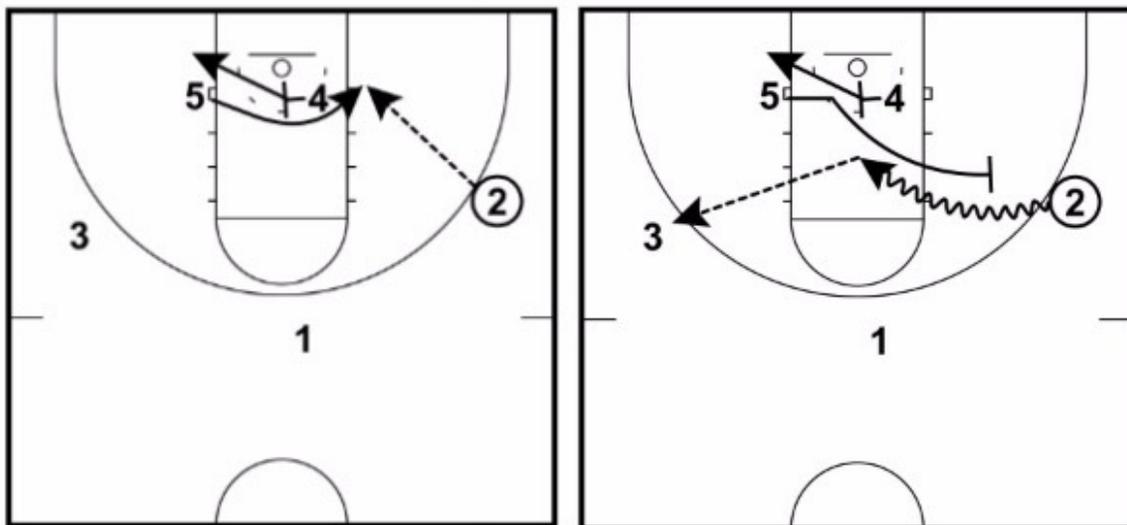
1. The play begins with 5 setting a screen for 3 pops out to the corner.
2. A second later (timing is important), 4 sets a down screen for 1 who cuts to the top of the key.
3. 4 then immediately sets another screen for 2 who cuts from the inbounding position to the wing.





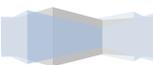
If any of these shots are open, the player should shoot it!

4. As 2 catches on the perimeter, 4 will set a final cross-screen for 5.
5. From here we have a few options...
 - A. 5 can receive the quick pass inside for the layup or post up on the blow block.
 - B. 5 can sprint up and set a screen on 2's defender and we're now in a pick and roll with fantastic spacing.



Coaching Points:

- The final screen is called a 'Ram Screen'. It's effective because 5's defender will be trailing the play after being screened by 4 which will mean there's no defender to show on the screen which leaves 2 open for the shot or driving to the rim with a post defender closing out late.
- All players must be looking to catch and shoot on every catch. They'll all be coming off screens so some will be open!



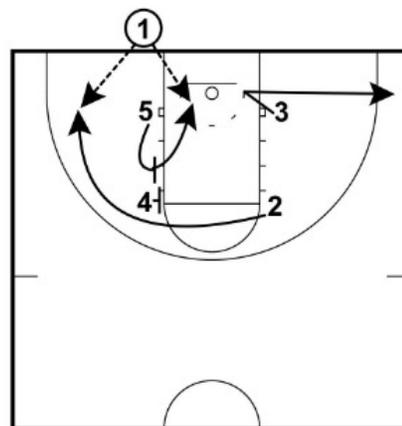
Ram Red

Overview of the Play:

This play starts in a box set and has numerous scoring opportunities including a shooter cutting off a double-screen for the shot, a post player diving to the rim, and a pick-and-roll with great spacing if none of the first two options are open.

Key Personnel:

- Your best shooter should start on the weak-side elbow.
- Your best pick-and-roll player should inbound the basketball.
- The post player that you want to screen on the pick should start on the ball-side low block.



Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a box formation.

1. The play begins with 5 sliding to the high post and setting a double screen with 4.
2. 2 curls tight off 4 and 5's double screen looking for the catch and shoot on the wing.
3. If 5 notices their defender helping, they duck to the rim for the layup.
4. 3 takes a few steps towards the rim and the pops out calling for the basketball to draw their defender out with them.
5. If no immediate scoring options are open, 1 inbounds the basketball to 2.
6. 4 and 5 immediately set a staggered down screen for 1 who cuts to the top of the key. 4 should ensure not to be too close to 5 on this staggered screen.



7. 2 takes a couple of dribbles and then passes to 1 at the top of the key.
8. 4 immediately sets a screen on 5's defender and 5 sprints to the top of the key to set the screen for 1.
9. 4 slides down to the weak-side short corner and both wing players create the best angles possible for the drive and kick.
10. 1 uses 5's screen and attacks the rim looking to score or dish off to an open shooter after reading the help defense.

Coaching Points:

- The point of screening for the screener is to create a lot of space for 1 to attack without the screener's defender hedging or trapping.
- Preferably, 1 should catch on the ball-side slot to give them more room off the pick-and-roll.
- Strong screens are very important during this play. Don't allow your players to be lazy. Set and hold until the defender fights through.



Stack Double

Overview of the Play:

A great play out of the common stack set to get your best shooter an open midrange or three-point shot on the wing.

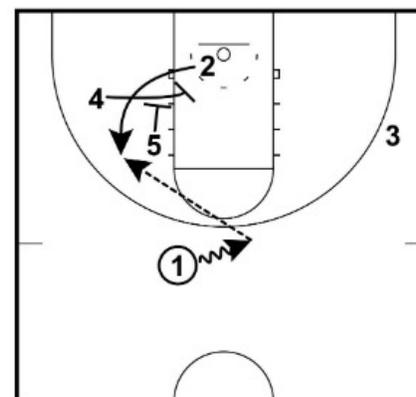
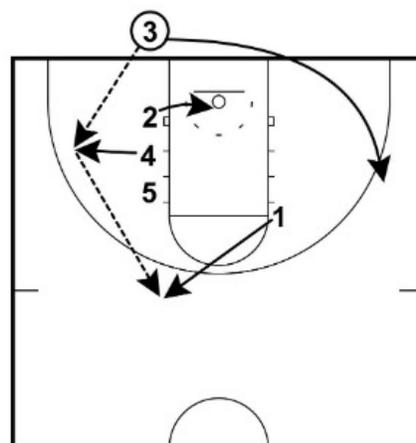
Key Personnel:

- Your best shooter should be in the position of 2.
- 1 should be your point guard.

Instructions:

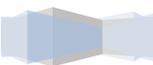
Setup: The play starts in a stack formation with the exception of the point guard (1) who is on the weak-side elbow.

1. The play begins with 4 popping out to the perimeter and receiving the pass from 3.
2. As this happens, 2 drags their defender lower by taking a few steps towards the hoop and calling for the basketball.
3. After inbounding, 3 sprints the baseline and clears out to the weak-side wing.
4. 1 cuts to the top of the key and receives a pass from 4.
5. 1 should take a dribble in the opposite direction to get the defenders moving towards the middle and to open up the pass to 2.
6. 4 and 5 immediately set a staggered screen for 2 who reads their defender and cuts out and receives the pass from 1 for either the midrange or three-point shot on the wing.



Coaching Points:

- It's important for 1 to sell the fake dribble towards 3 at the top of the key to get the defense moving across.
- At the beginning of the play, players shouldn't face the direction they're going to go or they'll give away their movements.



Two Inside

Overview of the Play:

The aim of the play is to get the basketball inside to one of the two post players. The play does this by using a screen-the-screener action. The two guards move to safety positions and keep their defenders occupied.

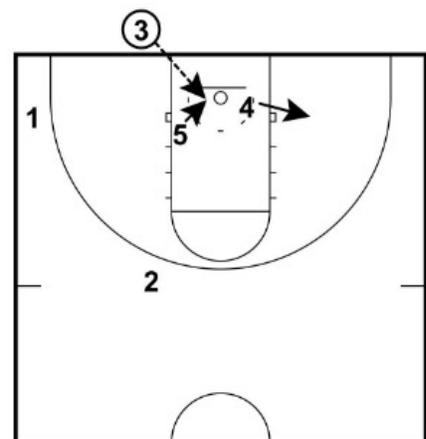
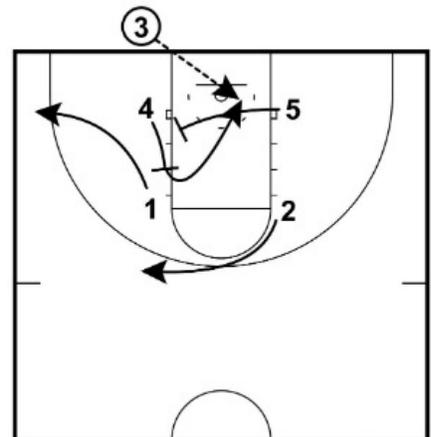
Key Personnel:

- Best used on a team with great post players.
- Can also be used for any player that has a height advantage against their direct opponent.
- The best passer should pass the basketball in.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a box formation with the two posts down low and two guards at the high post elbows.

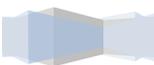
1. The play begins with 4 setting an up-screen for 1 who pops out to the corner.
2. As 1 is cutting to the corner, 2 cuts to the ball-side slot calling for the basketball to keep their defender out of the paint.
3. 5 waits for one to two seconds while facing 2 and then cuts across the lane to set a strong screen on 4's defender.
4. This screen-the-screener action should allow 4 to cut to the weak-side of the rim for an open layup.
5. If 5's defender cuts off the pass, 4 should back out to the short corner to open up the paint for 5.



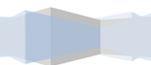
6. After screening, 5 seals 4's defender and pivots towards the hoop where 3 should be able to pass to them for the open layup.
7. If no options are open, 3 passes over the top to 2 and the team sets up the half-court offense.

Coaching Points:

- 1 and 2 must call for the basketball while cutting even if they know they won't receive it. It drags the defenders away.
- 5 must start the play by looking in 2's direction so that the screen-the-screener action isn't given away.



BLOB 2-3 Zone Basketball Plays



Belmont Flash

Overview of the Play:

The play is designed to get your team an open three-point shot in the corner by catching the low ball-side post player off-guard. The ball gets to the top of the key, a quick flash from the weak side, and then a pass to the corner to the in-bounder off strong screen.

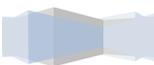
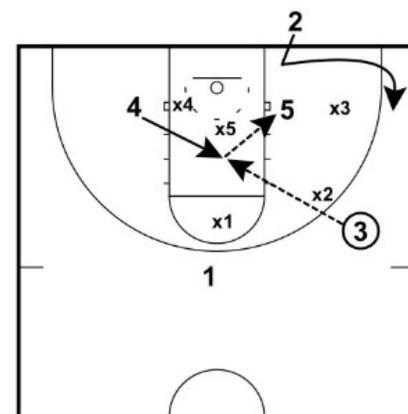
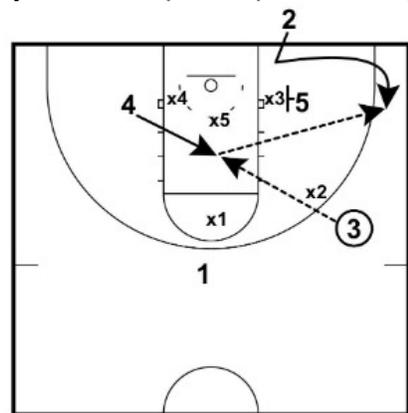
Key Personnel:

- Your best shooter should be in-bounding the basketball.
- A player capable of setting a strong screen on the ball-side low block.
- Preferably a good decision-maker on the weak side low block.

Instructions:

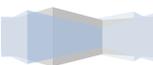
Setup: Players start in a wide box set. This means that instead of being on the low blocks and elbows, players are approximately 3 feet wider than usual.

1. The play begins with 3 popping out to the wing and catching the pass from 2.
2. 1 also cuts to the top of the key in case it's easier to use an extra pass before feeding the basketball inside the key.
3. On 3's catch, 4 immediately flashes to the middle of the key to receive the pass.
4. 5 will set a screen on the low ball-side post player and 2 will curl around to the corner to catch the pass from 4 and take the three-point shot.
5. If x3 does get around the screen, 5 will be open for the bounce pass and layup as x5 is forced to defend the player in the middle of the key.



Coaching Points:

- As this is a play where we catch the defense off-guard, it's not going to work if you run it too regularly. Save it for special occasions.
- It's very important that 4 is able to make the read on x3 and then deliver the correct pass to 2 or 5.
- If 5 does get the catch inside, they must go up strong because x5 will usually turn around and foul.



Box Flash

Overview of the Play:

This is a 2-3 zone BLOB box set with multiple scoring options. This set overloads a side of the zone and forces the zone defense to make a decision on who to guard. Great play for teams of all levels!

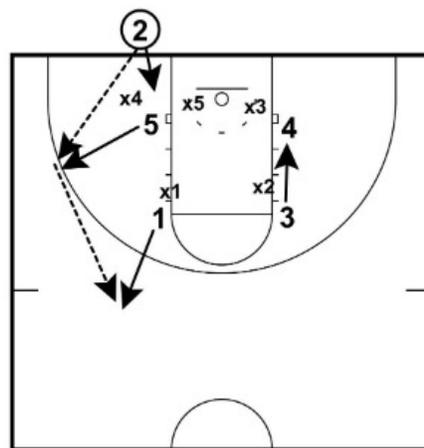
Key Personnel:

- A strong shooter (2) who can make the three-point shot or mid-range shot at a high percentage.
- A post player who can shoot the basketball from the outside is preferable (4).
- Put your best playmaker in the (3) position.

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a box formation. Post players are positioned on the two low blocks and your guards are positioned on the two elbows.

1. 5 sprints up to the wing and 2 enters the ball in-bounds to 5.
2. 1 pops high to the slot and 3 moves down to the block with 4 to set a double screen.
3. 2 steps on the court and positions themselves in the ball-side short corner.
4. 5 passes the ball to 1 at the top of the key.
5. 2 then sprints off the double screen screen from 3 and 4 to the corner.



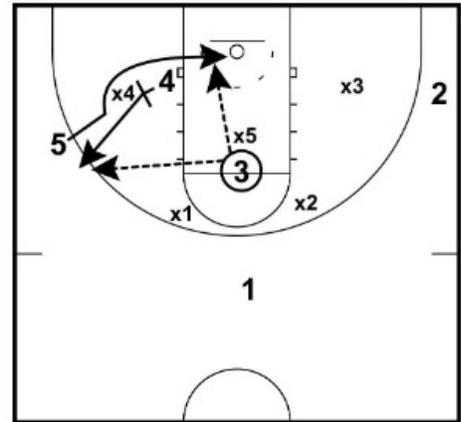
6. 1 dribbles to the top of the key to improve the passing angle and makes the pass to 2 in the corner for the open shot.

7. If 2 isn't open for the shot, 3 flashes to the high post and 1 passes the basketball to 3.

8. 4 then sets a back screen on the bottom wing defender and 5 sprints backdoor looking for the open pass and layup.

9. 4 pops out to the wing after setting the back screen and is then open for a three-point shot depending on how x4 decides to play it.

10. If 3 feels like they have a speed mismatch against x5, they can also attack the rim from the high post.



Coaching Points:

- 1's pass to 2 in the corner must be on-time and on-target. Ensure this is a pass you're practicing often at practice.
- Put your best playmaker in position #3. The decision made from this spot will often decide whether your team gets an open shot/layup or not.
- Teach your players what option will be open depending on how the defense guards them.
- Emphasize to player 4 on setting a good back screen and also be shot ready when popping after setting the back screen.



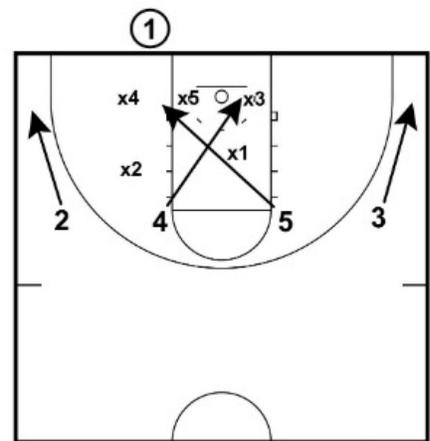
Cross

Overview of the Play:

This baseline out of bounds play is a fantastic play for youth basketball teams. It's simple, easy to remember, and effective. The theory behind the play is to get 4 offensive players low and force 3 defenders to guard 4 players. As long as the spacing is even, someone must be open.

Key Personnel:

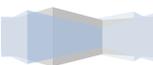
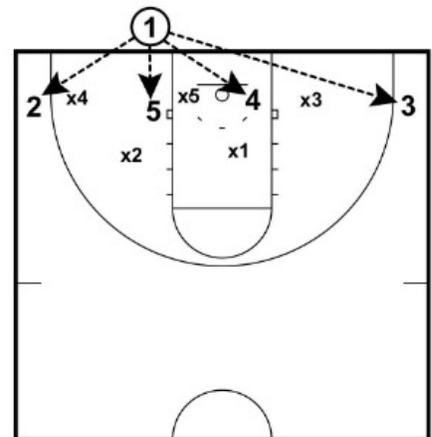
- Two players who can knock down the open three-point shot (2 and 3).
- Two players who can finish strong inside (4 and 5).
- One player who can read the situation and make the correct pass (1).



Instructions:

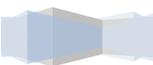
Setup: The play starts in a 1-4 high formation. Post players are at the elbows, and two best shooters on the wings.

1. The play begins with 2 and 3 cutting to their respective corners calling loud for the basketball. This will draw out both bottom wing defenders.
2. 4 and 5 wait a second and then cross paths and cut to opposite low blocks.
3. 1 then reads where the defenders moved to and passes to the open player for the shot.



Coaching Points:

- If one of the shooters does receive the pass and takes the shot, the opposite corner must immediately sprint back on defense to prevent the fast break.
- I always advise the in-bounder to look at the player cutting to the opposite corner at the start of the play. The ball-side low player will nearly always deny the corner pass, but it's the weak-side low player we need to move out of position before the post players can get open.
- All players must be calling loud for the basketball. This will draw the defenders.
- The in-bounder can't give away where they're going to pass the basketball with their eyes.



Double Skip

Overview of the Play:

This is a 2-3 zone BLOB 1-4 high set that moves the defense from side to side and creates an advantage with a double flare screen for the in-bounder on the weak side out of sight of the zone defenders.

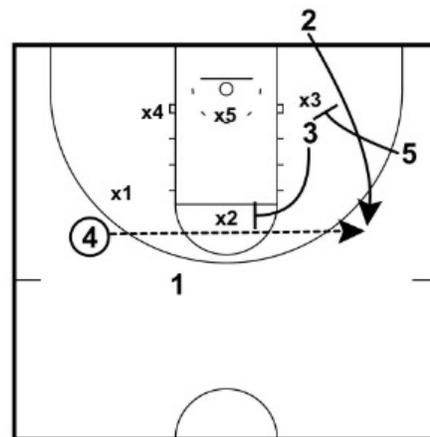
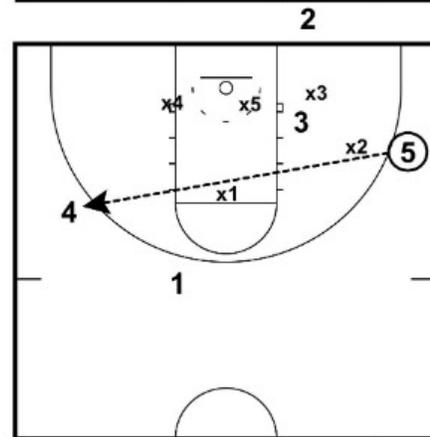
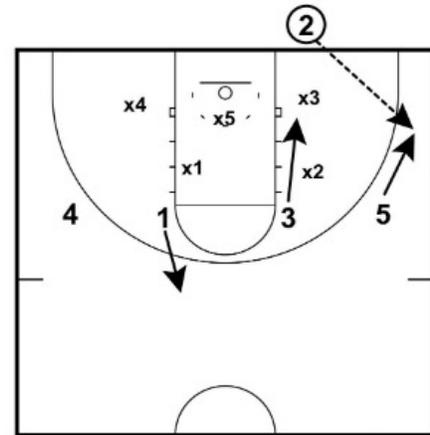
Key Personnel:

- A strong shooter (2) who can make the three-point shot at a high percentage.
- Post players (4) and (5) who are capable of making a strong skip passes.

Instructions:

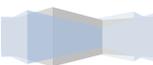
Setup: The play starts in a 1-4 high formation. Post players should be on the wings of the 1-4 high. Best shooter is the in-bounds passer.

1. 5 sprints to the strong side corner. 3 sprints to the strong side short corner at the same time.
2. 2 enters the ball in-bounds to 5 in the corner.
3. 5 skip passes the ball opposite to 4. 1 can also screen in on x1 in order to make this pass easier and safer.
4. 1 spaces up to the top of the key when 4 receives the skip pass.
5. 3 sprints up to flare screen the top zone defender (x2). 5 screens in on the bottom wing defender (x3) at the same time.
6. 2 sprints behind the bottom wing zone defender (x3) and positions himself on the wing.
7. 4 skips the basketball to 2 when as they're arriving to the wing. 2 should have an open three point shot.



Coaching Points:

- 5 can also dribble to the wing to make the skip pass to 4 easier.
- 3 and 5 can also slip the flare screens and show themselves to 4 if the wing defenders fight over the flare screen.
- 4 can also use a pass fake to shift the zone away from where 2 is cutting to.
- Timing of the screens is very important. 3 should arrive to screen near the same time the skip pass is thrown so that the skip pass isn't given away too early.



Hawk

Overview of the Play:

This 2-3 zone quick hitter BLOB play results in either an open three-point shot in the corner or a post player shooting an open jump shot from the low block. This occurs by forcing the low zone defender to make a decision on who to guard.

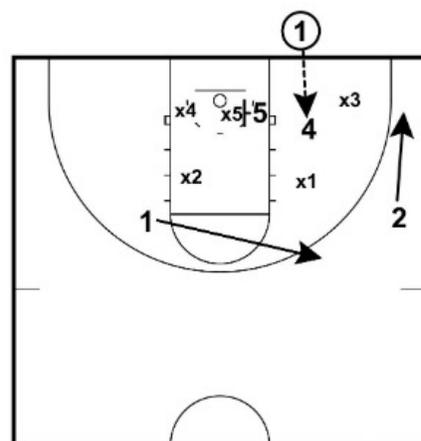
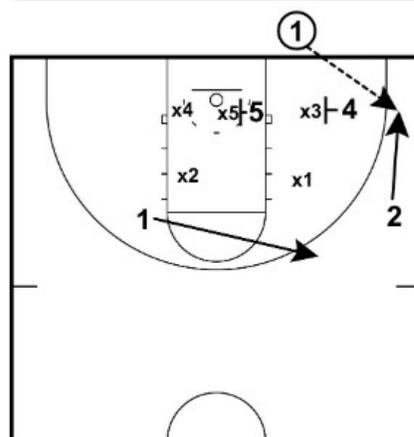
Key Personnel:

- A strong shooter (2) who can make the 3-point shot at a high percentage.
- A post player (4) who can make a midrange shot close to the basket.
- A player who can set a strong screen (5).

Instructions:

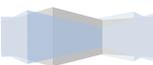
Setup: Players begin in an irregular formation with 3 players along the free-throw line extended and one player in the ball-side corner.

1. The play begins with 5 cutting down the key and sealing the middle zone defender (x5) with a screen.
2. At the same time, 4 walks their defender (x3) closer to the basket with a screen.
3. 2 cuts towards the ball-side corner and should be open for the pass and shot if 4 and 5 have done a good job of sealing their opponents.
4. 1 cuts to the ball-side slot to force the ball-side guard defender (x1) to hold their position.
5. If x3 cheats over the screen to deny the corner shot, 4 should be open for the catch and shoot midrange jump shot.



Coaching Points:

- Timing is very important during this play. 4 and 5 should be setting the screen at the same time and 2 must immediately cut to the corner for the shot.
- 2 must not make it obvious that they're going to cut to the corner. Face the middle of the floor and they can even make to set a screen before cutting there.
- This quick hitter won't work if you're running it every time you have a baseline inbounds. Save it for a special occasion where you need a three-point shot.
- The player in-bounding the basketball must make the correct read and pass.



Side Cross Elevator

Overview of the Play:

This is a 2-3 zone BLOB set designed to get your best shooter an open shot on the strong side corner. The play works by screening the two side defenders in the zone in a creative way.

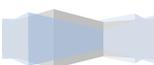
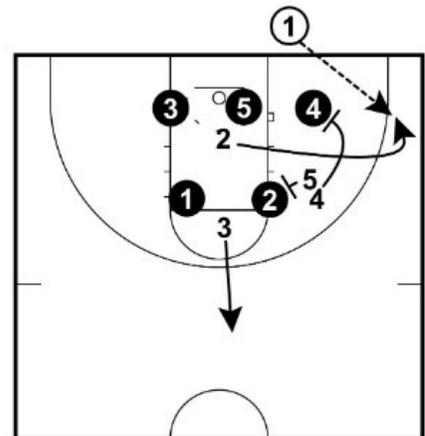
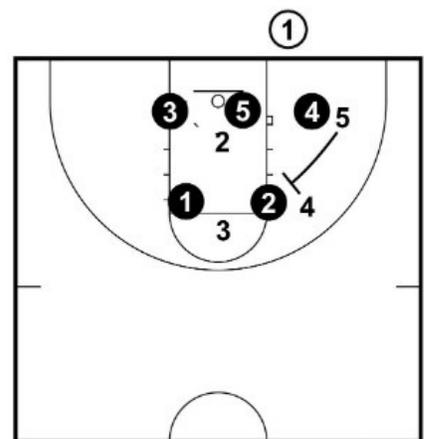
Key Personnel:

- A strong shooter (2) who can make the three-point shot at a high percentage.
- Your two post players to set strong screens (4) and (5).

Instructions:

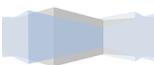
Setup: Begin in a box formation that's pushed closer to ball-side. Your 4 and 5 must begin on the outside of the two zone side defenders.

1. 5 sprints up and sets a screen on the top wing defender (x2).
2. 4 runs off the screen and sets screen on the bottom wing defender (x4).
3. When 2 sees that 5 has just set the screen on x2, 2 will then sprint off 4s back to the corner preparing to shoot.
4. 1 passes the basketball to 2 in the corner for the three-point shot.



Coaching Points:

- If x2 goes under the screen from 5 to jam 2 from going through the elevator, have 2 go over top of the screen to the corner.
- If the side defenders fight over top of the screens, use 3 as a safety option over the top and also teach 4 and 5 to slip their screens and show themselves to the in-bounder.
- 4 and 5 should not start the play by facing where they're going to set a screen. Don't give the play away.



Stack

Overview of the Play:

A basic BLOB 2-3 zone play that's incredibly common (and successful) at the youth basketball level. It involves clearing out two of the low zone defenders and creating a gap for a player to receive the pass for a quick midrange shot.

Key Personnel:

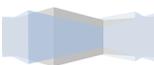
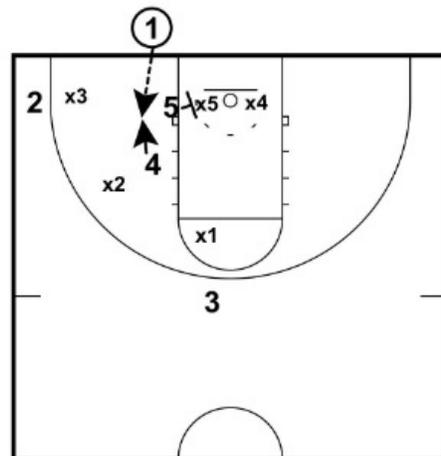
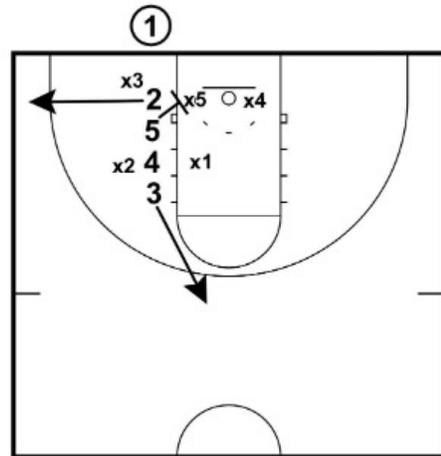
A strong shooter (2) who can make the three-point shot at a high percentage..

A post player (4) able to cut into the gap and make a short midrange shot.

Instructions:

Setup: Players are set up in a stack formation on the ball-side edge of the key.

1. 2 immediately cuts to the corner calling for the basketball to drag out the low wing defender (x3).
2. 5 steps towards the middle of the key and sets a screen on the middle zone defender (x5).
3. This leaves a gap for 4 to step into and receive the pass from 1 for the open shot.
4. 3 must clear out to the top of the key to drag out the top defender (x1) and for safety..
5. If x3 does stay and cut off the pass to 4, that will leave 2 open in the corner for the catch and shoot three-pointer.



Coaching Points:

- As always, timing of the screens and cuts is crucial for the play to be successful. 4 needs to wait for the gap to open up before stepping up and calling for the basketball.
- 4 must have their hands up and be ready to catch and shoot quickly. There's not enough time to take a dribble or lower the basketball.
- Very important that 2 is calling for the basketball as they cut to the corner to drag the defender out with them.
- 1 must read x3 and then make the correct pass to the open player. Since they will be forced to guard two players, one of them should be open.



37 Basketball Training Tips, Strategies, and Secrets

 basketballforcoaches.com/basketball-training/



Effective basketball training is essential for all players.

Whether you're a young player still learning the game, a college athlete attempting to turn pro, or a coach looking to help out their team, you should always be on the search for new basketball training tips to improve your game.

Below I'll share with you 37 important basketball training tips that will help you elevate your game to the next level.

Let's get started...

1. Always Have a Workout Plan

There is nothing more important than having a plan of what you want to accomplish every time you step in the gym.

This requires that you've spent time evaluating your strengths and weaknesses and you understand what areas of your game you should be focusing on.

- What shooting drills do you want to use?
- How many shots do you want to take?
- Do you need to work on your ball handling?

The answers to all these questions should be clear to anyone who looks at the workout you have planned for the day.

Players can list their workouts on an electronic device like their phone or iPad, or be 'old school' by using traditional printed out paper with a pen to track your results (which I prefer).

Having a plan will allow you to stick to a schedule and be efficient.

You know exactly what to do and you go in and do it.

2. Treat your workouts like doctors appointments

Similar to how people schedule doctors appointments and work commitments, players must be schedule their basketball training workouts too.

Because if you don't schedule them, they probably won't happen.

Schedule your basketball workouts into your calendar at the start of the week and then hold yourself accountable to going to them.

How many times have you planned on working out but then other stuff just kept popping up?

- A friend asks you to hang out...
- You lose track of time while playing video games...
- You're busy watching on a TV series

And then by the time you look at the clock, it's too late to work out so you just forget about it and say "Oh well. I'll do it tomorrow".

This can't happen if you want to develop as a basketball player.

You have to make workouts a priority if you want to be successful.

3. Shooting is the most important skill in basketball

Players must understand this.

When you're in the gym, a lot of your workout time must be spent developing your ability to shoot the basketball.

Every other skill is secondary to shooting.

In the type of basketball that is being played today, it's very hard to receive significant minutes on the court at higher levels if you can't knock down an open shot consistently from the perimeter.

Sure, there are players who make it all the way to the NBA or WNBA who aren't great shooters, but they're often either 7 foot tall or have elite athleticism most of us couldn't dream of possessing.

To give yourself the best chance for success, focus on shooting.

Your goal should always be to become the best shooter on the team.

4. Elite shooters make 1,500 shots per week

Forget about all the parents on instagram claiming their 12-year-old makes 1,000 shots every single day...

Your goal should be 1,500 made shots per week.

Here's the simple chart I refer to:

- Elite Shooter = 1,500 made shots per week
- Great Shooter = 1,000 made shots per week
- Poor Shooter = 500 made shots per week

"Only 1,500 a week!?" I've had a lot of coaches say to me...

If you also think this number is low, I want you to remember how many other commitments players have...

- School
- Homework
- Employment
- Team Practices
- Games
- Other sports
- Friends
- Etc

All the time these commitments require can really add up!

Let's crunch the numbers to see how much time 1,500 shots a week takes...

Assuming a player makes one game-like shot every fifteen seconds (4 made shots per minute)...

Good - 500 made shots would take 125 minutes = 2 hours and 5 minutes.

Great - 1000 made shots would take 250 minutes = 4 hours and 10 minutes.

Elite - 1,500 made shots would take 375 minutes = 6 hours and 15 minutes.

That doesn't seem like too much to ask of a player, does it?

5. Always keep a detailed shooting log

I first started advising players to start tracking their made shots after reading a terrific article on shooting coach Dave Hopla.

Dave tracks every single shot he takes... and regularly shoots 98%.

Incredible, right?

In fact, you'll find it hard to find any great shooter that doesn't meticulously track their makes and misses when working on their shooting.

So why don't more youth and high school players do it?

I have absolutely no idea!

To me, it's an absolute must if a player plans on improving their shot.

Here are 5 quick reasons why tracking shots will make you a great shooter:

1. You cannot improve what you don't measure.
2. It makes every single shot important.
3. Players can set shooting goals and commitments.
4. Players will see improvements.
5. Players will find out their weak shooting areas.

6. Perfect your shooting technique

As shooting is the most important skill in basketball, it's important for all players to develop a fundamentally sound, consistent, and repeatable shot.

And the sooner a player can develop this, the better.

It's much faster and easier for players to improve when they're using correct shooting technique.

Here are the 10 steps players must follow:

1. Shot preparation
2. Hand placement on the ball
3. Balanced base
4. Feet direction (the turn)
5. Consistent shot pocket
6. Eyes on target
7. Wrinkle the wrist
8. Elbow under the basketball
9. Balance hand
10. Rhythm shot + follow through

For a more in-depth look into each of these steps, [check out my full blog post on how to shoot a basketball perfectly.](#)

7. Start every workout with form shooting

Players should start every workout close to the hoop working on their shooting technique (hint - the pros already do).

The absolute worst thing you can do is step into the gym and immediately start throwing up shots from behind the three-point line.

Start close to the rim and get into a rhythm of shooting the basketball with good technique first and then gradually extend the range of your shot.

Here's what I recommend:

- 20 makes from 3 feet.
- 15 makes from 5 feet.
- 10 makes from 10 feet.
- 5 makes from 15 feet (free-throw line).

That's all you need to do.

It's simple, it's quick, and you'll lock yourself in for a great workout.

8. Workout quality is more important than workout quantity

There are stories that occasionally surface on the internet about a kid 'grinding' in the gym for 10 hours a day and shooting 3,000 shots...

This is completely unnecessary (and often harmful).

In fact, if a player is spending that long in the gym, they're most likely doing something wrong.

Remember this quote...

"Time in a gym doesn't make a man a player any more than time in a garage makes him a car."

A smart and efficient player who goes to the gym for 1 hour can often achieve better results than a careless player who goes to the gym for 10 hours.

"How?"

By having a pre-planned workout and then getting in the gym and executing the workout at game speed and with 100% focus.

9. But quantity of workouts is still incredibly important

While the quality of a workout is more important than quantity, players who want to get better still need to be in the gym multiple times per week.

No matter how effective your pre-planned workouts are, if you're only completing the workout once or twice per week, you're still not going to be able to develop at a significant rate.

You must be in the gym 3 - 5 times per week working on your game.

Any less than that and you simply won't be able to get in enough quality repetitions to give yourself a chance of becoming a great player.

10. Practice your skills under game-like conditions

Another reason to add conditioning to your workouts is that it ensures you'll be practicing under game-like conditions.

Understand this...

During games you're going to be sprinting up and down the floor multiple times before attempting to shoot. You're going to be fatigued physically and mentally.

It's important to practice under these conditions so that you're comfortable executing your skills when faced with these conditions during games.

Here are a few examples of how to add conditioning to workouts:

- Sprint to half-way and back after each shot attempt.
- Complete one suicide after each shooting drill and then practice shooting free-throws.
- Instead of using a basketball shooting machine, rebound the basketball after every shot by yourself.

11. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses

One of the best things a player can do is sit down with a pen and paper and evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses.

As long as the player is honest with themselves, this exercise will show them a few different things:

- a. What areas of their game they need to work on (weaknesses).
- b. What to focus on executing during games (strengths).

Understanding this is especially important when players are putting together basketball training workouts to improve their game.

You must be able to look at your game from an outsider's perspective and be objectively critical with yourself.

For example, just because you like shooting three-pointers doesn't make you a three-point shooter (especially if you're only making 17% of your attempts).

Which is why I always recommend getting your coach's thoughts, too...

12. Talk to your coach about what you need to improve

"Good players take criticism. Great players crave criticism" - Don Meyer

Once you've evaluated your own strengths and weaknesses, ask your coach if they'll spend a few minutes with you sharing their thoughts.

Ask them to be honest with you and to provide feedback.

Ask them what they think your strengths and weaknesses are.

But you must be willing to accept criticism when you do this. Understand that you're putting yourself in a vulnerable position and you must be willing to listen to your coach's advice. This takes mental toughness.

Don't argue with them.

An experienced coach can provide great insight into areas of your game that you might have overlooked.

13. Always train at game speed

“I try and go through practice at game speed so it’ll be easier when I step on the floor for a real game” - Kevin Durant

One of the biggest mistakes a player can make during workouts is only putting in 50% effort when practicing.

Instead of sprinting around the court, they jog.

Instead of raising up on each shot, they barely leave the ground.

Being able to shoot casually and being able to shoot after running off a screen and then jumping up high into the air to avoid the defender blocking your shot are completely different skills.

If you want to improve your in-game shooting, you need to be practicing game shots at game speed.

14. Develop a consistent free-throw routine

If you don't already have one, developing a consistent free-throw routine that you'll use every time you step to the line is very important.

A consistent routine gives you confidence and a process to focus your attention on when shooting free-throws.

Keep in mind that there isn't a 'right' or a 'wrong' way to do this...

- Steve Nash shoots imaginary shots before receiving the basketball.
- Jeff Hornacek strokes his cheek 3 times (a tribute to his kids)
- Gilbert Arenas circled the basketball around his waist 3 times.
- Jason Kidd blows a kiss before each free-throw (another tribute).

The above examples may seem odd, but the purpose of including them is to show you that anything is possible.

All that matters is that your routine makes you feel comfortable.

Here's a look at my routine:

- Catch the basketball a foot behind the line.
- Spin the basketball back to myself.
- Line up my lead foot with the middle of the rim.
- Other foot slightly behind and pointed at 10 o'clock.
- Bounce 3 times.
- Shoot

Figure out yours and stick with it.

15. Spend more time working on your free throw shooting

"No fundamental basketball skill has a bigger impact on a close game at any level than the free throw" - Adam Filippi

Once you've developed a consistent free-throw routine, then it's time to make sure you're practicing them enough to become a great free-throw shooter.

If you want to be on the floor during the final few minutes of close games, this is crucial...

Your coach must be able to trust that if you're on the court and you're fouled, you'll be able to step to the line and knock down two clutch free-throws.

Here are some of the percentages players should be aiming for to be an above-average free-throw shooter at each level:

Late Youth - 60%

High School - 70%

College - 80%

For context, the average free-throw percentage from college players has floated around the 67% - 70% mark since 1960...

And the average free-throw percentage from NBA players has varied between 73% and 77% since 1955 (source: [Chicago Tribune](#)).

Players should be doing much better than that!

16. When (and how) to practice your free-throws

Continuing with the free-throw topic...

"When should you be practicing them and how should you do it?"

There are two specific times...

a. Bulk free-throw shooting

The first method involves shooting a large amount of free-throws in a row.

What you're aiming to achieve using this method is to commit your free-throw routine and free-throw technique to muscle memory.

The focus is on getting in a lot of repetitions.

Players can do this by shooting 100 free-throws in their backyard after school or by shooting 50 free-throws to finish a basketball training workout.

b. Fatigued free-throw shooting

While the first method focused on mass repetitions, fatigued free-throw shooting focuses on game-like repetitions.

This means practicing your free-throws while feeling the same type of fatigue a player would experience mid-game.

The best way to incorporate this into your workouts is to shoot two free-throws after each drill during a basketball workout.

For example:

- Mikan layups
- 2 free-throws
- 15 midrange shots
- 2 free-throws
- 10 three-point shots
- 2 free-throws

Both of these methods are important for free-throw shooting development.

17. Work on your shot fake

Bob Knight (former coach of Indiana) understood the importance of developing a great shot fake...

"I sit and wonder why no one uses the shot fake. The shot fake, when used correctly, can eliminate a defender" - Bobby Knight

"The most neglected and best scoring move in basketball is the shot fake" - Bob Knight

But how many people take the time to work on it?

Not many.

Here are the key points you need to remember:

a. Stay low - If the defender jumps on the shot fake, the offensive player needs to be low to explode past them and attack the rim.

b. Raise the basketball to eye level - Any higher and the offensive player will take too long to make the most of their advantage.

c. Eyes on the rim - To really sell the shot fake, players need to look at the rim. Defenders will often watch the eyes of their opponent.

Once the defender takes the bait, the offensive player can either take one dribble to the left or right and shoot or they can attack the hoop.

Commit to working on your shot fake and improving it.

18. Practice both 'The Hop' and the '1-2 Step'

If you've ever been told by a coach that you should always either 'hop' or 1-2 step' into your shot, don't listen to them.

Truth is...

The 1-2 step is better in some situations.

The hop is better in some situations.

Which one is better will depend on a number of factors:

- How quickly you have to shoot.
- The direction you're facing on the catch.
- The position on the floor.
- How fast you're moving on the catch.
- Personal preference.
- etc.

Which is why it's important that you're practicing your shot using both methods in a range of different situations.

Don't listen to anyone who tells you that you must use one of the methods exclusively no matter what.

19. If you have access to a shooting machine, use it

There is absolutely no question that a basketball shooting machine can help you become a better player.

A personal rebounder for your entire workout?

Yes please.

A basketball shooting machine will significantly increase the number of shots a player can take in a short amount of time.

Instead of chasing after the rebound after every single shot, a player can stay at a specific spot on the floor and let the machine do all the rebounding while they just focus on shooting.

And if you're looking for one, I highly recommend Dr. Dish.

Not everyone will have access to a shooting machine...

But if you do, take full advantage of it whenever possible.

20. Develop a variety of finishes at the rim

Once you become a lethal outside shooter, opposition players are going to be forced to defend you closer to prevent the outside shot.

It will also be far more likely that they'll jump on your shot fakes.

This is when you need to attack the rim.

Being able to explode past your opponent and then finish at the rim with a variety of moves is crucial to be a complete scorer.

Here are 7 finishing moves all players should be working on:

1. Regular layups (overhand)
2. Finger Roll (underhand)
3. Floaters
4. Off-foot layups (example: right foot jump, right foot shot)
5. Euro step
6. Reverse layups
7. Jump stop layups

21. Don't forget about defense

"There's a disposition great defenders have - a genuine pride that scores are a problem, people that score on me is a problem" - Brett Brown

Becoming one of the best defenders on your team is a smart way for any player to stand out and increase their court time.

How many players really want to improve defensively?

Not many.

The best way to improve your one-on-one defense is to compete against a live opponent. Preferably someone better than you.

Here's what to focus on:

- Staying down in defensive stance.
- One arm's length away from your opponent.
- Contain them. Don't allow them to get past.
- Force them into a difficult shot.

Very few players are committed enough to focus on defense - be different.

22. Become a beast in the low post

Being able to catch the basketball in the low post and the score with a variety of moves is a lost art in today's game.

When was the last time you walked into a gym and noticed kids working on their low post moves?

It just doesn't happen much anymore.

Usually kids are too busy shooting off-balance three-pointers.

But let's turn this negative into a positive:

Just as players aren't practicing scoring in the low post, players aren't learning how to defend the low post either...

This gives players who are willing to commit time to developing their post moves a big advantage over the competition.

Here are the post moves I recommend working on:

- Jump hook
- Up and under
- Drop step
- Face up shot

To be clear, all players (1 - 5) should be working on these low post moves. Not just the tall players who usually hang around the rim.

You never know who's going to have a mismatch against a smaller or weaker opponent. All players must be prepared to take advantage in the low post.

23. Get in the weight room and improve strength

The exact age that players should start lifting weights is a highly debated topic online and offline.

I'm not a doctor or a medical professional so I won't give advice on when players should start lifting, but one thing's for sure...

Weight training does help players on the basketball court.

Getting stronger will allow a player to pull down more rebounds, fight better for position, nudge off opponents, etc.

The body will also be more resistant to injuries.

As long as a player seeks professional advice and gets a weight lifting program tailored for their goals, increased strength can be a big advantage on the basketball court.

24. Improve your level of fitness

"The better conditioned team will probably win in the long run" - John Wooden

Another fantastic way to improve your basketball training is to incorporate conditioning (sprints, bodyweight exercises) into every workout.

This is important for several reasons, but the one we'll talk about now is the importance of improving your fitness.

Improving your level of fitness will dramatically improve every single area of your game.

You'll be less fatigued while shooting, you'll be able to sprint back harder on defense, free-throws will be easier, much better defense, etc.

It's difficult to be a great player when you're fatigued...

When players are tired, they make mistakes.

And a player who makes mistakes and poor decisions isn't the kind of player that coaches want on the court at the end of games.

I'll show you some examples of ways to add conditioning to your workouts in the next tip...

25. Upgrade your diet

One of the best things you can do to give yourself an edge over the opponent is to sort out what food you're putting into your body.

And this doesn't just mean before and after games...

It means all the time.

What food are you putting in your body on a day-to-day basis to fuel your basketball and life commitments?

Most people are eating McDonalds and KFC every day and then washing it down with 4 cans of Coca-Cola.

Commit to doing better.

I don't claim to be a nutrition expert, and I'm not expecting players to eat like they're training for a bodybuilding contest, but we all have a general understanding of what food is good and bad.

- Stop having sugar-filled cereal.
- Stop eating fast food.
- Stop drinking soda.
- Start eating more chicken and eggs.
- Start planning your meals.
- Start drinking more water.

Committing to the little things like improving your diet can give you a big advantage over the competition.

26. Understand the importance of rest and recovery

With all the individual workouts, team practices, and games that players go through on a weekly basis, putting a high importance on recovery is crucial for long-term development.

Let's be realistic...

At some point you need to rest your body and recharge your mind.

Resting is important both physically and mentally to ensure that you'll be able to continue to play at train at a high level.

Here are a few exercises and tools that can help basketball players with recovery:

Foam Rolling - By foam rolling you can increase your flexibility, improve blood circulation

around the body, and it also removes lactic acid post-workout.

Stretching - Daily stretching will prevent tight muscles, improve your range of motion, and can decrease injuries.

Massages - Similar to stretching, massages will prevent tight muscles and assist with preventing injuries.

27. Become Ambidexterous

Definition: "Able to use the right and left hands equally well."

Apart from shooting, the best players are able to perform all basketball skills equally well with both hands.

- They can pass with left and right.
- They can block with left and right.
- They can dribble with left and right.
- They can finish with left and right.

I've watched many young players dominate the game with their preferred hand at a young age. Many are so dominant that they don't even bother working on their opposite hand.

And here's what happens:

When they get to the next level, defenses get smarter.

You'll often hear a coach yell out to 'force him left' which can effectively shut down the player because they don't have the left hand dribbling skills to attack that direction.

It's important to work on both hands so that players are able to take advantage of anything that the defense gives them.

28. Improve your ability to handle the rock

"I dribbled by the hour with my left hand when I was young. I didn't have full control, but I got so I could move the ball back and forth from one hand to the other without breaking the cadence of my dribble. I wasn't dribbling behind my back or setting up any trick stuff, but I was laying the groundwork for it" - Bob Cousy

While dribbling is without a doubt the most overused skill in basketball, it is still important to spend time on developing.

This is true for players at all five positions -- not just the guards.

The last few years have shown us that having a tall player who can rebound at a high rate and then immediately push the basketball down the floor is invaluable to a team; so encourage everyone to improve!

There are several ways to improve your ball-handling:

1. **Compete against live defenders**

Whether it's 5-on-5 or 1-on-1, playing against live defenders is the best way to improve your ball-handling.

The benefit of live competition is that it forces you to learn how to be creative and effective in game-like situations.

There's nothing better!

2. Full-Court Dribbling

If you have a full court available to practice (or a driveway), you can use the entire floor to work on different dribbling moves.

- Crossovers
- Change of pace
- Hesitation dribble
- Behind-the-back
- Through-the-legs
- In-and-out

3. Stationary Ball-Handling

Here's a list of some of 50 [stationary ball-handling drills](#) you could be working on at home or when you don't have access to a hoop:

- Pound dribble
- Figure 8
- Body wraps
- Spider dribble
- Scissors
- Kills

29. Improve Your Vertical Jump

Another fantastic way to make the most of the off-season is to improve your vertical jump.

An extra inch or two on your vertical jump can make a big difference during games....

It can be the difference between rising up and blocking an opponent's shot or slapping them on the wrist.

Performing a vertical jump workout program will also improve your speed, agility, and reaction times too.

There are many benefits!

Fortunately, a few years ago I created a [free 12-week vertical jump program](#) that has resulted in many success stories.

Use it.

30. Make sure you have a 'Driveway Workout'

One of the most important things a player can do is have a 'driveway workout' or two ready for when they can't get to the gym.

It's the number one excuse I hear for why players can't train...

"I couldn't get to the gym"

So, what's a 'driveway workout'...

A driveway workout is a basketball training workout that you can complete at home by yourself as long as you have a basketball.

These should be created by each player because the equipment, space to dribble, and whether you have a basketball ring at home or not will vary between each individual.

Here's an example workout for a player who doesn't have a ring at home:

- Pound Dribble - right hand x 20
- Pound Dribble - left hand x 20
- Crossovers - x 30
- Front V-Dribble - right hand x 20
- Front V-Dribble - left hand x 20
- Side V-Dribble - right hand x 20
- Side V-Dribble - left hand x 20
- Spider Dribble - x30
- Creative Wall Passes - x30
- Line Form Shooting - x50

When you have a driveway workout, there should never be any excuse not to work on your game every day.

31. Play more 1-on-1

Competing one-on-one is by far one of the best ways to improve your basketball ability.

This is especially true if you're competing against players who are currently better than you.

Offensively, players learn how to create shot opportunities for themselves and score using a variety of moves.

Defensively, players must learn how to play solid on-ball defense as there is no help defense to back them up if the offensive player gets past them.

Here are 3 tips to make one-on-one more game-like:

1. Start from different positions on the floor

Don't just start at the top of the key every time, change it up...

You have the option to start each possession from a number of different areas on the floor:

- On the wing

- In the corner
- In the low post
- From the elbow
- Off a closeout

2. Limit number of dribbles

Don't dribble the basketball at the top of the key 20 times before looking to attack the defense and score.

One of the most effective 1-on-1 rules is to limit the number of dribbles that a player is allowed to use on each possession.

This forces players to learn how to effectively create a good shot in limited time and limited space.

My recommendation is 2 - 3 dribbles.

3. Confirm each point with a free-throw

This is a great rule to improve shooting free-throws while under pressure.

Each time a player scores a point, they must go to the free-throw line and take one shot (or two for elite players).

If they make the free-throw, they get the point.

But if they miss the free-throw, their point is cancelled and the opposing player receives the ball on the next possession.

32. When you go to the gym, always invite a teammate

Here's a quick tip to make your basketball team significantly better without any extra effort on your part...

Always invite a teammate when you go to the gym.

Even better -- invite all your teammates.

Not only does this give you a partner to shoot and rebound with, you'll be able to teach your teammates how to effectively work out, too.

Hopefully this will encourage your teammates to practice more often and your team will quickly improve. This will also allow you to use basketball drills that require a bigger group.

Unfortunately, there are many players who don't want to do this...

Many players don't want their teammates to improve and challenge them for minutes or their spot in the rotation.

33. Study basketball games (don't just watch them)

Another way for players to develop is to start watching basketball games like a coach instead of a general fan.

There's a big difference.

The general basketball fan will sit back in their chair and occasionally glance up at the TV screen while scrolling through their phone.

A coach watches with focus and attempts to learn from every game.

Here's a few things to look for:

- How is the defense defending ball-screens?
- How is the offense attacking the ball-screen defense?
- What plays are the offensive team using?
- What defense is the defensive team running?
- How do the star players create space to get an open shot?
- Where are the best defenders positioning themselves on the floor?
- And there are hundreds more!

Watching basketball games with the intent to learn and improve will give players a huge advantage over those who watch just for fun.

34. Follow the best basketball minds on Twitter

Following on with the topic of constant learning, one of the best ways you can increase your basketball knowledge is on Twitter.

I'm constantly amazed by the amount of valuable basketball content that's shared on there each day.

Inspirational quotes, video breakdowns, effective basketball plays, links to interesting articles, etc.

But...

Twitter is only an effective learning tool if you're following the right people.

If you're not, it can quickly fill your days with a flood of pointless and negative garbage as people use their tweets to vent their frustrations.

Here are 5 accounts I highly recommend you follow:

1. [@franfraschilla](#) - Fran Fraschilla
2. [@coachliamflynn](#) - Liam Flynn
3. [@fastmodel](#) - Fast Model Sports
4. [@bballimmersion](#) - Chris Oliver
5. [@bballcoachmac](#) - Trevor McLean (yours truly)

35. Spend time studying, too

This is my 'responsible adult advice' tip...

It's a warning not to put all of your eggs in one basket.

There are far too many young players who are putting 100% of their hopes and dreams on securing a NBA or WNBA contract.

The reality is, according to [NCAA statistics](#), only 0.02 to 0.03 percent of high school players end up in the NBA or WNBA.

To do the math, that's 2 - 3 out of every 10,000 players.

Those aren't great odds.

Make sure you're studying hard in school and putting enough time into your education so that you have something to fall back on if your basketball dreams don't work out.

36. There are very few players willing to put in the work

I have some great news for you...

Very few players are willing to get in the gym every day.

Very few players are willing to track every shot they take.

Very few players are willing to work on their 1-on-1 defense.

Very few players are willing to shoot 100 free-throws every day.

Very few players are willing to develop their ball-handling.

You see, most players aren't patient.

Unfortunately, most players are looking for the 'secret bullet' that will take them from an average player to a superstar overnight.

And it doesn't exist.

"What does this mean for you?"

If you're willing to commit to consistently improving your game with a lot of hard work, there won't be much competition standing in your way.

37. Consistency is key to long-term improvement

This could be the most important tip of all.

If you really want to become a great basketball player, you have to commit to working on your game long-term.

It always amazes me how many kids I see start a basketball training routine full of excitement and looking towards achieving big goals...

...but then they quit after 1 or 2 weeks because they haven't seen any significant results yet.

You will not see overnight improvements.

In fact, your rate of improvement will be so small that you probably won't even realise it at first.

But this doesn't mean improvement isn't happening...

After a few months of training, you'll be able to look back on your basketball training log and you'll realise just how far you've come and how much better you are now than before.

Small improvements add up remarkably quickly.

Basketball Training Tips Summary:

1. Always have a workout plan.
2. Treat your workouts like doctors appointments.
3. Shooting is the most important skill in basketball.
4. Elite shooters make 1,500 shots per week.
5. Always keep a detailed shooting log.
6. Perfect your shooting technique.
7. Start every workout with form shooting.
8. Workout quality is more important than workout quantity.
9. But quantity of workouts is still important.
10. Practice your skills under game-like conditions.
11. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses.
12. Talk to your coach about what you need to improve.
13. Always train at game speed.
14. Develop a consistent free-throw routine.
15. Spend more time working on your free-throw shooting.
16. When (and how) to practice your free-throws.
17. Work on your shot fake.
18. Practice both 'The Hop' and '1-2 Step'.
19. If you have access to a shooting machine, use it.
20. Develop a variety of finishes at the rim.
21. Don't forget about defense.
22. Become a beast in the low post.
23. Get in the weight room and improve strength.
24. Improve your fitness level.
25. Upgrade your diet.
26. Understand the importance of rest and recovery.
27. Become ambidextrous.
28. Improve your ability to handle the rock.
29. Improve your vertical jump.
30. Make sure you have a 'driveway workout'.
31. Play more 1-on-1.
32. When you go to the gym, always invite a teammate.

33. Study basketball games (don't just watch them).
 34. Follow the best basketball minds on Twitter.
 35. Spend time studying, too.
 36. There are very few players willing to put in the work.
 37. Consistency is key to long-term improvement.
-

Conclusion:

For players committed to improving, the basketball training tips presented in this blog post will help you become a much better basketball player.

But there's a catch...

Simply reading this blog post won't make you a better player.

You have to take action.

Start scheduling your workouts, keep a training log, sit down and work out your strengths and weaknesses, be more careful with the food you put into your body, develop your shooting technique, commit to training at 100%...

I guaranteed you'll quickly see results on the court.

50 Basketball Dribbling Drills (Develop an Amazing Handle)

 basketballforcoaches.com/50-basketball-dribbling-drills/



If you're a basketball coach or parent I bet you have heard these comments from your players...

"Coach, I can't train at home. I don't have a basketball ring" or "Coach, there's not enough space to train at home".

These are excuses I hear all too often and it's not necessarily the player's fault. As coaches and parents, we need to teach our players that they can work on their game no matter where they are.

That's why I've compiled this list of exactly 50 stationary basketball dribbling drills that your players can use to work on their game anywhere as long as they have a small area to use and a basketball.

Stationary 1 Basketball Dribbling Drills

1. Ball Slaps

Continuously slap the basketball from one hand to the other. This is a great drill to start with to get your hands ready for the workout.

2. Straight Arm Finger Taps

While making sure to keep your elbows locked, tap the basketball quickly back and forth straight out in front of you. When you become good at this drill start moving the ball up and down.

3. Wraps – Around Ankle

Wrap the ball around your lower leg/ankles without letting the basketball touch the ground.

4. Wraps – Around Waist

Wrap the ball in a circle motion around your waist.

5. Wraps – Around Head

Wrap the ball in a circle motion around your head.

6. Wraps – Around the world

Involves combining the wraps around the ankles, waist, and head into one drill. Start by wrapping the ball around your head, then bringing it down and around your waist, and finally around your ankles. Then back up to your waist, then head, then waist again, etc.

7. Wraps – Figure 8 Around Legs

Wrap the ball in a figure 8 motion around your legs.

8. Wraps – Around Right Leg

Starting with your right leg in front and your left leg back, wrap the ball around only your right leg.

9. Wraps – Around Left Leg

Starting with your left leg in front and your right leg back, wrap the ball around only your left leg.

10. Wraps – Double Leg, Single Leg

Start with your legs together. Step your right leg forward and circle your right leg with the basketball. Then immediately step back with your right leg so that your feet are together and circle both legs. Then step out with your left leg and circle it before stepping back together and wrapping the ball around them both. Continue this process.

11. Drops

Start in a squat position with both hands and the basketball in front of you. The aim is to drop the ball between your legs (only a few inches off the ground), let it bounce once, then take both hands behind your legs before catching it. Then dropping the ball again from behind and taking both hands back to the front and catch it. Repeat.

12. Straddle Flip

Similar to drops but instead start with one hand in front and one hand behind while holding the ball between your legs. The aim is to quickly flip the ball up and inch or two, swap hand positions from front to back, and catch the ball before it hits the ground.

13. Machine Gun

Kneel down onto the ground and alternate both hands to keep the ball as low as possible to the ground. The ball should stay in the same spot.

14. Spider Dribble

Start with your knees shoulder width apart and bent. The ball should stay underneath you the entire time of the drill. Dribble the ball with your right hand, then your left hand, then

reach your right hand around behind your knee for a dribble, and then your left hand behind your knee for a dribble, and then back to your right hand in front. Continue this.

15. Pound Dribble – Ankle Height – Right Hand

Dribbling the basketball a couple of inches off the ground with your right hand.

16. Pound Dribble – Ankle Height – Left Hand

Dribbling the basketball a couple of inches off the ground with your left hand.

17. Pound Dribble – Waist High – Right Hand

Making sure to be in stance, pound the ball as hard as you can into the ground at around waist high with only your right hand.

18. Pound Dribble – Waist High – Left Hand

Making sure to be in stance, pound the ball as hard as you can into the ground at around waist high with only your left hand.

19. Pound Dribble – Shoulder Height – Right Hand

This is used to get the player out of their comfort zone. Pound the ball as hard as you can while dribbling at around shoulder height with only your right hand.

20. Pound Dribble – Shoulder Height – Left Hand

This is used to get the player out of their comfort zone. Pound the ball as hard as you can while dribbling at around shoulder height with only your left hand.

21. Dribble around Right Leg – Right Hand

Start in a wide stance. Keeping the ball low to the ground, dribble the ball in a circle around your right leg with only your right hand.

22. Dribble around Left Leg – Left Hand

Start in a wide stance. Keeping the ball low to the ground, dribble the ball in a circle around your left leg with only your left hand.

23. Dribble Figure Eight

Again starting in a wide stance. Dribble the ball in a figure 8 motion around both legs using both hands.

24. Kills – Right Hand

This drill involves dribbling from ankle to shoulder height. Start by dribbling the ball at your ankles and gradually dribbling the ball higher on each bounce. When you get to as high as you can 'kill' the basketball by stopping it a few inches off the ground and dribbling back up to your shoulder.

25. Kills – Left Hand

This drill involves dribbling from ankle to shoulder height. Start by dribbling the ball at your ankles and gradually dribbling the ball higher on each bounce. When you get to as high as you can 'kill' the basketball by stopping it a few inches off the ground and dribbling back up to your shoulder.

26. Crossover Dribble

Cross the ball continuously in front of your body. Make sure you're crossing over wide.

27. Behind the Back Dribble

Cross the ball continuously in behind your body. Make sure you're crossing over wide.

28. Scissors – Alternating Between the Legs

Start with your right foot forward and left foot back. Cross the ball between your legs and jump to switch the positioning of your feet so you can immediately cross the ball back to the other side. Every time you go through the legs you should be switching feet.

29. 3-Dribble Crossover.

Pound the ball 3 times before crossing it over in front of your body. Then pound the ball 3 times before crossing it back. Repeat this process making sure that you're pounding the ball hard.

30. 3-Dribble Through the Legs.

Pound the ball 3 times before crossing it over through your legs. Then pound the ball 3 times before crossing it back. Repeat this process making sure that you're pounding the ball hard.

31. 3-Dribble Behind the Back

Pound the ball 3 times before crossing it behind your back. Then pound the ball 3 times before crossing it back. Repeat this process making sure that you're pounding the ball hard.

32. Triples – Crossover, Through the Legs, Behind the Back

The drill must be performed in this sequence: crossover, between the legs, behind the back, through the legs. Continue this sequence.

33. Front V-Dribble – Right Hand

Using only your right hand, dribble the ball from side to side in the shape of a 'v' in front of your body.

34. Front V-Dribble – Left Hand

Using only your left hand, dribble the ball from side to side in the shape of a 'v' in front of your body.

35. Side V-Dribble – Right Hand

Using only your right hand, dribble the ball backwards and forwards beside your body in the shape of a 'v'.

36. Side V-Dribble – Left Hand

Using only your left hand, dribble the ball backwards and forwards beside your body in the shape of a 'v'.

37. Freestyle

Using all the moves in your arsenal, while staying in a stationary position, combine as many moves together as you can. Be creative and work on your handle!



Photo Credit: [lorenkerns](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

Stationary 2 Basketball Dribbling Drills

38. Double Pound at Ankle Height

Dribble both basketballs as hard as you can at ankle height.

39. Double Pound at Waist Height

Dribble both basketballs as hard as you can at waist height.

40. Double Pound at Shoulders Height

Dribble both basketballs as hard as you can at shoulder height.

41. Double Pound Alternating

With the balls at a comfortable height, alternate the dribbling of each basketball.

42. One High/ One Low

Dribble one of the the basketballs at ankle height and one of them at shoulder height.

43. Double Wall Dribbling

Dribble both basketballs against the wall simultaneously at shoulder height.

44. 3 Dribble Double Crossover

Pound dribble both basketballs 3 times and then cross the balls over at the same time. Then perform another 3 dribbles before crossing over again.

45. 3 Dribble Through the Legs/Crossover

Pound dribble both basketballs 3 times and then cross one ball over in front of you and one ball through your legs at the same time.

46. 3 Dribble Behind the Back/Crossover

Pound dribble both basketballs 3 times and then cross one ball over in front of you and one ball behind your back at the same time.

47. Two Ball Figure Eight.

Keeping the ball close to the ground, use your right hand to dribble one ball around your right leg and use your left hand to dribble the other ball around your left leg.

48. Double V-Dribble in Front

Dribble both basketballs side to side in front of you simultaneously.

49. Double V-Dribble on Side

Dribble both basketballs from back to front beside you simultaneously.

50. Kills

Pound both basketballs higher and higher starting from ankle height. When you reach the shoulders 'kill' both balls stopping them a few inches from the ground before dribbling both balls back up.

5 Quick Basketball Dribbling Tips

- Keep your eyes up when dribbling the basketball.
- Dribble the ball as hard as you can.
- Don't be discouraged if you mess up. It means you're pushing yourself!
- Make sure you change which way you're wrapping the ball.
- Perform every drill as fast as you can.

Conclusion

These are all fantastic basketball dribbling drills to develop your ball-handling skills.

Print these drills off or share these with your players. Depending on the age of players I'm coaching, I like to pick out a few of these drills and set them as their 'basketball homework'. They're great because any player can do them as long as they own a basketball.

If you don't understand what any of the drills are, make sure you YouTube the name or ask in the comments. I'm more than happy to answer any questions on any of the drills.

52 Basketball Defense Tips (*Become a Great Defender*)



C O A C H M A C

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52 Basketball Defense Tips (Become a Great Defender)



How important is basketball defense to you?

If you go to the park or the gym, most of the time all you'll see is players working on their offensive game. Rarely do you see players down in defensive stance entire possessions anticipating passes and offensive movement.

You see, basketball offense is fun. It's 'cool'.

It's the crossovers and dunks that make spectators stand up from their seats and cheer and get players excited.

But it's basketball defense that will have a bigger impact on the amount of success you have individually and as a team.

I challenge all coaches and players to place more importance on the defensive end of the floor in games and practices.

Below I'm going to provide you with 47 basketball defense tips that all players must know.

Let's get started...

General Basketball Defense Tips

1. Focus on Forcing Tough Shots

The most important thing for a player to remember about defense is that the goal is to force the opposition to attempt a difficult shot.

Whether the shot they attempt is made or missed is irrelevant.

There will be times when you play fantastic defense for an entire possession and your opponent hits a tough fadeaway jump shot.

There will be other times when you play terrible defense for an entire possession and your opponent misses a shot or turns the basketball over.

For those reasons, it's important to focus on the process of playing great defense and forcing the opposition team into a low-percentage shot instead of judging your defense on whether the shot they attempted was successful or not.

2. Commit to Becoming a Great Defender

You'll never become a great defender without consciously deciding that becoming a great defender is important to you.

It takes a tremendous amount of toughness and heart to commit to the defensive end of the floor.

Most players would prefer to take the easiest matchup possible so that they don't have to work hard on the defensive end of the floor. The fans want to see the ankle-breaking crossovers and the thunderous dunks.

It's only the hardcore basketball fans who appreciate and understand how important the defensive end of the floor is.

Becoming a great defender starts with embracing and loving the challenge.

So, before anything else, you must start with a change in mindset.

Make the decision that from this day forward you're committed to becoming a great defensive player.

3. Always Defend the Opposition's Best Player

By far the best way to become a great basketball defender is to play against highly skilled offensive players.

This goes for practice, pick-up games, regular games, 1-on-1 games, everything.

Constantly seek out the best offensive players and challenge yourself to play great defense against them.

If you keep competing against players who are bigger, stronger, and more skilled than you are, I promise that you'll walk away from the game a better defender every single time.

4. Keep Your Balance at All Times

Balance is one of those areas that coaches constantly emphasize the importance of but players often consider unimportant.

Let me make this perfectly clear...

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Balance is everything on defense.

Staying on balance allows defenders to quickly react to movements and actions from the offensive team.

When you're not on balance, it's impossible to be a great defender.

For example: Think about all the fakes that players use on offense... Shot fakes, pass fakes, jab steps, etc.

Some players might not realize it, but these are all weapons used to get the defensive player off-balance making it easier to attack and score.

Once you lose your balance, it's game-over for the defense.

A smart offensive player will instantly attack an off-balance defender and either create a shot for themselves or a teammate.

5. Stay in Defensive Stance the Entire Possession

Most players are in the bad habit of only being in defensive stance when they're playing on-ball defense. When they're playing off-ball defense, they're out of stance and 'resting'.

Great defenders don't do this.

Great defenders stay in defensive stance for the entire defensive possession.

Staying in defensive stance allows players to react quickly when needed.

This could be to rotate across to play help defense on an opponent driving to the rim or to intercept a skip pass.

You must understand that basketball is a game of inches and if you're not in defensive stance, the extra split-seconds of time that it takes to react can be the difference between blocking a shot or allowing a layup.

Tip – If you're having trouble staying down in stance for a long period of time, try doing 'wall sits' (video) multiple times per week. This involves resting your back against a wall and sliding down until your knees form a 90-degree angle. Aim to stay in this position for as long as possible and gradually build up the length of time.



6. Prepare Physically and Mentally to Play Great Defense

Your preparation refers to your pre-game routine, keeping your body in top physical condition, what kind of food you're eating, the amount of sleep you're getting each night, studying your opponents and the teams you're competing against, your water intake levels, etc.

If you're not focusing on these things before the game even starts, then you'll never live up to your defensive potential when you take the court.

Players must start taking preparation more seriously.

Do you think a player joking around before the game when they should be mentally preparing and warming up can step on the court and be a great defender?

Nope.

Do you think a player who takes no time to think about their upcoming opponent (their tendencies, strengths, weaknesses) and the team their playing against can step on the court and be a great defender?

Nope.

Preparation is crucial to your success on the basketball court. Take it seriously.

7. Never Allow Easy Transition Scores

Unless your role is to crash the offensive boards after a teammate shoots the basketball, you must sprint back on defense immediately after the shot is taken.

By doing so, you'll be in position to stop the opponent's fast break and to then pick up your player as they make their way down the court.

The worst possible thing a player can do is neither transition back on defense or sprint in for the offensive rebound.

Instead, they wait for the shot to be rebounded by either team and then react.

This allows the opposition to pass forward and score uncontested layups which will often be the difference between winning and losing games.

8. Always Give Multiple Efforts

Every great defender is willing to give multiple efforts on defense.

I see too many players who will get beat off the dribble and will then consider themselves out of the play so they jog back to pick up their player crossing their fingers that they don't score.

This can't happen.

You must give 100% effort on defense until your team has secured possession of the basketball.

These multiple effort situations can occur when the basketball is being juggled on a rebound and you have to jump 3 – 4 times to secure the basketball or when a player gets beat playing full-court on-ball defense and instead of giving up they turn and sprint back into the play and attempt to get a back tip steal to one of their teammates.

“I put players in and take them out based on effort and defense, not making or missing shots” – Doc Rivers

Great defenders never give up.

9. Constantly Talk to Your Teammates

You can never be a great defender if you're not communicating with your teammates on defense.

“There has never been a great ‘silent’ defense” – Del Harris

Throughout the entire defensive possession, you should be letting your teammates know where you are and what's happening on the floor that they might not be able to see.

If all 5 players on the court are doing this everyone stays on the same page and it will prevent many defensive breakdowns.

Here are 5 of the most common phrases players should communicate on defense:

1. **“Ball, ball ball”** – Used by the defender guarding the basketball.
2. **“Deny, deny, deny”** – Use by the defender one-pass away denying their opponent.
3. **“Help, help, help”** – Used by a player two passes away to let others know that they're in position to help on a drive.
4. **“Screen right”** or **“Screen left”** – To let your teammate know there's a screen coming and which side it will be set on.
5. **“Cutters coming through”** – If an opposition player is cutting through the lane.

If you're one of the leaders on the team, it's even more important that you're talking to the less experienced players on your team about where they should be on the floor.

For example...

“Mike come low.”

“Mike get up and deny the pass.”

“Mike force him to the left.”

All talking must be loud and clear to be effective communication.

This kind of communication can go a long way to improving the team's defense and also giving each player added confidence.

10. Always Listen to Your Teammates

Just as you must constantly talk to your teammates, you must always listen to them too.

Having teammates who are great at communicating will instantly make you a better defensive player because you'll be more aware of what's going on around you.

This is why you must be constantly emphasizing to the other players on your team the importance of communication.

It will be most evident when you're playing on-ball defense. Listen out for teammates calling screens and then adjust your positioning so that you're able to evade the screen and establish defensive position back in front of your opponent.

11. Accept That You'll Get Crossed Up and Dunked On

This is an odd defensive tip, isn't it?

But it's an important view of tough defense that you must understand.

The players who never get crossed up are the players that are hanging back off their player and not giving the best for their team when they're playing defense.

The players that never get dunked on are the players who don't rotate to help or who would rather not contest a shot that they're unlikely to block.

If you're going to be a great defender, you need to accept that these things can (and probably will) happen to you.

Don't be afraid to challenge yourself by putting pressure on the basketball and playing tight defense. When you get caught out once or twice, brush it off and continue to work hard.

12. Stay Out of Foul Trouble

Being able to consistently stay out of foul trouble is one of the keys to being a great defender.

After all, you can't be a great defender if you're on the bench, right?

Staying out of foul trouble comes down to two things...

a. Your defensive knowledge

As you improve more and more as a defender, you'll learn when the best opportunities are to attempt a steal or get a deflection.

b. Your discipline

Once players know what opportunities they should and shouldn't be taking on defense, they must have the discipline to play the percentages and stick to only the plays that are low risk and high reward.

This involves staying down on shot fakes, not lunging for a basketball that you're unlikely to steal or deflect, and staying straight up when you're defending inside the key.

Also, if you're one of the better players on the team, it's often a better option to allow your opponent to score than it is to draw a foul that's going to sit you for the rest of the game.

"If one of our players gets his second foul in the first half, then he must come out of the game and not re-enter until the second half. To play defense and not foul is an art that must be mastered if you are going to be successful" – Chuck Daly

13. Use Your Time on the Bench Wisely

When you do get subbed out of the game, don't waste the opportunity you have to study the opposition team while you recover.

I'll elaborate on the specific questions to think about later in the article...

But for now, here's a brief summary...

- *What are the tendencies of the player you'll be defending?*
- *What are their strengths?*
- *What are their weaknesses?*
- *What offense is the opponent running?*
- *Who are the best shooters on the team?*
- *How do their set plays work?*
- *etc.*

14. Gain Possession of Every Loose Basketball

What coaches often refer to as 50/50 balls are when the basketball has been knocked away or deflected and both teams have an even chance of taking possession.

A player's job is to turn the basketball from a 50/50 ball to an 80/20 ball. Meaning that when there's a basketball loose on the floor, you'll be the one who secures it 8 times out of 10.

In order to do this, players must be down in defensive stance ready to react at any moment and must also be willing to put their body on the line for the benefit of the team by diving on the basketball if the opportunity to do so arises.

Every single possession counts and these are the plays that will determine which team has had more scoring opportunities at the end of the game.



15. Learn How to Use Your Body to Your Advantage

Fact: Basketball is a contact sport.

If you want to excel as a defender, you need to learn how to use your body to your advantage.

By allowing the offensive player to get anywhere they want on the court, you're not doing a good job on defense.

Use your arm bar and lower body to move players away from where they want to catch the basketball. This goes for the low post and on the perimeter.

Cut off an opponent's cutting lane by stepping in front and bumping them while making sure to keep your hands out to show you're not pushing.

Players will learn to use legal physicality as they gain more experience and gradually face smarter and stronger competition.

16. Be Willing to Take a Charge

The other unselfish act a player can make on defense is being willing to put their body on the line and draw a charge.

Taking a charge is often a huge momentum changer and will make the opposition hesitate next time they're around you.

If a player is dribbling or running in your direction, hold your position and when they make contact allow your body to fall straight backward while simultaneously forcefully blowing out air.

Is this flopping? Maybe.

Will they call the charge if you hold your ground and don't allow your body to fall over? In 99% of the cases, no they won't.

Whether we like it or not, being able to exaggerate a charge has turned into a skill in today's basketball.

It will get your team extra possessions every game!

17. Improve Your Athletic Ability

While a lot of it is innate, you can definitely improve your athletic ability if you're working on the right things.

Remember how I talked about basketball being a game of inches earlier in the article?

Then it should be obvious that improving your athletic ability even slightly can often help you make up these inches and more.

I highly recommend players complete a vertical jump program during their basketball off-season.

Here is a link to an [equipment-free 12-week vertical jump program](#) that I created that can help any player gain a few extra inches on their vertical leap.

The other exercises I recommend are the use of ladders to improve foot quickness and even cone drills to improve explosiveness and acceleration.

18. Be a Student of the Game

All players who aspire to be great defenders need to be constantly improving their knowledge on the subject.

The best way to do this is by talking to great defenders about their thoughts on defense and also by watching great defenders.

In this day and age, one of the best ways to do that is by watching YouTube video breakdowns.

Never stop improving your defensive knowledge.

19. Stop Complaining About Missed Calls

One of the most detrimental decisions a player can make for their individual defense and also for the team's defense is to complain about missed calls.

Instead of sprinting back on defense, a player stops and complains to the referee about a call they believe should have been made but wasn't.

When a player does this, it often leads to a 5 on 4 fast break resulting in an easy score for the opposition if they spaced the floor correctly.

A player who has ambitions to be a great defensive player can't ever allow this to happen.

More than anything, a player must understand that referees are going to miss calls from time to time.

You must get back on defense immediately and if the lack of foul call does need to be brought up with the official, leave it for a stoppage in play or for the coach to do the talking.

20. Run Three-Point Shooters Off the Line

If you're playing in a league where players can consistently hit the three-point shot, then you must be ready to run them off the three-point line.

For those unfamiliar with this term, 'running them off the line' means sprinting at the three-point shooter and forcing them to put the basketball on the floor instead of shooting the outside shot.

The premise behind this tactic is that we would rather the opposition take a contested layup or midrange pull-up than attempt an open three-point shot.

Instead, we encourage the poor closeout that will prevent the opposition from scoring three points and lead them into a more difficult shot.

21. Establish Post Position as Early as Possible

One of the keys to great post defense is not allowing the opposition to establish early position.

Players competing in the post must beat their man down the court and then make contact early to keep them as far out as possible.

By doing so, there's less chance that they'll receive the basketball and have the opportunity to score from close range.

This isn't specific to the initial sprint down the floor either.

Post defenders should be legally physical with their opponent the entire possession to keep them as far away from the rim as possible.

22. Make Contact and Secure the Rebound

Too many players will play hard defense and force a contested shot, but once the shot has left the opponents hands, they act like their job is finished.

A defensive possession isn't over until your team has rebounded and secured the basketball.

I hesitate to write the traditional 'box out on every shot' because I feel too many players get so focused on boxing out their opponent that they forget to rebound the basketball.

If you're close to the basket, box out.

If you're away from the basket, make contact with your opponent and then pursue the basketball.

Understand Your Team's Defensive System

23. What Defense is Your Team Running?

An obvious but important question.

A lot of times a youth basketball coach will install a defense by explaining how it works, but never directly telling the players what it is.

Make sure you find out what the coach is running so that you can go home and learn more about the defense you're going to be playing.

Study it until you understand it completely. You never want to get lost when you're playing defense.

Once you've gained deep knowledge of what to do on the defensive end of the floor, the coach will be able to trust you to make the right decisions and that will usually lead to an increase in court time.

24. Where Are You Forcing the Basketball?

Most defenses incorporate consistently influencing the basketball to a specific side or area of the court.

This will determine how you position yourself when playing on-ball defense and also when to deny the player you're guarding.

The three different options you have of forcing the basketball are:

1. *Force Sideline/Baseline*
2. *Force Middle*
3. *Neutral*

You must know which one of these is the preference of your team's defense so that you're always in the correct position and not letting your team down.

25. How Does Your Team Defend the Pick and Roll?

The pick and roll is arguably the most effective action in basketball.

In order to be a great defender, you must know how your team's defense is designed to defend it.

Depending on the age and skill level of your opponents, some coaches will choose to go under the screen, over the screen, or even switch the screen.

Some teams will have different defensive actions depending on where the basketball is on the court or even depending on which offensive players are involved in the screen.

Failure to defend the pick and roll correctly will almost always lead to an open shot from the offensive team.

If this is something you need to ask and clarify with your coach, do it.

26. What Are the Defensive Rotations?

"Defense is all about helping. No one can guard a good dribbler, you have to walk kids through how to help and then how to help the helper" – Bob Knight

Being able to rotate correctly and immediately on defense is by far the hardest part of defense for most players.

Players get stuck in the 'this is my man and I have to stop them from scoring' mentality and forget that basketball isn't played individually. It's played as a team.

There are going to be breakdowns in the defense from time to time and players must be ready and willing to rotate off their player and help out their teammates.

Therefore, having complete understanding of the defensive rotations is incredibly important for a great defender.

The most common rotations that are when there's a baseline drive.

The help defender on split-line needs to rotate across to prevent the layup and then the high defender needs to rotate down to stop the pass to the helper's defender.

27. How Are You Defending the Post?

Every single player on the team must understand the rules on defending players in the post.

This includes the guards on the team.

Whenever I help out coaches with tall and strong guards on their team, I always recommend they use them in the post. The opposition guards never know what to do because they've never been taught post defense!

Specifically, all players must understand how to front the post, 1/2 front from either side, and how to play behind.

How your team uses these tactics in games is up to the coach and the defensive system used by the team.

Ensure that all players know exactly what to do if they get stuck in a post defense situation.

Understand Your Opponent

28. Are They a Great Outside Shooter?

The number one factor that determines how you should play against your opponent on defense is whether they can shoot the basketball from the outside at a high percentage.

If you're guarding a poor shooter, then you can assist your teammates with more help off the basketball and you know that when playing on-ball defense you can take an extra step back to defend the drive without fear that they'll make the shot.

If you're guarding a great shooter, you won't be able to help as much and you must be more mindful of your rotations on defense.

Instead, you should close the space between you and the defender and force them to dribble inside and take a lower percentage shot.

This is why smart basketball coaches put great off-ball defenders on poor shooters.

29. Where/How Do They Score Most of Their Points?

Whether they're a great outside shooter or not, most players will have certain areas of the floor or certain ways that they score the majority of their points.

To be a great basketball defender, you must work out where and how your opponent does most of their scoring.

Do they get most of their points running off screens and getting midrange shots?

Do they score most of their points driving to the rim and finishing with their right hand?

Do they have a deadly midrange pull-up game?

Are they a low-post specialist?

These are questions you must figure out the answer to for every offensive player that you play against.

30. Do They Prefer Dribbling With Their Right or Left Hand?

Figuring out whether to influence your opponent's dribbling to the right or left is one of the most important and easiest things you can do to improve your defense.

How you'll implement this knowledge during the game might vary due to team defensive rules, but understanding their preference is crucial.

More often than not, the player you're competing against will prefer to drive to their right hand.

To force them to their opposite hand, position yourself so that you're slightly overplaying their preferred side and then establish a higher lead foot on this side too.

From this stance, the only way they can drive on their preferred side is to dribble through your chest and receive an offensive foul or to retreat dribble around you which will provide enough time to establish position again.

If they were to drive on their opposite hand, you're still in position so that you can contain them and cut off the driving lane.

31. What Are Their Favorite Offensive Moves?

Every player has 1 – 2 go-to moves that they will use constantly throughout the game.

In order to defend them as well as possible, you must figure out what these regularly occurring moves are and understand how best to stop them.

Maybe they constantly use the in-and-out dribble to keep the basketball in their preferred hand.

When posting up, maybe they have a deadly right-handed jump hook but rarely go to their left to finish.

Understanding your opponent's tendencies goes a long way to locking them down during games.



32. What Are Their Weaknesses?

As well as figuring out their strengths, it's important to know what an opponent's weaknesses are.

This knowledge will assist you to put them in uncomfortable situations by forcing them into performing what they're not good at.

This will require watching tape of your opponent, watching them play live, or simply working it out as the game progresses.

Every single player on the planet has weaknesses. It's your job to find out what they are and exploit them.

33. How Do They Respond to Pressure?

One of the most surprising differences between great offensive players is their ability to handle pressure being put on them.

I've seen many players who regularly average 25 points per game but when you put a high amount of pressure on them, their point totals automatically take a significant drop.

These are often the player who can't mentally handle pressure from great defense. They get frustrated, start yelling at their teammates, and throw up shots from all over the court trying to reach their regular scoring numbers.

Conversely, there are many great offensive players who stay calm and will have the same impact as usual regardless of the defensive pressure.

For that reason, it's important to know which category your opponent falls under and then use that knowledge to improve your defense against them.

34. Do They Crash the Offensive Glass?

There are many players who do a fantastic job of sprinting in for offensive rebounds and then either scoring or passing out to a teammate for an open shot.

Shots after offensive rebounds always seem to be great shots.

As a defender, you must be aware whether the player that you're guarding has a tendency to sprint in for offensive rebounds or to run back on defense after each shot.

If they are a great offensive rebounder, you must ensure to make contact with them after every shot and put a high importance on keeping them off the glass.

Understand the Opposition's Offense

35. What Offense Are They Running?

One of the first questions that smart defenders will ask themselves when determining how to defend their opponent is "What offense does the opposition run?"

Once you figure this out, the next step is to determine the best way to defend against it.

Here are a few of the questions you should think about...

How do they initiate the offense?

What's the regular passing sequence of their offense?

Where do they take most of their shots from?

For example: If an opponent's offense always starts with a pass from the top to one of the players on the wing, you then know that if you completely deny this pass then you've effectively taken them out of their offense.

36. What Are Their Most Common Set Plays

Often you'll come across teams that don't have an offense at all and will rely solely on set plays to score the basketball.

Since most youth and high school teams only have 2 – 3 set plays that they run a majority of the time, it can be relatively simple to figure out the name of the set play and what their actions are.

Just like the previous tip, your goal is to figure out what the opposition are trying to do and then take those options away from them.

The best time to do this is before the game. Watch video of the opposition's offense or to watch them in-person and focus on figuring out what they do offensively.

If you don't have that opportunity, with focus you can figure it out throughout the game as you're competing against them.

On-Ball Basketball Defense Tips

37. Defense Starts With the Feet

A player's responsibility on defense is to direct the opponent in the direction that benefits the team's defensive system while also containing and not getting beat off the dribble.

Achieving this starts with the positioning of your body. In particular, the feet.

There are too many players that use their hands to either slap at the basketball or to push/hold the offensive player to stop them from driving past and to the rim.

Every player must be able to contain the opposition player by continually adjusting their positioning to stay in front and take away the driving lane.

38. Put Constant Pressure on the Basketball

While the main goal is containment, we don't want players to do this by standing 2 meters off their opponent and giving them wide open shots.

Players must learn how to contain their player while also putting constant pressure on them when they have the basketball.

The purpose of putting pressure on the basketball is to make the offensive player uncomfortable which will often lead to deflections and turnovers.

When a player is uncomfortable from on-ball pressure, they don't want to dribble the basketball, they're scared that one of their passes will get deflected, and they don't even think about shooting.

As long as your teammates are playing great help defense, you shouldn't hesitate to apply on-ball pressure because if the offensive player does happen to beat you off the dribble, your teammates are ready to rotate and stop the basketball.

"My philosophy of defense is to keep the pressure on an opponent until you get to his emotions" – John Wooden



39. Stay Lower Than Your Opponent at All Times

When you're playing on-ball defense, you should always be lower than your opponent.

If you're roughly the same height, your eye level should be at approximately their shoulder level.

Being lower gives you better balance and allows you to react quickly once the offensive player makes their move.

As always, the quicker you can react, the better.

40. Don't Lunge for the Basketball

This tip goes back to the importance of balance that I talked about in the first section of this article on basketball defense.

When you lunge for the basketball, you're often putting yourself off-balance and out of correct defensive position.

If the basketball comes within your reach, by all means, attempt to tip it and secure the steal, but never lunge out of position unless you're over 75% sure you're going to steal the basketball.

Always remember that containing your opponent is your number one priority when playing on-ball defense.

41. Stay an Arm's Length Distance From Your Opponent

One of the most common questions I get asked by players is how close they should be to their opponent when playing defense.

On average, a player should be approximately one arm's length away from their opponent. This means that if you stick your hand out straight, you should just be able to touch the offensive player with your fingertips.

As players improve to higher and more skilled levels of basketball, the distance will start to vary depending on the tendencies and abilities of the player they're guarding against. But for the youth and high school level, this is often the most appropriate distance.

Being an arm's length apart is the perfect length because it's close enough that the defender can get a hand on the basketball for a steal and also prevent the shot, but far enough away that if the player attempts to drive there's enough to react and adjust defensive position.

42. Watch Your Opponent's Chest or Waist

This tactic will make an immediate impact on your defensive ability.

When players are still learning the game, the natural tendency is to look at the basketball or the eyes when playing on-ball defense.

The problem with doing this, however, is that it's easy for the offensive player to fake with their eyes or the basketball and get the defense off-balance.

So, what should players be looking at while playing on-ball defense?

The mid-section of their opponent. This being anywhere from their chest to their waist.

Unlike the other parts of their body, it's incredibly difficult for the offensive player to fake with their mid-section which is why that's where I recommend players focus on.

43. Always Keep Your Hands Active

While you're playing on-ball defense, you should be tracing the basketball with one of your hands at all times.

Doing so will allow you to deflect the basketball if the offensive player makes a quick pass inside and also simply discourages passes as your opponent knows you may get a hand to it.

Your other hand should be below the basketball looking to tap the basketball out of their hands or to poke it loose if they decide to dribble.

By leaving your hands down at your sides (which a lot of players do), you're not achieving anything defensively.

Keep your hands active.

44. Swipe Up at the Basketball

Most players have formed a bad habit of swatting down on the basketball when attempting to reach in for a steal.

The problem with doing this is that the referee will often call the defender for a foul. It looks aggressive and there will often be contact made with the arm.

The better way to steal while playing on-ball defense is to swipe up at the basketball. This means keeping one of your hand's lower than the basketball with your palm facing up.

Since the defender should be playing lower than the offensive player, this is a far more successful method and will result in fewer foul calls.

45. Contest Shots by Blocking the Shooter's Vision

A cardinal on-ball defensive sin is jumping up and swatting at the basketball attempting to block an opposition player's shot.

Although this can sometimes work, there are two main reasons why this isn't always a terrific idea...

1. You might foul the shooter

It's incredibly difficult to block an outside shot without fouling. The shooting motion of most players will often bring their arms directly into yours on the shot resulting in a foul.

2. They might fake the shot

If you jump on a shot fake, it's game over. They're going to have an open drive to the rim and if they don't score themselves, they'll often be able to pass to an open player for the shot or layup.

Instead, the best option you have when defending an outside shooter is to get your hand up to their face and take away their vision of the rim.

A missed shot is just as good as a blocked shot. Often better since most blocks are out of bounds or straight back to the opposition team.

This tactic allows you to stay on the ground and react quickly to whatever happens next.



46. Always Jump to the Basketball After a Pass

One of the primary rules of defense is to never allow your opponent to cut ball-side of you after making a pass.

This most commonly occurs on a pass-and-cut when the opposition is swinging the basketball around the perimeter.

After making the pass, they will immediately look to cut ball-side for the for the give-and-go pass leading to an open layup.

Great defenders never allow this to happen.

Any time you're guarding a player and they pass to a teammate, you must immediately jump towards the basketball on the flight of the pass.

This removes your opponent's opportunity to cut ball-side and forces them to cut behind which is a much more difficult pass to make and puts you in prime position to intercept the pass if it's attempted.

Even if they choose not to cut, you're immediately denying the return pass to the player you're guarding.

47. Belly Up When the Basketball is Dead

For those unfamiliar with the term, a basketball is 'dead' when an offensive player has used their dribble and then picks up the basketball.

When this happens, their defender must get up close and put lots of pressure on the basketball. The defender is able to do this because they know that the offensive player can't dribble again.

The goal of this pressure is to force the offense to make a difficult pass that will result in a turnover.

When the defensive player closes out they should be yelling "*Dead! Dead! Dead!*" or "*Ball! Ball! Ball!*" while tracing the basketball with their hands attempting to get a deflection on the pass.

By far the most important part of this tactic is not fouling.

Players must understand that the steal will most likely come from an off-ball defender off a deflection or poor pass. Rarely does the on-ball defender get a clean steal in these situations.

Off-Ball Basketball Defense Tips

48. One-Pass Away – Deny or Help?

One of the most important principles of your team's defensive system you must understand is whether to deny when one-pass away or whether to be in help position.

This is the main difference between the two most popular defensive systems: The man-to-man defense (deny) and the Pack Line defense (help).

If you're denying the pass, you should always have one arm and one foot in the passing lane, your chest should be facing your opponent, and you should see the basketball by looking over your ball-side shoulder.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the defensive system may not have a universal rule on this. The rule may change depending on where the basketball is on the court.

For example, some coaches prefer to allow the initial pass to the wing and then deny after that pass has been made.

Others might allow passes to the corner by playing in help position but deny any reversal pass back to the top of the key.

Make sure you understand your team's defensive strategy when defending one-pass away from the basketball.

49. Learn How to Close Out Correctly

Close outs are one of the most difficult skills to master on defense.

In fact, there are many offenses and set plays designed specifically to create defensive closeouts as that's often where a lot of defenses break down.

There's no avoiding them. If your team is in help position (which they should be), then there will be close outs no matter what.

So how do you perform them effectively?

The key to closing out is to sprint approximately two-thirds of the way to the defender and then use short, choppy steps to finish the close out.

As a player gets close, they should be low with their weight back to absorb the drive and also have one hand up to deter or contest the shot.

50. Never Help Off Ball-Side Corner

The corner three-point shot is arguably the most efficient shot in the game of basketball. You should never leave this shot open.

A player will most commonly make this mistake when an opponent drives to the rim from the wing and they're defending a player in the corner one-pass away.

Instead of staying on their opponent, this corner defender will drop down to help stop the drive to the rim leaving their player open for the simple pass and wide open jump shot.

Every player must understand that help comes from the middle. That's why you must always have a defender on the split-line.

Help never comes from ball-side corner.

They can quickly plug and recover to their player, but they should never completely commit to helping on the baseline wing drive and leave open their opponent in the corner.

51. Always See Your Opponent and the Basketball

Whenever you're on defense and you're not defending the basketball or one-pass away, you should be in a 'defensive triangle'.

The defensive triangle (or ball-you-man) refers to positioning yourself between the basketball and your opponent so that you can see both with your peripheral vision.

You should have one hand pointing towards the basketball, one hand pointing towards your opponent, and your vision should be in-between the two.

If a direct chest pass was made between the player with the basketball and your opponent, the help defender should be able to intercept it.

A defender should be as close to the basketball as possible but still close enough to their player that if a skip pass to them was made, the defender would have time to close out and establish defensive position without allowing an open shot.

The reason for this is that the closer a help defender is to the basketball, the quicker they can be to play help defense.

52. Constantly Adjust Your Positioning

A great basketball defender never stands still while they're on defense. They're constantly adjusting their positioning the entire possession.

Whenever the basketball or your opponent moves, you should be moving as well to make sure you're always in the best defensive position.

This requires players to understand the defense to know where they should be, stay in a defensive stance to react quickly, and use the defensive triangle to keep vision of the player they're guarding and the basketball.

If you're not constantly adjusting your position, it won't be long before you get caught out and your opponent gets a quick backdoor layup or a wide open jump shot.

Even if being caught out of position doesn't lead to a direct score by your opponent, it will lead to a breakdown in the defense and the need for your teammates to rotate and help. This puts them out of position and usually leads to an high-quality shot from one of the opponents.

Your teammates need to trust that you'll be in the correct position to help them just as they need to be in the correct position to help you.

Don't let each other down with lazy defense.

Conclusion

Becoming a great basketball defender is one of the most important areas a player can focus on.

Since few players put a focus on defense, doing so is one of the best opportunities a player has of separating themselves from the crowd and advancing from a mediocre player to a great player.

If you implement the above tips into your game, very quickly you'll see the impact that they can have on your game.

- Coach Mac from www.basketballforcoaches.com

52 Basketball Experts Reveal the Most Common Practice Mistakes

 basketballforcoaches.com/practice-mistakes/



Do you ever wonder what mistakes you're making when running a basketball practice?

Since creating this blog I've been blessed to interact with some of the smartest basketball minds on the planet. What better way to help you than to collect the answer to a simple question from all these experts?

I asked 52 basketball experts this simple question:

"What are the most common mistakes coaches make when running a youth basketball practice?"

There's two ways you can digest this post...

1. I've created this handy list so that you can skip down the page to your favorite expert.
2. Grab a coffee, make sure you have 20-30 minutes spare, and devour the entire post (**highly recommended**).

[Alan Stein](#), [Augie Johnston](#)

[Brian McCormick](#), [Bryan Burrell](#)

[Casey Dudek](#), [Chris Hyppa](#), [Courtney Campbell](#)

[Darrell Johnson](#), [Dave Hopla](#), [David Nurse](#), [Drew Hanlen](#), [Duane Jourdeans](#)

[Galen Harkness](#), [Ganon Baker](#), [Gary Maitland](#), [Gary Petrin](#), [Greg White](#)

[Hal Wilson](#), [Henry Barrera](#)

[James Gels](#), [Jeremy Russotti](#), [Jim Burson](#), [Joe Haefner](#), [John O'Sullivan](#), [Jordan Delp](#)

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[Mike Dunlap](#), [Mike O'Halloran](#)
[Paul Fabritz](#)
[Randy Brown](#), [Rich Czeslawski](#), [Robert Starkey](#), [Ryan Razooky](#), [Ryan Walker](#)
[Sam Allen](#), [Scott Fields](#), [Shawn Sullivan](#), [Sundance Wicks](#)
[Tamir Goodman](#), [T.J Allen](#), [Tommy Hulihan](#), [Tony Alfonso](#), [Trafford Hannon](#), [Tyler Relph](#)

Most Common Basketball Practice Mistakes

Read on to discover what all 52 experts believe are the most common practice mistakes. Responses listed alphabetically:

[Top](#)

Alan Stein – Stronger Team

Most common mistakes youth coaches make:

- Practices aren't age appropriate (physically, mentally or emotionally).
- Practices aren't purposeful.
- Practices aren't fun.



[Top](#)

Augie Johnston – Baller Boot Camp

One thing coaches don't spend enough time on is man to man team defense. If the team can play good help defense and rotate correctly that will directly impact their win/loss record in the end of the season and give them a good chance to have success.



[Top](#)

Brian McCormick – 180 Shooter

Drills should have a purpose, and the coach should know the purpose for each part of practice, even if the purpose is to take a break to recover before an intense drill.



However, the biggest mistake is talking too much and giving the players all of the answers. There is a misconception that players learn from the coach's talking or instructing; instead, players learn from the doing. When a coach is talking, the players are not doing anything. Instructions should be short and concise.

Players need an opportunity to figure out solutions on their own rather than being told exactly what to do or what they should have done. When coaches quickly supply answers, players stop thinking and rely on the coach.

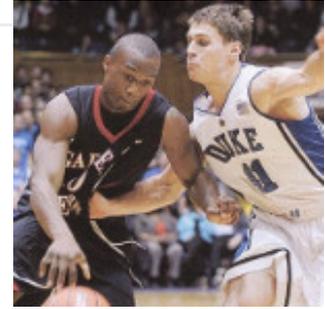
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Bryan Burrell – New Age Elite Sports

In my opinion the most common mistakes when running a youth basketball practice, is the amount of time that coaches just scrimmage vs breaking down specific game situations.

I believe majority of the time youth basketball practice is spent on what will make their current team better vs working on things that will also benefit the player as they go throughout their career.

I think that when HS/Collegiate get the players they have to teach or re teach the players a lot of times because they players weren't taught properly when they were younger. Whether it be defensive fundamentals or offensive fundamentals, the best player or worst player on a team it all needs to be taught at an early age vs allowing players just to scrimmage and end practices.



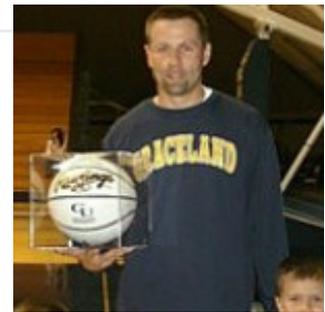
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Casey Dudek – CITK Hoops

I have watched a ton of youth game and all I ever see is zone defenses.

So I would say working ONLY on a 2/3 zone on defense.

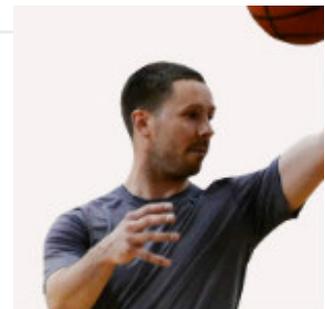
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Chris Hyppa – Chris Hyppa Basketball

Coaches are too concerned with winning!

Everybody wants to win but at the youth level “development” is set on the back burner for wins. I believe development needs to be the #1 focus. Wins will follow. Development in the terms of building skill, raising basketball IQ and strengthening relationships with players!



Have a plan!

I see a lot of youth practices with no “purpose”. Youth coaches will have more productive practices and see players improve quicker when they can document progress/failures and prepare each practice plan around these! *“Confidence comes from Preparation”* – YOU have the power to instill confidence, be prepared!

[Top](#)

Courtney Campbell – Train to Ball

I think a common mistake by coaches is spending time focusing on the 20% not the 80%. This comes from Pareto principle (or the 80-20 rule) which states that 80% of the results comes from 20% of your actions.



I think many youth coach's drills focuses on teaching certain skills that are rarely used in games. I.e. A crossover to a spin to a pull up. Drills can be randomly selected without thought on what are the dominate skills needed to create an efficient and productive player. I try to organize my drills, agility, footwork and training based on what will affect 80% of the game.

Also, there is an increase in the use of bands and other tools that in theory can increase first step, speed and quickness, however most trainers are not educated about injury mechanisms in our game. If a coach does not have knowledge of common injury mechanism, you are most likely increasing the chance of overuse injuries with these tools. (knee, back and other injuries) Use these tools with restraint or until properly educating yourself.

[Top](#)

Darrell Johnson – Cross Over Hoops

The most common mistakes coaches make when running a youth basketball practice is neglecting the fundamentals. Some youth coaches are too concerned about the team record and how many wins they can get. Don't get me wrong, winning is important, but skill development is much more important at the youth level.



No one is going to remember their team record from elementary school, but what they will remember is winning a varsity tournament, going to state, etc...

The majority of youth practices should be spent on skill development, rather than teaching offensive and defensive strategies. What good is a play when your players can't dribble, pass, or shoot? The fundamentals should be taught correctly and then practiced using repetition.

If a player is doing something incorrectly, they need to be corrected before a bad habit is formed. Too many players get to middle school and high school with terrible habits that are extremely difficult to break simply because they were never corrected in elementary school.

Establishing a good foundation with fundamentals is the primary responsibility of youth coaches.

[Top](#)

Dave Hopla – DaveHopla.com

I find that most coaches are more interested in running plays or letting them play, instead of teaching them how to play.

Never seems to be enough passing, catching, or shooting. Too much dribbling.

[Top](#)



David Nurse – Perfect Shots

I'm a firm believer that the one of the biggest mistakes made by youth coaches is that they want to start teaching plays and forcing players to become 'robots'.

The more coaches can emphasize drills that put young players in situations where they have to make quick decisions and think for themselves the more they will develop the IQ portion of their game early. It's like anything, if you want to learn a new language it is easiest to do so while you are young before your brain becomes developed in that area. Same with IQ and 'basketball feel'.

Very important to develop early and youth coaches need to do a much better job at this. I have seen it all over the world and it is the same theme, drives me nuts! I compare it and the bad habits of being a 'robot' to a comfy bed – easy to get into, very tough to get out of. Players need to learn to think for themselves at young age and it will pay dividends in their development.

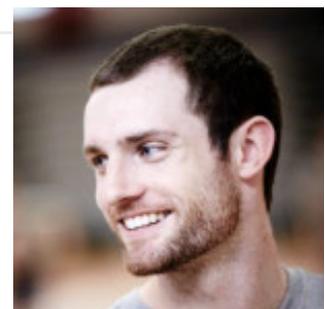
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Drew Hanlen – Pure Sweat Basketball

- Too much flash, not enough substance
- Too many old school drills (3 man weave, uncontested lay-up lines) and not enough skill development
- Too much live play and not enough breakdown drills
- Not enough correction (too many mistakes are allowed)
- Wins in lower levels are celebrated instead of focusing on improvement for long-term success

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Duane Jourdeans – Rule of 5

- #1: No practice plan
- #2: Lack of emphasis on forming relationships with players
- #3: Lack of skill development
- #4: A focus on running plays rather than how to play
- #5: Mistaking yelling for teaching
- #6: Lack of leadership opportunities for players
- #7: Bigger kids just learn to play in the post
- #8: Lack of mental training
- #9: Conditioning without a basketball purpose

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Galen Harkness – GalenHarkness.com

Major Mistake: There is an over-emphasis on strategies on how to win a game that often result in sacrificing the long term fundamental development of the players and team.

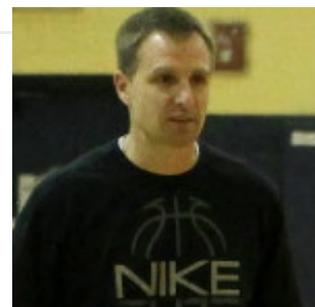
Other Thoughts

1st: There is an over-emphasis on running plays or sets. Coaches have good set plays that are going to get shots, but what do the players do when the set doesn't work? It is structured in a sense that it does not allow or encourage players to make correct playmaking decisions.

2nd: Wasted time. There is a large amount of time transitioning from one drill to the next with little sense of urgency. Drills rarely are designed or implemented so that ALL of the players are continuously engaged. Too much standing.

3rd: Lack of professional development. Coaches are teaching and running practices like they were taught to play. The game has evolved, but youth coaches have not necessarily evolved with it.

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Ganon Baker – Elev8 Basketball

Problem – they talk too much during practice where the kid lose attention and their “sweat”. They are too wordy with their instruction.

Solution – keep instruction/correction to 20-50 seconds. Get “in” with their comments and then “out” with out disrupting the flow of an intense practice.

Problem – they don't use or have a sense of humor. They seem stiff or awkward in their delivery.

Solution – Coach with a childlike heart but an adult mind. Have fun and have a personality but draw boundaries. These are kids and basketball is still a game, so have some fun!



Problem – they use useless drills in their practice. The drills are boring non game like and do not relate to the coaches offensive and defensive system!

Solution – study your craft. Try to find ways to run a progressional practice. Teach a skill, have the drill in a game like situation, then have them execute the Action with a 1 on 1 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 competition.

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Gary Maitland – Coach Maitland

1. Punishment

Youth basketball practices are the early experiences of a potential long term passion and commitment to the sport we love.

The biggest mistake a coach can make, is create an environment where kids fear ‘getting it wrong’.



It is sadly far too common for youth basketball coaches to punish their players for making mistakes. A player should never be afraid to make mistakes. Failure is an essential part of the learning process and therefore it is important for kids to know that they are not required to get it right all the time.

Basketball involves a number of complex skills. Skills need to be learnt, developed and mastered. When a coaches punishes a player for making a mistake, he/she discourages the player from taking risks; risks that help them explore the game and develop a feel for the fast paced action.

These early years should be engaging. Kids should be enjoying themselves as they learn new things. If a coach punishes kids with endless push-ups and sprints then it is unlikely that they’ll wish to continue. It’ll only be a matter of time before they stop attending those practices.

It is important for young players to understand the consequences for making mistakes (i.e. How does poor execution have a negative impact on performance) but punishments do not teach kids how to demonstrate a skill better next time.

This type of coaching behaviour is so common that young players judge the quality of coaching/practice by how intense the punishments were.

“How was practice?”

“It was hard. We ran a lot and did lots of push ups”.

That very answer shows that not much (if anything) was learnt during that session.

2. Long lines

Youth practices should include each player having lots of touches of the basketball. Youth basketball practices are development practices and therefore sufficient repetition of skills should be planned for.

When a coach gets players to stand in long lines, they are reducing the amount of times a player has the ball. Long lines will see many kids standing around waiting for their chance to engage with the learning but instead become bored and distracted.

It is important for youth coaches to organise their drills so that all kids are active, engaged and practicing skills.

3. Letting things slide

Youth basketball covers a wide range of abilities but ultimately it is essential that coaches do not let things slide. Beginners need to be conditioned that they can't 'travel' with the basketball. If the coach sees a mistake then they must address it.

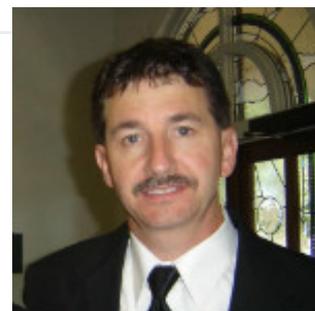
The coach must offer constructive feedback that identifies exactly what the player must do next time to improve their performance. If the coach chooses to ignore this opportunity to teach then they are in fact condoning poor execution of skills. For more advanced players, these teaching opportunities are equally as important.

The coach is doing a disservice to his/her players if he/she does not seize each moment and engage in a dialogue that will challenge the player and promote progression.

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Gary Petrin – AVCSS Basketball

1. Not having a practice plan, not being prepared (what you want to accomplish, which players you want at which positions, plays, drills, water breaks – all planned with extra just in case you need a plan B).
2. Not keeping the practice flowing from one drill to the next.
3. Stopping and talking to parents while the players are in need of supervision.
4. Being late (as the coach you should never be late)
5. Having a team meeting during practice time (have it after or before, don't eat up practice time)



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Greg White – Twitter Profile

The epidemic of bad coaching in youth sports is at an all time high. I applaud USA basketball for creating a certification program but the question we must answer is this: "Who is coaching our Coaches?" Here are a few things I see wrong with Youth Practice.

1. Drills over Skills

Coaches are running drills they ran in High School. Ever watched an 8 year old team run a 3-man weave? There is no point or purpose to it. Find a way to introduce skills without over complicated drills. We teach the alphabet one letter at a time for a reason.



2. FUNdamentals

Young players shouldn't associate Coaching and Yelling. Youth basketball should be fun while learning the Fundamentals of the game.

3. Playing over Plays

Teach Players how to play, not run plays. What you're winning with using on the 5th grade level doesn't translate well to the 7th grade.

4. Competition

Too many games. It doesn't take a genius to know that in an 8 year old game a zone press into a 2-3 zone wins ball games. At that age, competition is more for the parent's egos than the kids benefit. Let kids be kids. I don't think we should play 5 on 5 until the age of 10.

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Hal Wilson – Coaching Basketball Wisely

1) The biggest mistake youth basketball coaches make is only coaching how they were coached.

Maybe those drills were used when you were playing because they fit that team's skill and development level and are not appropriate for the level you are coaching at now.



2) The second biggest mistake is just doing something because successful coach X does it on TV.

Big time coaches have big time players with big time needs, again, your players might have different needs. Trying to force your players into advanced skills and concepts before they have mastered the fundamentals is a recipe for a disaster of injury and/or frustration.

Coaches should look outside of their own experience to find ideas, but must adapt them to their current situation.

Practices should be designed with clear objectives (how will this drill help your team in games?), intentional progression (break large skills and concepts down), and clear game application (players must understand why the skills or concepts are important, how they will help them be more successful individually, and how they will help the team in games).

3) The third biggest mistake is coaching practice to make the coach look good instead of to get the team better.

Yes, your precision drills might look great in practice, but as mentioned in point two, if they don't have a clear application to games then they are really more about you than your players.

4) The fourth biggest mistake is taking the fun out of practice and the sport, often in the name of winning.

Some well-intentioned youth coaches dampen or put out the competitive fire of their players by focusing too much on short term end results. Enjoy the journey and let your players do the same! We want Long Term Athlete Development of our players, on and of the court!

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Henry Barrera – Shoot 360

1. Not planning practices
2. Talking too much
3. Not enough shooting and skill development

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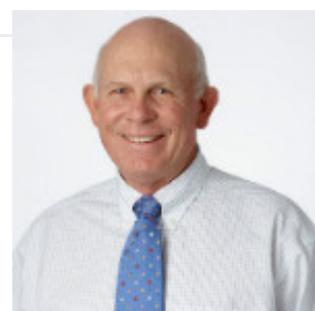


James Gels – Coaches Clipboard

A very common mistake that youth coaches make is frankly talking too much. Kids get bored and nothing is absorbed.

For high school practices, I've always said that a good practice is one where the players talk (communicate) and the coaches don't have to.

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Jeremy Russotti – 1 Percent Club

I think the most common mistake coaches make when running a youth practice is functionality. It seems every practice I watch includes mostly lay up lines, free throws and scrimmaging. There isn't anything wrong with those drills but you rarely see drills that involve players to make decisions.

Therefore, I think youth coaches should add more IQ drills that involve using their brains to make decisions. Simple 3 on 2 drills, 4 on 3 drills will really help players both offensively and defensively. These drills force players on how to make the extra pass (and correct pass), but also force players to learn how to scramble on defense.

Another area that coaches need to focus on is ball touches. Youth players need to be bouncing a ball, passing, or shooting a ball as much as possible in practice. The more reps they receive in these areas, the more they will improve. Having the team shoot free throws around the key, or just scrimmaging, doesn't give the players enough touches to improve.

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There are some really obvious mistakes that aren't limited to running youth practices, such as not being organized and not preparing in a purposeful way.

Assuming that many of the youth coaches aren't professionally trained coaches, there are many hazards for the unaware.



Some of my immediate thoughts are these:

- Not organized
- Coach players as a group not as individuals
- Preparation for practices and games is not purposeful
- Knowing the difference between too much practice and not enough practice; must know the players' emotional, physiological, conditioning and maturity levels in order to assess this on an ongoing basis
- Worrying too much about winning rather than trying to make the players better
- Don't pay attention to anything but the X's and O's
- Don't teach the kids how to win and lose with character, class and perspective
- Don't develop leaders; instead of the best player doing everything, have different kids step up and take turns leading drills, for instance
- Don't teach players how to communicate, both on and off the floor; in the gym and away from the gym
- Don't work on developing players' intrinsic motivation, which is best done by supporting, lifting, caring; can't just be "my way or highway" or expect players to just do what they say
- Don't emphasize the importance of academics along with athletics and how the two interact
- Forget that making kids better in basketball helps them be better in life; although this may happen naturally or as a by-product of the coaching, more is learned when this is planned for and built into the program.
- Play favorites, even unintentionally, often with their own child
- Think that their coaching is the only thing that makes the kids better; they forget that you can't make someone get better – you can only influence them to want to get better themselves
- Often coach the players as though they could become a pro rather than coaching them to become all that they (the individual) can become
- Don't know their real reasons for coaching – are they they right ones?

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Joe Haefner – Breakthrough Basketball

1. Focusing on plays rather than teaching them how to play.
2. Players standing in lines.
3. Having a plan of what to do at practice.. short-term and long-term.
4. Running without a basketball to condition when they could condition while developing basketball skills at the same time.
5. Separating team offense and skill development drills. You can do both at the same time.
6. Monkey See. Monkey Do. Just doing a drill they saw on YouTube or the Internet without really focusing on the objective of the drill. It's not what you do... it's how you do it.
 - a. What are you trying to improve? What's your objective?
 - b. Why are you trying to improve it? Is this age appropriate? Are there more important things to work on? Is this going to benefit them in the future?
 - c. How do you improve the specific skills? Does this drill accomplish your objective?
7. Creating a high-stress environment with yelling and constant criticism without understanding that the highest rate of learning occurs when stress levels are lower.

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John O'Sullivan – Changing the Game Project

The biggest mistake coaches of most any sport make is that practice does not replicate the game. In other words, they practice to look good in practice, not the game. They throw perfect passes instead of game like passes. They play without defenders and then expect technical expertise with defenders.

The more practice looks like the game, the more the things players learn in practice will transfer to the game. So next time your players are practicing free throws with a low heart rate and no pressure, ask yourself “does this really replicate what it feels like to be in the line of a tied game with 1 second left?” and adjust.

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Jordan Delp – Pure Sweat Basketball

When I have been around youth basketball practices, the biggest issue I have seen is that coaches spend so much time worrying about what plays to teach that they forget to teach kids how to play.

Once the initial option breaks down on offense, or the team beats your trapping defense, players have no idea how to react and adapt and it sets their development back.



Rather than focus on winning the 5th grade basketball tournament of the weekend, we should be focused on setting these kids up to be successful later in their careers by focusing on ten areas of development.

- 1 – Shooting Form
- 2 – Dribbling with both hands/against pressure
- 3 – Passing with both hands/against pressure
- 4 – Finishing with both hands/against pressure
- 5 – Basic footwork, triple threat reads
- 6 – Making FTs
- 7 – Moving w/o the ball
- 8 – Defensive stance
- 9 – Defensive positioning, handling screens, helping the helper
- 10 – Being a GREAT teammate

If our youth basketball players spent their time working on these ten areas from the earliest of ages, I believe our game would be in a much better place at the highest levels.

That means practice time must be purposeful, it must be planned, and it must be efficient. Also, there must be more of it. Youth players spend far too much time playing games and not nearly enough working on their skills.

Kids are naturally competitive and we can use practice time to foster that competitive drive – you don't need to be playing 5 games a weekend (where losses really don't matter that much anyway), you need to be spending more time in the gym developing your game.

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Koran Godwin – Jump Start Hoops

I would say the most common mistake would be not outlining the objectives of the practice. Every practice should include drills that focus on skill, offense, defense, and team strategy.

If you are new to coaching the entire practice should be outlined on paper so cover all basis and your team is ready to compete. Any area of weakness discovered in competition should be add to your practice outline so you can address it.

Youth coaches are lucky if they can get a full 2 hours of practice time so having a solid plan of attack would help tremendously.

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Lamar Hull – Inspirational Basketball

Some of the common mistakes in my opinion are:

- Screaming and yelling at their kids (there are more effective ways to get your message across)
- Not providing their team with the opportunity to scrimmage
- Not focusing on the fundamentals
- Executing drills without explaining and coaching
- Not putting any focus on defense
- Not putting any emphasis on talking as a team



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Lemar Griffin – Grind Time Hoops

With the youth players I think the biggest mistake coaches make are the lack of repetition. What I mean by that is if you don't practice the things you want your players to be able to do at game speed, with game like scenarios, how can you expect them to perform those same responsibilities in the actual game?



To answer the question simply, I believe the lack of practicing at game like speed with game like situations is a common mistake with youth basketball coaches.

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Mark Adams – Mark Adams Basketball

1. Don't spend enough time teaching/explaining FUNDAMENTALS.
2. Spend too much time putting in and practicing plays instead of teaching kids 'how to play'.
3. Too much time playing zone defenses when kids need to learn the fundamentals of man to man defense.
4. Overall, youth basketball plays too many games and there is too much of an emphasis on winning. Kids should learn how to play the game and have fun.

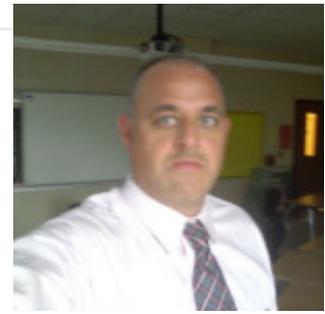


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Matt Kramer – Beyond the Hardwood

1. Teach kids to play man-to-man defense before ever considering to teach a zone.

To me, this is the biggest one. I watched a bunch of youth basketball games this past winter because my son is playing in a league for 9 and 10 year olds. Almost every game I watched the teams were playing zones.



This stunts the growth of the players on both sides of the ball. The defender isn't learning to guard anyone and the offensive players don't know how to navigate a zone defense. It's bad for everyone. Teach man-to-man defense.

2. Teach kids on offense to move without the ball.

The world has gone screen and roll crazy. It's great at the pro and high-major college level, but when everything is screen and roll at the youth level, the other 3 kids on the floor may as well be in the parking lot because they are spectators.

Dribbling kills the experience for 90% of the players on the floor and screen-roll invites lots of dribbling. Teach kids to cut and even set a screen away from the ball if they have the aptitude to understand it.

3. Don't waste time on tricky out-of-bounds plays.

Any time wasted teaching the young ones cute out-of-bounds action is time that could have been spent teaching kids to play man-to-man defense and teaching them to play offense without the ball.

Coaches, here's a fact: every OB under play is a great one in a youth game because nobody knows how to defend one. If you want to really help your players get better, forget about that stuff and focus on numbers 1 and 2.

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Matt Monroe – Hoops Roundtable

One of the most common mistakes in running youth basketball practices is that all too often coaches focus too much time teaching players how to run sets and special defenses.

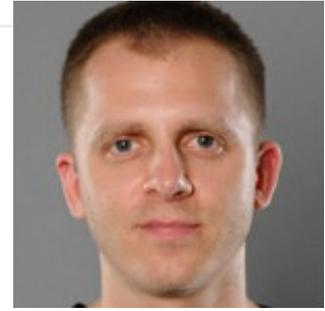
To ensure the overall development of your players and to have them reach their full potential, youth coaches most first teach the fundamentals of the game. Teach them how to play, not how to run a bunch of plays.



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Micah Lancaster – I’m Possible Training

The greatest problem I see in youth coaches today is the tendency to coach young players skills and concepts they will have to “unlearn” later. There are many skills and concepts that are being taught to today’s youth that will certainly work at nine, but are of no value when they are 18.



Instead of coaches operating from the mindset of, *“How can I help these player reach their dreams”*, there is a common mindset of *“how can I help this group win.”*

I believe this is often justified by coaches by the fact that only a small percentage of players actually will achieve their dreams. This, however, is a tragic and flawed belief system. It makes me wonder how many players do not make it based on being underestimated as youth!

So my ultimate advice for youth coaches is this. Overestimate your players! Look at the skills they will need at the college level, and begin to teach them those concepts. That may result in more carry violations from a lack of technique, or travels as their timing will be off, or more missed layups due to attempting more advanced finishes. But one thing I can promise, they will start to attain those skills and concepts far quicker than the teams who are just trying to teach young players how to find success NOW.

The fact is, even many of the NBA players I work with today are still attempting to unlearn many of the habits they were taught at their younger ages. If NBA players are still impacted negatively, than even more so will the less talented!

When it all comes down to it, I’d rather see a player get to the college level, then see them with a championship at the age of 9! I would hope all coaches would agree with that.

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Mihai Raducanu – No Limit Performance

Coaches should be focusing 100% on skill development.

Age 6-9 – Kids should learn motor development skills.

Age 6-12 – Kids should learn to train/practice the right way. Fundamental Skills of the Game.

Age 12-16 – Kids should learn to train. A more strategic specific model here. Introduction of technical and tactical concepts.

Age 16-18 – Train to compete. Emphasis on Winning. More Game concepts. Advanced skill development.

Age 18+ – Train To Win. Everything should be fully established. Athletes will get a higher level of education with everything. A lot of mental training here.



The formula above is what I use and what I teach to local coaches. It is a process but it is the right way to do it.

Coaches should not teach any plays and games should not be played until the age of 12 years old. They have no business playing if they don't know how to play. They have no business playing if they can't dribble or shoot properly.

Development of the grass roots as gone by the way side due to all the crazy AAU garbage out there and the game is ruined. Needs to change but the question is who is willing to educate the parents and the players that there are no instant results? Who is willing to treat money for what it is – piece of paper and nothing else?

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Mike Costello – Pure Sweat Basketball

I think the most common mistake when running a youth basketball practice is too much 5 on 5. Enough kids don't touch a basketball to improve.

I prefer 3 on 3 games so that every kid touches the ball, and it improves spacing (6 kids vs. 10 kids).

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Mike Dunlap – Coach Dunlap

Mistakes that I have made with youth camps:

1) Must establish a “camp routine” that includes such things as check in and exit system, uniform way we teach station work, competition games and keeping track of camper scores, report card camper evaluations, and other basic organizational line items.

2) System of medical needs, injury status, and record keeping that allows us to take care of campers while staying out of jail.

3) Communication: well designed huddles that are staged periodically during the day whereby the coach sits with campers in a circle for a short duration and teaches, asks questions, and has a good laugh with camper pods. This just means that we splice in times throughout camp to take some quiet time with campers to talk, teach, and listen.

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Mike O'Halloran – Sports Feel Good Stories



1. Scrimmaging too much.

Yes, most basketball games feature 5 players on one side and 5 on the other. And, yes, scrimmaging can be a valuable component of a team's practice schedule. But, it seems too many coaches devote too much time to 5-on-5 scrimmages.

Here's why you shouldn't... Players get better the more touches they have. When only one ball is in use, fewer players have the opportunity to step up their game. European soccer officials learned that a long time ago. By moving to small ball where fewer players were matched up against each other on a smaller field, players progressed at a faster pace. Intuitively as in soccer, it makes sense that the more a basketball player dribbles, shoots and passes with correct form, the more likely that player is to improve their skills.

I'm surprised by the number of courts I walk by where only one basketball is being used, and a bunch of basketballs sit idly on the sidelines for the lion's share of the practice. Basketball coaches should be encouraged to use the full court, all the baskets and all of the basketballs for a major part of every practice.

To accomplish that, coaches should be thinking of reinforcing skill development with everyone practicing with their own basketballs, 1-on-1 play to reinforce a newly taught skill, and 2-on-2 play or 3-on-3 play to add a team component.

2.) Spending too little time on defense.

With younger players especially, it seems like there is so much to teach with so little time. It's tempting to zero in on offensive skills, offensive schemes and offensive plays. Perhaps many coaches dream of coaching a team executing slick pick-and-roll's and precise give-and-go's that result in San-Antonio-Spurs-at-the-top-of-their-game baskets.

Does anyone dream of being a great defensive coach? It doesn't seem like it. When pushed for time, youth coaches cut on the defensive preparation. Perhaps there's a 10 minute overview of instructing your team to keep an eye on the ball and stay in between your offensive player and the basket, and maybe even a drill or two. But, seldom is enough time devoted to defensive skill development. Big mistake!

Players that learn solid defensive fundamentals, like how to move your feet, how to close out properly and how to play help defense, can make it extremely difficult for the opposition to score. Whoever said, "Offense sells tickets, but defense wins championships," was right.

3.) Not embracing practices like they do games.

The best coaches get pumped up for practices. They're prepared. They have a plan. They know that this is the time that players get better. This is where the teaching and learning happens. Lesser coaches seem to only get excited for games. And, where they might come prepared with detailed line-up variations for a game, they seldom put a lot of thought into how they're going to run practices and make it the most rewarding for players.

The problem with that approach is that it shows both in players' interest levels at practices and in game performance. Do what the best coaches do. They're always learning and looking for new approaches and techniques. Talk to other coaches. Go to a coaching clinic. Check out a college coach you admire on YouTube. You can learn a lot quickly. When you care more, your players care more.

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Paul Fabritz – PFJ Performance

The most common mistake youth coaches make is failure to develop their players foundation from a functional movement standpoint. Building a dynamic, skilled player without a strong foundation is like building a mansion on quick sand! It will look good while it lasts, but eventually it will come crashing down.



The majority of youth players that I assess lack the ability to activate their posterior chain (gluteals/hamstrings), which leads to an unequal distribution of force absorption when landing and cutting. By ignoring this problem, we are setting up our youth for injury and poor performance in the long run.

It's ideal for our youth players to undergo a well-designed strength and conditioning program, however, that's not always realistic. By simply adding a few exercises to the end of our warmup we can help players reduce the risk of injury and improve performance.

Each practice we must incorporate a squat pattern — body weight squats, dowel overhead deep squats, body weight box squats, etc. Coaches **MUST** monitor squat form and make corrections as needed. *Quick tip — 90% of your players will strictly use the knees to squat. Teach them to hinge from the hips FIRST, then bend the knees. Teach them to sit the hips back to a box or “imaginary chair”. Once we learn how to squat correctly we will begin utilizing the posterior chain when absorbing force on the court. Again, the goal is to take stress off of the knees and distribute forces through the gluteals and hamstrings when landing and cutting.*

Each practice we must incorporate one glute activation exercise — hip bridge variation, mini band lateral walks, bird dogs, etc.

Each practice we must incorporate a landing drill. Start with 12 inch box drops to double leg stick (have players hold the landing for 2 seconds). Once they master the double leg stick, have them progress to a single leg landing with 3 second stick).

Every practice we must incorporate an ankle strengthening exercise. Mini-band windshield wipers, single leg toe raises, ankle ABC's are all great options. The number 1 injury in basketball is related to the ankles, take care of them!

Every practice we must incorporate a core strengthening exercise. We can keep it simple here — planks, side planks, etc. We don't need much time here, 3 minutes at the end of the warm-up will suffice.

Injuries are part of the game, but non-contact injuries are almost always preventable. The above exercise recommendations will take less than 10-15 minutes and will go a long ways in helping your athletes stay healthy. If you don't have time during practice, have your players come in 15 minutes early to go through an injury prevention circuit!

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Randy Brown – Coach RB

1. Conducting a practice without a well thought out plan prior to the practice.

Note: the plan must be shared also with the assistant coaches/parents so there is consistency in what is being taught and accountability is a combined effort. Every practice needs an objective.



2. Not making maximum use of the time, court space, and high engagement for all players.

i.e. – lay up line is one of the most worthless time wasters ever.

3. No method of evaluation of each practice.

Without an way to accurately evaluate individuals and team as a whole, how do you gauge improvement of that practice, needed adjustments for the next practice, and an analysis of how time was used and was your objective for the practice met.

4. #1 Pet Peeve – Trying to do too many things and spending time on offenses and defenses instead of breaking down the parts of each and teaching/drilling/making players accountable for each skill.

Why? – If you don't make players accountable in practice, that's the coach's fault not the player. How can a coach be disappointed, angry, make substitutions, when he hasn't taught/drilled/and had each player/team as a whole accountable for listening, executing the skill in drill, then getting it into the game. Until this is done, the game is a joke, and many times coaches are the culprit.

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Rich Czeslawski – Better Basketball

Putting too much emphasis on 5-on-5.

Managing drills more than teaching fundamentals.

Showing them how to run plays rather than teaching them how to play.



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Robert Starkey – Hoop Thoughts

One common mistake that a coach can make in practice once we all get into the season is to be too concerned with an opponent and neglect fundamentals.

There needs to be a good blend of preparation while continuing to develop players through fundamental drill work.

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Ryan Razooky – GT Basketball

1) Not teaching the “why”.

Youth coaches must explain how and why things are done in each drill and how they apply to a game setting.

2) Teaching plays instead of players

Set plays are great because they teach a lot of good concepts to score. However, it is more important to teach actions that will translate into the rest of the players careers. Teaching screeners to score by rolling/popping/slipping, cutters to face-cut and see ball at all times, and to teach players how to make great decisions on the floor by “Knowing Your Personnel” (KYP) & Knowing Your Role.



KYP refers to many aspects of basketball. For instance if you have a 3-1 fast break a player, who doesn't know his teammates very well, may pass to the weaker finisher on his weak hand side. Know Your Role is simple. Do not shoot 30 shots if you are not a great scorer or try to break a press if you are not a great dribbler. Keep in mind knowing your role does not mean that you cannot change your role with hard work.

3) Defensive IQ is not a priority

Equally as important as offensive. Players should not close out hard on players that cannot shoot, go over a screen 30 feet from the basket, foul a terrible finisher etc.

4) Conditioning drills

Of course players have to be in shape to play but running suicides and down and backs is not always the best way to do it. Full court layup/pull-up drills work well and help development in a game-like setting.

5) Not enough compliments

Do not lie to your players and tell them they are doing a good job if they aren't. But if see a kid set a killer screen, throw a great extra pass, or box out like his life depended on it ACKNOWLEDGE IT! Youth players need to know that they are involved and contributing to the teams success.

6) Know how your players learn

Do not yell at the player who is insecure or be a pushover to the alpha male. Sandwich method (good, bad, good) *“Hey Jimmy I love that you’re trying to set screens! But Tommy has a mismatch so we do not want to give the defense a chance to switch back if you set a screen, otherwise keep setting them man!”*

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Ryan Walker – Ryan Walker Basketball

Too much talking (less talk, more reps) and using drills that aren’t specific to what is or will be run offensively/defensively.

Focus on doing these things as much as possible throughout practice: Getting a ball in all the players hands, explain “why” things are being taught, and making the experience fun.



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Sam Allen – PGC Basketball

1) Not starting simple enough.

Start very fundamental in passing, dribbling, shooting, footwork. I call it “Master the Boring” — and then move on from there. Some of the best players in the world have some of the best fundamentals. It’s sometime over-shadowed by spectacular athleticism.



2) Try to do too much.

The “less is more” approach can prove to be very beneficial to young kids. Instead of trying to squeeze in 10-15 different things in a practice or training session, narrow it down to 1-3 things and get really good at those. Once those few things start to become habit, move on to introducing a new skill or concept.

3) Identifying what young person is hoping to get out of the game or wanting to accomplish and coach establishing his or her intentions of working with them.

Along with establishing the expectations and communication system.

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Scott Fields – CoachScottFields.com

I find that youth coaches don't spend enough time teaching the basic fundamentals. This needs time and repetition.

Take the time to teach, demonstrate, and make it fun and competitive.

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Shawn Sullivan – Coach Sullivan Basketball

I would not say any coach is making a mistake, putting one's time in to the youth for their improvement in basketball and life while balancing family and work is not always an easy task. A youth coach does always have hours to plan a practice and therefore I would suggest a general outline to follow for each practice. This way they can maximize their time for each practice.



I would also suggest to emphasize skill work and to understand that players improve a little bit each practice and little bit will add up to a lot during the course of the season.

Each player should eventually be comfortable with right and left hand layups, ball handling, and passing. To be able to use both hands in all those situations already puts them a notch above most youth. The aforementioned can all be used as drills to help warmup players.

I would also spend a few minutes each practice focusing on shooting starting from a foot or two away and gradually moving back, working on follow through of both their shooting and release hands.

From there it is also essential to work on footwork drills, start slow with basic jump stops and how to pivot correctly by toeing the pivot foot. Then put them in situations in drills to eliminate travel situations. Catch and go, jab and go, reverse pivots, ball fake, etc... Majority of players will catch to high and then get low. Stress to players to catch the ball and stay low.

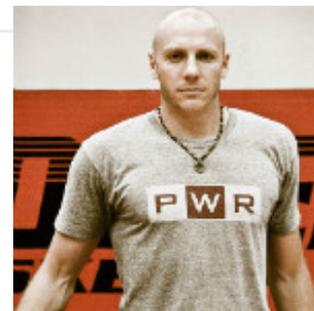
Each practice I would include something extra to work on, such as: One on one moves, post moves, pick and roll, etc...

While playing, I would make sure to spend more time working on man to man rather than zone.

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Sundance Wicks – AZ Power Basketball

In my dealings with the development of youth basketball players and the structure of youth practices I have found that one vital ingredient is missing at the youth level and that is the element of FUN!



In this specialization age of sports we have started taking ourselves way to seriously as teachers, coaches and trainers.

We have started pushing kids to their limits at such a young age that we actually play a huge role in the burnout factor of kids in youth sports.

Early on it is our job to help players have two types of fun in practice. Those two types are 'laughing fun' and 'learning fun'. We first develop the love for the game because we have fun playing it. Our love for the game continues to develop and grow when we start learning the correct way to play. It is first and foremost about pleasure and participation at the youth level.

Technically speaking, when a kid enters high school that pleasure and participation mode will change into power and performance. It is our job as teachers, coaches and trainers to trust the process of constant improvement and development. If we trust the process then there should really be no problem passing these kids on into the power and performance platform.

Inevitably, young coaches in this microwave society have fell victim to the pitfalls of skipping steps in the process of development.

It is not our job to take the love and fun out of the game, it is our job to teach with it and learn through it!

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Tamir Goodman – Zone 190

Often times coaches start warm-ups, get their players sweaty, and then have them stand around and listen to the practice schedule which cools the players off and slows down the pace of practice.



I suggest that coaches go over the practice schedule before warm-ups. For example, tell the players what drills they are going to do and how they are expected to do each drill, then warm-up and go straight into the drills.

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T.J Allen – 4th Quarter Basketball Training

By far the biggest mistake youth coaches make when running a practice is wasting valuable practice time on running (sprints, line drills, “suicides”, etc).



Most kids, especially in today’s society, play basketball or another sport year round, some playing two sports year round. They’re already in shape, and the running the coaches do in practice is going to do very little to improve their cardiorespiratory capacity. They would make much better progress if they spent that 15-20 minutes perfecting the fundamentals with dribbling or shooting drills.

In addition, the added running is just impairing recovery, creating an atmosphere that isn’t appropriate for skill acquisition, and possibly even increasing the athlete’s risk of injury.

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Tommy Hulihan – Tommy Hulihan Basketball

The #1 mistake I feel is that the majority of youth coaches are spending too much time trying to put in plays or defenses etc..

They don’t focus on player development enough.

They focus on the wins/losses more so than player development.

They don’t go in to each practice with a purpose and a plan. They are not organized/detailed in their practice plans. There can be no wasted time in youth practices.

Youth’s attention span very short must be detailed and move from drill to drill quickly.



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Tony Alfonso – Hoops U

No practice plan

You can’t run an effective and efficient practice without planning it out to the minute. Even if you have written down what you want to do, if you don’t plan the timeframe, you wind up spending too much time doing something or too little time.



Not spending enough time (or any time) on the fundamentals.

I’ve seen too many youth coaches simply conduct a scrimmage session and not teach the fundamentals and how to play the game.

Ignoring the kids that need more work and development.

I've seen all too often at the youth level, the coaches focus on the few really good players and don't give much attention to the kids who are new or still learning. These kids could still develop and become excellent players, however, we lose them from the sport because they aren't being taught and they aren't getting to play.

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Trafford Hannon – Basketball and Beyond

Working extensively on the X's and O's, leaving very little to NO time at all for very specific skill development.

The skills work being practiced is far too advanced or not even necessary for the youth players. Meaning we get away from your basic being able to finish with both hands and begin to work on things like a crossover step back. We need to truly look at the game, they may do a crossover step back once every 2 games but finishing with both hands is required every game.

They lack small number (1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3) live play. Small numbers gives more touches per player but also helps them understand that the game breaks down to smaller numbers not 5 on 5.

Finally, they lack reactionary skills, this is also going back to the live play. We can teach a drill with a cone or a dummy and the players do it the same way every time but we need to eventually have them react to a live defender. This gives players the real game feel and eliminates the ability to pre-determine what they are going to do, something we want players getting away from.

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Tyler Relph – Tyler Relph Basketball

There are a few things I think that is killing youth basketball, especially AAU.

The first being coaches worry about winning more than their players being developed and getting better. No one cares if you won a 6th grade championship.

The second is teaching players how to play the game of basketball, not teaching them sets but teaching them movements of the ball and spacing and how to play out of the pick and roll and pin down situations.

Too many coaches want to be Coach K in 6th grade instead of teaching kids the right way to play basketball, and showing them the necessary skills to get better.

Wow. Thank you!



A massive thank you to every expert that took the time out of their busy day to answer this question for all of us.

I definitely learned a lot going through the answers and I hope you've taken a lot from this post too.

250+ Basketball Terms all Coaches and Players Must Know

 basketballforcoaches.com/basketball-terms/



Becoming familiar with the many different basketball terms is one of the toughest challenges for all new coaches and players.

There are a lot of them...

From learning the many different offenses and defenses (*examples: 5-out motion and 1-3-1 defense*) to the many rule violations (*examples: 5-second violation and cross-court violation*), there is a lot of basketball terminology to take in.

Below, I've listed 250+ of the most common basketball terms you will hear during a basketball practice or game.

Don't expect to learn all these at once.

Rather, whenever you hear a word or phrase you're unsure of, return to this page to find out what it means and how you can learn more.

Let's get started...

250+ Basketball Terms You Must Know

-- 1, 2, 3 --

1-2-1-1 Press - A true full-court press with many possible variations. The goal of the press is to trap the basketball immediately after it has been inbounded into play. This allows the defense a lot of time to recover if the offensive team is able to break the press.

1-2-2 Zone - A common zone defense similar to a 2-3 zone. This zone defense starts with a player at the top of the key, a player on each elbow, and a player on each low block. All 5 players are responsible for guarding a portion of the three-point line.

1-3-1 Zone - A unique and aggressive zone defense that relies on cutting off passing lanes, anticipation, and deflections to create turnovers and fast break opportunities for your team.

2-3 Zone - The 2-3 zone is the most common zone defense coaches will use as an alternative to man-to-man defense. It involves two players at the top of the key guarding above the free-throw line and three players across the key guarding the paint and the sides of the court. This is a very common defense to see in youth basketball (unfortunately) because it crowds the key and forces the opposition to shoot from the perimeter.

3-2 Zone - The 3-2 zone is a common zone defense. It involves three players guarding the perimeter and two players inside guarding the key area. This defense is great for challenging perimeter shots, but can be exposed inside due to only two defenders protecting the basket.

3-Second Violation - An offensive player will be called for a 3-second violation when they spend more than three seconds in the key while the basketball is in live play.

4-Out 1-In Motion - The 4-out 1-in motion offense involves three players spread out around the perimeter while one player occupies the low post. A positionless, continuity offense.

5-Out Motion - The 5-out motion offense involves five players spread out around the perimeter. It's a positionless, continuity offense that's great for player development at any level.

5-Second Violation (inbound) -

Once a player inbound the basketball has taken possession from the referee, they then have 5



seconds to inbound the basketball to a teammate or they'll be whistled for a 5-second violation.

5-Second Violation (closely guarded) - An offensive player in the frontcourt with possession of the basketball can be called for a 5-second violation if they're being guarded within 6 feet and fail to pass, shoot, or dribble within 5 seconds.

8-Second Backcourt Violation - After a team gains possession in the backcourt, they then have 8 seconds to advance the basketball over the half-way line. If they fail to do so, a violation will be called.

-- A --

Airball - A shot attempt that doesn't hit the rim or the backboard.

Alley-Oop - An exciting play involving a player catching a pass in the air and finishing with a layup or dunk before landing back on the court.

Amoeba Defense - A junk defense made popular by coach Jerry Tarkanian at UNLV. Similar to the 1-3-1 zone, the Amoeba defense is designed to confuse the opponent and force turnovers.

And One - A phrase used when a player gets fouled on a made shot attempt. The player then gets to go to the free-throw line and shoot one bonus free-throw.

Ankle Breaker - When an offensive player uses a dribbling move that results in the on-ball defender stumbling or falling down.

Assist - A player is awarded an assist when they make a pass that leads directly to a score by one of their teammates.

-- B --

Backboard - A rectangular board generally made of tempered glass that the rim is attached to. The backboard prevents most missed shots from going out-of-bounds and provides a wall the players can shoot the basketball off and into the basket.

Backcourt (area) - If referring to an area of the court, the backcourt is the half of the court that a team is defending.

Backcourt (players) - The term backcourt can also be used to refer to the two guards on a team. The point guard and the shooting guard.

Backcourt Violation - See 'cross-court violation'.

Backdoor Cut - An offensive play involving a player cutting behind their defender towards the rim looking to receive a pass and finish with a score. This play is often encouraged by coaches when a player's opponent is overplaying the passing lane.

Back Screen - An offensive play involving an off-ball player setting a screen on the back of a teammate's defender. The screener's teammate will then cut towards the hoop looking to receive a pass and finish at the basket.



Balance Hand - The non-shooting hand when going through the process of taking a shot. The role of this hand is to balance the basketball on the shooting hand until the basketball is about to be released.

Ball Fake - See 'pass fake'.

Ball-Handler - Any player dribbling the basketball can be referred to as the ball-handler. Although many coaches will use this term when referring to the point guard.

Ball Side - Refer to 'strong side'.

Ball Reversal - The term used when a basketball starts on one side of the court and is then passed to the other side of the court. Coaches utilize ball reversals to move the defense.

Bank Shot - A shot that bounces off the backboard before falling through the basket.

Baseball Pass - A one-handed pass commonly used to throw a full-court pass to a teammate sprinting down the court. This type of pass will be more powerful than a chest pass but much less accurate.

Baseline - The line separating the playing area from out-of-bounds four feet behind the backboard. Also known as the 'endline'.

Basket (equipment) - A circular hoop with a diameter of 18 inches that's attached to the backboard. A team must pass the basketball through top of this hoop to score points.

Basket (score) - The term 'basket' can be used when a player successfully scores a field goal.

Basket Cut - An offensive action involving a player making an explosive cut directly towards the hoop.

BEEF - An acronym used often by coaches teaching players how to shoot with correct technique for the first time. B = Balance. E = Eyes. E = Elbow. F = Follow through.

Behind-the-Back Dribble - An advanced dribbling move involving a player moving the basketball from one hand to the other by bouncing it behind their back. Often used when a close on-ball defender would steal a basic crossover.

Behind-the-Back Pass - An advanced pass involving the player with the basketball passing to a teammate by wrapping the ball behind their body.

Bench - The sitting area for the coaches and players who aren't currently on the court. Both team's benches are located on the sideline at opposite ends of the court.

Bench Points - The number of points scored by all players on a team who started the game on the bench.

BFC - The acronym for the Basketball For Coaches website. The only website you need for everything about coaching basketball (shameless plug).

Big Man - A coach will often use the term 'big man' when referring to one of the taller players on the team. Usually the center or the power forward.

BLOB - The acronym for a BaseLine Out of Bounds play. These are plays designed to be used when the offense is passing the basketball into play from the offensive baseline.

Block (defensive play) - The term block can be used when a defensive player knocks the basketball out of their opponent's hands or out of the air during an attempted field goal.

Block (foul) - A player can be called for a blocking foul if they impede an offensive player's path without having established legal defensive position.

Block (court area) - There are two small rectangles located on the outside of the key that coaches will refer to as the block.

Board - See 'rebound'.

Bounce Pass - A pass that is intentionally rebounded off the floor before reaching the receiver. Players are generally taught to aim at the area of the floor 2/3 of the way to their teammate.

Box Out - After a shot has been taken, coaches will encourage their players to box out. This means making contact with the player they're guarding and establishing position between them and the basket to put themselves in the best position to secure a rebound.

Box and One - A defensive strategy commonly used against teams with one dominant player. This defense involves playing one defender man-on-man against the dominant offensive player and then setting up the four other defenders in a box zone.

Brick - A slang word given to a poor shot attempt that bounces hard off the rim or the backboard.

Buzzer Beater - A shot attempted in the final seconds and made after the shot clock has expired. The points will still count since the basketball left the shooter's hands before the clock expired.

-- C --

Carry - A carry is a dribbling violation that occurs when a player continues their dribble after placing their hand underneath the basketball.

Center - Also known as the '5'. The tallest player on the team is often referred to as the 'center'. This player's main responsibilities are to secure rebounds and defend the paint.

Center Court - The circle in the middle of the court where the jump ball takes place at the start of every basketball game.

Charge - An offensive foul that's called when an offensive player runs into a defender who has established position.

Charity Stripe - See 'free-throw line'.

Cherry Picking - People will use the term 'cherry picking' when a player who is meant to be helping their team on defense hangs around the half-way line or the opponent's goal waiting for a long outlet pass that leads to an open layup or dunk.

Chest Pass - This is the most common type of pass and involves one offensive player making a two-hand pass from their chest to the chest of another offensive player without the basketball touching the ground.

Closeout - A closeout is a defensive action that occurs when an offensive player receives the basketball and their defender must sprint towards them to prevent the shot while also attempting to prevent the offense from driving towards the hoop.

Corner - The corner is the small area of the court where the sideline meets the baseline. There are often many three-point shots taken from this spot as it's an important area to fill for team who want great spacing.

Court Vision - The term 'court vision' is used when a player has great ability to read the play. Usually goes hand-in-hand with basketball IQ.

Cross-Court Violation - When the offensive team establishes possession of the basketball in the frontcourt, they are then not allowed to return to the backcourt while still in possession of the basketball. If they do, a cross-court violation will be called.

Cross Screen - A cross screen occurs when a player cuts to the opposite side of the floor to set a screen for a teammate. This most often occurs in the paint.

Crossover - A dribbling move involving a player passing the basketball from in front of their body from one hand to the other. This is the most common dribbling move and is great for quickly changing directions.

Curl Cut - A curl cut occurs when a player who receives an off-ball screen uses the screen and cuts towards the basket. This is a great action for an offensive player when the defender follows them over the screen.

Cut - A quick sprint that can involve changing directions made by a player in an attempt to get themselves free to receive a pass or clear out space for a teammate.

-- D --

Dagger - A slang term that can be used to describe a clutch shot made in the final few seconds of the shot clock or the game.

Defense - The team on defense is the team without possession of the basketball. While on defense, the team will attempt to prevent the opposition from scoring in their basket.

Defensive Stance - The players on defense should always be in defensive stance. This involves keeping the knees bent and arms out wide. This puts a defender in the best position to react quickly and steal the basketball.

Deflection - When a defender makes contact with the basketball but doesn't get the steal, it is referred to as a deflection.

Diamond and One - A junk defense similar to the box and one. It involves one player guarding the opposition's best player man-to-man and the other four defenders set up in a diamond zone.

Diamond Press - See '1-2-1-1 press'.

Dip - The process of bringing the basketball down to a lower starting point before shooting. Dipping the basketball allows players to have a consistent starting point and also adds power and momentum to the shot.

Dish - See 'assist'.

Double-Double - The word 'double-double' is used when a player scores in double-digits in two positive statistical categories. For example, 16 points and 10 assists.

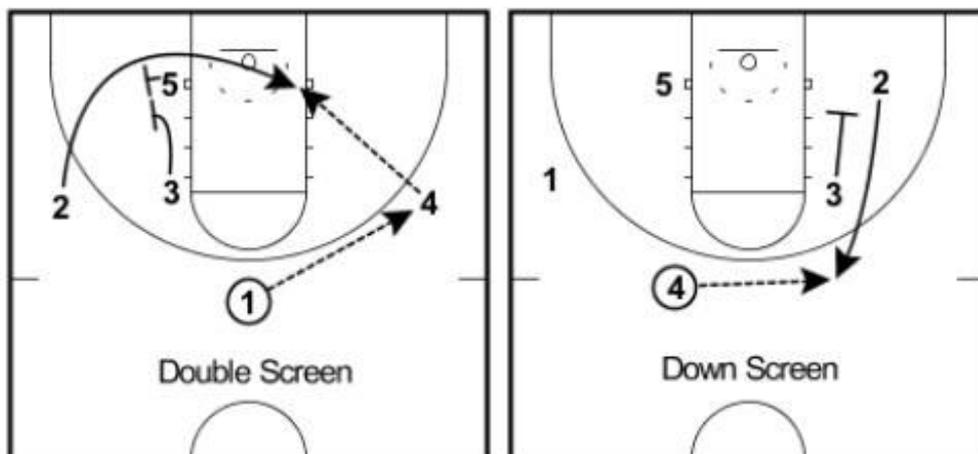
Double Dribble - This is a dribbling violation that occurs when a player dribbles the basketball with two hands simultaneously or terminates their dribble and then begins to dribble again.

Double Foul - An uncommon situation that occurs when two opponents commit a foul against each other at the same time.

Double Screen - When two off-ball offensive players set a screen side-by-side. This increases the distance the cutter's defender has to move to avoid the screen which will give the offensive player who received the screen extra time to make a play.

Double Team - A double team occurs when two defensive players trap the player in possession of the basketball. The goal is to get the basketball out of a great player's hands or force the offensive player to make a poor pass that results in a steal.

Down Screen - A down screen is any screen that's set when when the screener has their chest facing the baseline. This results in their teammate cutting away from the hoop which is why it's often used to get shooters open.



Dr. James Naismith - The amazing man who first invented basketball back in January 1892. Thanks, Doc!

Drag Screen - A drag screen is an on-ball screen set by a trailing offensive player. This screen is often effective because the screener's defender is out of position and unable to provide help on the ball-handler.

Dribbling - The process of using one hand to repeatedly bounce the basketball off the floor. This is the only legal way a player can move around the court while in possession of the basketball.

Dribble Drive Motion - A motion offense developed by Vance Walberg. The offense is designed to spread the floor and focuses on dribble penetration for a layup or passing out to a teammate for an open shot.

Drive and Kick - An offensive action involving a player penetrating the defense to force them to shift and then passing out to a teammate on the perimeter.

Drop Step - An offensive low post move involving the player with the basketball and their back to the basket taking a large step back and to the side of their defender as they turn towards the basket to create room for a shot.

Dunk - A dunk is an exciting play involving an offensive player slamming the basketball forcefully through the hoop.

-- E --

Elbow - The 'elbow' is the area on the court where the lane line and the free-throw line meet. There are four elbows on a full basketball court.

Elevator Screen - An elevator screen is a screen set by two players and involves the player being screened cutting through the middle and then the two screeners closing the screen by quickly stepping side-by-side.

Endline - See 'baseline'.

EuroLeague - The top basketball league in Europe. The league contains 16 teams who each play each other once for a total of 30 games before finals.

Euro Step - The euro step is an advanced move used when attacking the basket. It involves a player taking a step in one direction and then taking a step in another direction for their second step before finishing at the rim.

-- F --

Face Up - See 'square up'.

Fadeaway - A basketball shot can be referred to as a 'fadeaway' when the shot is taken while the player is jumping away from the basket. This shot requires a high level of skill and is used to create space between the shooter and their defender.

Fast Break - After a change of possession, a team advances the basketball as quickly as possible to attack the defense before they have been able to establish good defensive position.

FIBA - FIBA is the acronym for 'Fédération Internationale de Basketball Amateur' which is in charge of all international basketball competition.

Field Goal - A field goal is a shot made from anywhere on the court except for free-throws. This includes both two-point shots and three-point shots.

Finger Roll - The finger roll is an advanced variation of a layup that involves a player turning their palm up and rolling the basketball off the tips of their fingers. This can create a 'soft' layup and also allow the shooter to finish with arc that negates a shot block attempt.

Flagrant Foul - A foul involving contact that the referee deems to be intentional, excessive, or unnecessary. The team who draws the flagrant foul will receive two free-throws and possession of the basketball.

Flare Screen - A flare screen is an off-ball screen that allows a player to cut away from the basketball to a spot around the perimeter. Similar to a back screen.

Flash - An quick offensive cut across the paint towards the basket. Most effective when a player can catch the defense off guard.

Flex (cut) - The flex is a cross screen immediately followed by a down screen. This is a very common and effective action at all levels of basketball.



Flex (offense) - The flex offense is a continuity offense requiring great spacing and smart players. This offense can be great for development as all 5 players must fill all 5 positions.

Floater - A type of shot often utilized by smaller guards to score at the rim against tall defenders. The basketball is shot with a high arc to prevent a blocked shot.

Flop - When a player intentionally falls or stumbles to appear to have been fouled by an opponent, we call it a 'flop'. This can be done by both defensive and offensive players.

Floppy - A basketball play often used for great shooters. Involves the shooter starting under the rim with a single screen on one side and a staggered screen on the other. The shooter can choose which side to cut on.

Four High - A basketball formation involving a player on each wing, a player on each elbow, and a player with the basketball at the top of the key.

Four Low - A basketball formation involving a player in each corner, a player on each low block, and a player with the basketball at the top of the key.

Foul - A violation of the rules usually involving illegal contact with a player of the opposition.

Foul Line - See 'free-throw line'.

Foul Shot - See 'free-throw'.

Four-Point Play - A four-point play is a rare event that occurs when a player is fouled while successfully making a three-point shot and then makes their bonus free-throw.

Four Corners Offense - A delay offense used by teams before the shot clock was added to the game of basketball. It involves one player with the basketball in the middle of the court attempting to break down their defender while their teammates stand in the corners.

Free-Throw - An uncontested shot 15 feet from the basket directly in front. Most free-throws are awarded to players who have been fouled while shooting. Each free-throw is worth one point.

Free-Throw Line - The free-throw line is 12 feet in length and located 15 feet from the basket. This is the line that players stand behind to shoot free-throws.

Free-Throw Line Extended - This is an imaginary line that extends the free-throw line to the sideline. Coaches will often refer to free-throw line extended when discussing offense or defense.

Frontcourt (area) - If referring to an area of the court, the frontcourt is the half of the court in which a team attempts to score.

Frontcourt (players) - The term frontcourt can also be used to refer to the two forwards and the center on a team. The small forward, power forward, and center.

Full-Court Press - A defensive strategy involving the defense pressuring the basketball for the entire length of the court. A full-court press can be either man-to-man or zone. For example, the 1-2-1-1 press.

Jump Ball - See 'tip off'.

-- G --

Give and Go - An offensive play involving the player with the basketball making a pass to a teammate and then cutting towards the rim and receiving a return pass.

Goal Tending - A goal tending violation is called when a player on defense touches the basketball when it's on the downward flight after a shot. When this happens, the basket is counted. A goal tending violation is also called if a player touches the basketball while it's above or on the rim.

Grinnell Offense - A unique offensive strategy developed by coach Dave Arseneault at Grinnell College. It's a high-pace and high-scoring offense usually involving the offense attempting a three-point shot within the first 5 - 7 seconds of the shot clock.

Guide Hand - See 'balance hand'.

-- H --

Hack - The term 'hack' is another word for fouling an opponent.

Hack-a-Shaq - A defensive strategy involving a team intentionally fouling the opposition's worst free-throw shooter and sending them to the line.

Half-Court Line - The line through the middle of the basketball court and the center court that divides the basketball court into two halves.

Hammer - A back screen set on the weak side of the court that allows a teammate to cut to the corner for an open shot. Made common NBA play that was first made popular by the San Antonio Spurs.

Hand-Off - An offensive action involving one player handing the basketball to a teammate.



Hedge - A 'hedge' is a common pick-and-roll defense. It involves the screener's defender stepping out to meet the ball-handler and force them to dribble wide while the on-ball defender recovers.

Help Side - Refer to 'weak side'.

Hesitation Dribble - An advanced dribbling move involving the ball-handler quickly slowing down and then exploding past their defender.

Hook Shot - A one-handed shot involving the player with the basketball turning side on to the basket and then extending their shooting arm and flicking the basketball over their head towards the basket. A very difficult shot to block.

Hoop - Refer to 'basket (equipment)'.

-- I --

Illegal Screen - Any player who sets a screen must be stationary when the defender they're screening makes contact with them. If they're not, an illegal screen will be called.

In-and-Out Dribble - A dribbling move involving a player pretending to perform a crossover dribble but only starting the inward motion before bringing the basketball back out to the original side.

Inbounds Pass - The basketball term 'inbounds pass' is used when a player on offense passes the basketball into the court from out-of-bounds.

Intentional Foul - A foul involving a defensive player making deliberate contact with a player of the opposition team.

Isolation - An offensive tactic involving one player with the basketball being left alone on one side of the court while their teammates clear out to the other side of the court. This is often used when a player has a favourable one-on-one matchup.

-- J --

Jab Step - From triple threat position, a player takes a quick step towards the basket while keeping their pivot foot planted. The jab step is used to see how the defense will react and possibly create an advantage for the offensive player.

Jump Ball - Used to start every basketball game. Involves the referee throwing the basketball up in the center of the court between two players who jump and attempt to tap the basketball to a teammate.

Jump Shot - A shot taken by jumping up in the air and releasing the basketball at the peak of the jump.

Jump Stop - A jump stop is used to come to a complete stop after dribbling or after receiving a pass. It involves both feet hitting the floor simultaneously.

Junk Defense - A junk defense is a combination of man-to-man defense and a zone defense. For example, a box and one or a triangle and two.

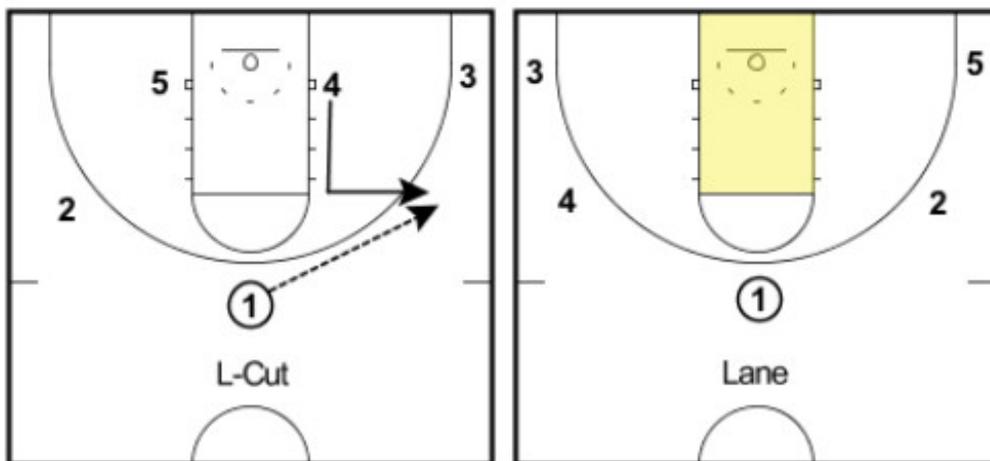
-- K --

Key - The rectangular area under the basket and the free-throw circle. Originally referred to as the 'key' because the lane lines were closer together than the width of the free-throw circle which gave off the appearance of a key hole.

-- L --

L-Cut - A cut made in the shape of an 'L'. Usually from the low block up the lane line to the elbow and then cutting out to the wing. Some coaches use the term 'L-Cut' when referring to cutting around the perimeter, too.

Lane - See 'paint'.



Lane Violation - A lane violation can be called on either the offensive or defensive team and occur during free-throw situations. Any player who steps over the lane line before the basketball has left the shooter's hands will be called for a violation.

Layup - A close-range shot taken when attacking the basket. Usually involves the shooter banking the basketball off the backboard.

-- M --

Man-to-Man Defense - A defense that involves all players matching up and taking responsibility of guarding one player on the opposition team. It is a team defense and players are required to help each other, but all players have a specific opponent they're defending.

Midrange - A midrange is a jump-shot that's taken anywhere between the three-point line and the key area. This shot is worth two points.

Mid-Court Line - See 'half-court line'.

Mismatch - When an offensive player has an advantage over the defender that's currently guarding them. When this happens, the offense will usually look to isolate this matchup on the wing or in the low post.

Mover Blocker Offense - This offense was developed by coach Dick Bennett. In this offense, some players are 'movers' (scorers) and some players are 'blockers' (screeners).

Moving Screen - See 'illegal screen'.

-- N --

NBA - The National Basketball Association is a professional basketball league located in North America. The league consists of 30 teams and features many of the best basketball players on the planet.

NCAA - The acronym for the National Collegiate Athletic Association. A non-profit organization in charge of all college sports.

NFHS - The acronym for the National Federation of State High School Associations. In charge of writing the competition rules for all high school sports.

No-Look Pass - This is an advanced pass that involves the player with the basketball looking one direction and pass another direction. This highlight play is designed to trick the defense.

-- O --

Offense - The team on offense is the team with possession of the basketball. While on offense, the team will attempt to score in their opponent's basket.

Officials - The people in charge of keeping the game under control and enforcing the rules of the game.

On-Ball Defense - When an offensive player has the basketball, the defender guarding them and pressuring the basketball is playing on-ball defense.

One-Pass Away - Coaches will use the term 'one-pass away' when they're speaking about team defense. A defender one-pass away is defending the player next to the basketball.

Open Post - The term used when there are no offensive players attempting to post up on the low block. When most coaches talk about open post, they're referring to the 5-out motion.

Outlet Pass - After a defensive rebound, the immediate pass to a teammate to start a fast break is called an outlet pass.

Overhead Pass - An overhead pass is a two-handed pass made from above the head of an offensive player. This pass is effective for passing over the top of the defense.

Overtime - If a game is tied after the end of regulation, teams will often play a 5-minute overtime period to determine a winner.

Over-and-Back Violation - See 'cross-court violation'.

-- P --

Pack Line Defense - A popular variation of man-to-man defense developed by Dick Bennett. It involves one player defending the basketball at all times while the other four players are in help position inside an imaginary arc 16 feet around the basket. Complete

coaching guide here.

Paint - The rectangular area located below the hoop that extends to the free-throw line. This area is usually painted a different colour to the rest of the basketball court which is where it gets its name.

Palming - See 'carry'.

Pass Fake - A quick movement where a player pretends to pass to a teammate by looking at them and making a quick passing motion while keeping hold of the basketball.

Passing Lane - An imaginary line between two offensive players that the basketball would follow if a pass was thrown.

Penetration - Penetrating is when an offensive player is able to dribble towards the basket through the defense.

Pick - See 'screen'.

Pick-and-Pop - Similar to the pick-and-roll. An offensive player will set a screen for the player in possession of the basketball. But instead of rolling towards the hoop, the screener steps out to the perimeter and looks to receive a pass for an open shot.

Pick-and-Roll - A common and effective two-person offensive action involving an offensive player setting a screen for the player in possession of the basketball. The screener will then roll towards the basket looking to receive a pass from the ball-handler.



Pick-and-Slip - Another variation of the pick-and-roll. In this variation, just before the screener is about to screen the on-ball defender, they instead slip towards the basket looking to receive a pass and finish at the rim.

Pinch Post - Pinch post is an action that occurs when the basketball is passed to the weak side elbow while there are no other players on that side of the floor.

Pivot - When a stationary player has possession of the basketball, they're allowed to move one foot around as long as their other foot stays in contact with the floor at all times. This is called pivoting.

Pivot Foot - The foot that stay in contact with the floor while a player is pivoting is known as the pivot foot.

Playmaker - A player is referred to as a 'playmaker' when they have the ability to create open shots for their teammates or give them an advantage on offense to score. Usually the point guard.

Point Guard - Also known as the '1'. One of the five positions on the court. The point guard is usually tasked with dribbling the basketball up the court, initiating the offense, and controlling the tempo of the game.

Possession Arrow - Usually a wooden or plastic arrow that sits on the scorer's table. Many leagues use a possession arrow to determine who starts each quarter with the basketball and who takes possession when a jump ball is called.

Post Up - A player posts up by establishing position close to the ring (usually on the low block) with their back to the basket and their chest facing the perimeter ready to receive a pass.

Posterize - A slang term used when an offensive player makes a highlight dunk over an opposition player.

Power Forward - Also known as the '4'. One of the 5 positions on the court. Traditionally, the power forward plays very similar to the center by playing in the post and rebounding the basketball. In today's game, we're seeing less post play and more outside shooting from this position.

Press - An organised basketball defense in which the team on defense pressures the opponent full-court in an attempt to force a turnover.

Pump Fake - See 'shot fake'.

Put Back - When a player on the offensive team grabs an offensive rebound and then immediately scores a field goal in the paint.

-- Q --

Quadruple-Double - A rare stat line where a player reaches double-digits in four offensive categories. For example, 15 points, 12 rebounds, 11 assists, and 13 steals.

Quintuple-Double - The near-impossible stat line of reaching double-digits in five offensive categories. For example, 18 points, 14 rebounds, 11 assists, 12 steals, and 10 blocks. This has never happened in the NBA.

-- R --

Ram Screen - Coaches will use the term 'ram screen' when an off-ball screen is set that leads directly into an on-ball screen. This is an effective action because it's very difficult for the screener's defender to get back in position quickly to play help defense.

Read and React Offense - Developed by Rick Torbett, the Read and React offense is a positionless, continuity offense that allows players to read the defense and make decisions.

Rebound - A 'rebound' is a stat that's awarded to the player who gains possession the basketball after a missed field goal attempt. A rebound can be either offensive (rebound by a player on offense) or defensive (rebound by a player on defense).

Referees - See 'officials'.

Restricted Area - A semi-circle inside the paint and four feet around the basket. A defensive player cannot take a charge while their feet are inside this area. Its purpose is to ensure that the offensive player has somewhere to land when attacking the basket.

Run-and-Jump Defense - The Run-and-Jump defense (or R&J) is a full-court man-to-man press with rules that encourage jump-switching and trapping. It was first created by Dean Smith at North Carolina during the 1970's. This full-court defense is best suited for a team of athletes that want to play an uptempo style game.

-- S --

Scorekeeper - An official responsible for filling out a scoresheet throughout the game. This requires them to keep track of points scored, fouls, and timeouts.

Screen - A screen involves a player setting a stationary block on their teammate's defender. The goal of a screen is to give their teammate space that may lead to an open shot or simply to receive a pass that puts them at an advantage.

Screen-the-Screener - A term used when a player receives a screen from a teammate immediately after setting a screen for another teammate. This is a very difficult action for the defense to guard.

Scrimmage - The term used for an unofficial game of 5-on-5. Scrimmages are most often ran towards the end of practices and involve players on the same team competing against each other.

Shooting Guard - Also known as the '2'. One of the 5 positions on the court. This player is usually the team's best shooter from the perimeter.

Shooting Range - A player's shooting range is the maximum distance away from the hoop that the player can consistently make shots.

Short Corner - An area of the basketball court between the corner and low block. While there's nothing to mark this area, it's an advantageous spot for the offense to occupy especially against zone defense.

Shot Clock - A shot clock is an electronic countdown timer used to increase the pace of a basketball game. The timer is usually set at 24 - 35 seconds in length and the team on offense must attempt a field goal before the shot clock expires.

Shot Clock Violation - If a team is unable to attempt a shot before the shot clock expires, a shot clock violation is called and the offensive team loses possession of the basketball.

Shot Fake - An advanced move where the player in possession of the basketball pretends to shoot. This move is designed to trick the defense and get them to raise out of their stance or jump which will then put the offensive player at an advantage to dribble past them.

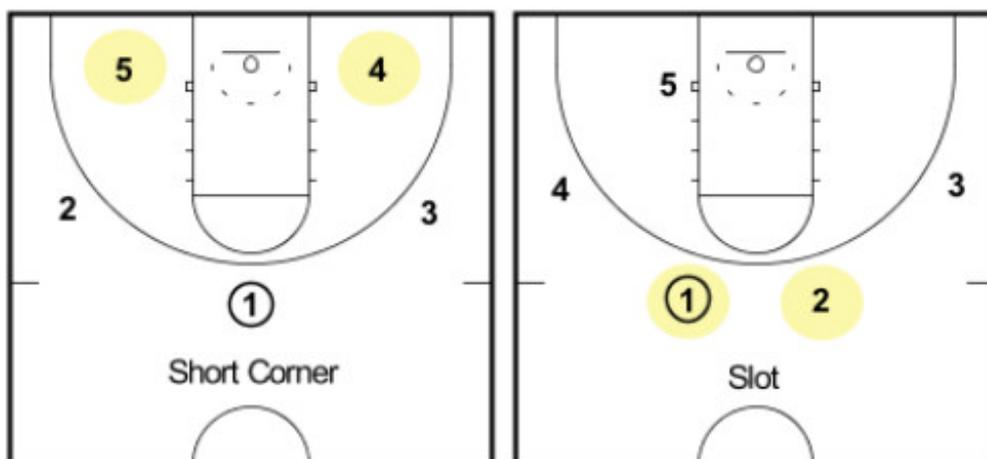
Sideline - The boundary lines that separate the playing area from out-of-bounds on the side of the court.

Sixth Man - A player who starts the game on the bench but is the first player to substitute on court and replace a starter.

Skip Pass - A pass made over the defense from one side of the court to the other. For example, from the corner to a player on the opposite wing.

SLOB - The acronym for a SideLine Out of Bounds play. These are plays designed to create an open shot for the offensive team when the basketball is being passed in from the sideline in the frontcourt.

Slot - An area of the court located to the left and right of the top of the key. The slot is a position that must be filled during the 4-Out Motion or when running any offense with a two-guard front.



Small Forward - Also known as the '3'. One of the five positions on the court. Small forwards are known for their versatility as they're able to contribute in multiple areas. They're able to rebound the basketball while also capable of dribbling the basketball up the court if necessary.

Split Line - An imaginary line that extends from one basket to the other directly down the middle of the court. This is a useful line to refer to when coaching the defensive end of the floor.

Strong Side - When splitting the court in half vertically (basket to basket), the strong side is the side of the court the basketball is located on.

Spacing - A term you'll often hear coaches say when they believe their players are too close together on offense. Great spacing is when all offensive players are 15 - 18 feet from each other.

Spin Dribble - An advanced dribbling move involving the player with the basketball reversing their body 360 degrees. This allows the dribbler to keep their body between the basketball and their defender.

Square Up - When a player catches the basketball on the perimeter, they 'square up' to the hoop by turning so that their feet, hips, and shoulders are aligned. This puts them in the position to shoot, pass, or dribble at any moment.

Staggered Screen - A staggered screen occurs when two players set off-ball screens for one of their teammates. The two screeners are positioned facing the same direction but not next to each other.

Steal - The basketball term steal is used when a player forces a turnover from an opponent by taking the basketball from them or deflecting a pass.

Stride Stop - A variation of the jump stop. But instead of both feet touching the ground simultaneously, in a stride stop one foot hits the ground before the other.

Substitution - When a player who was off the court swaps with a player on the court, it's called a substitution. A 'sub' for short.

Swish - The term swish is used when a player makes a shot that doesn't hit anything except the net.

Switch - A defensive strategy usually occurring when a screen is set that involves two defensive players swapping which player they're guarding.

-- T --

Tear Drop - See 'floater'.

Technical Foul - A technical foul is called when a coach or player brings the game of basketball into disrepute and is not made in relation to contact. This could be actions like yelling at a referee, flopping, kicking a basketball, using inappropriate language, holding onto the rim after a dunk, etc.

Three-Pointer - As the name suggests, a three-pointer is worth three points and is a field goal from behind the three-point line.

Three-Point Line - The three-point line is an arc at each end of a basketball court surrounding each hoop. The distance of this line will vary depending on the level of basketball played (between 19 and 24 feet) but all shots taken from behind the three-point line are worth three points.

Three-Point Play - A three-point play is when a player scores a two-point basket while being fouled. They then go to the free-throw line and if they make the bonus free-throw it's called a three-point play.

Through-the-Legs Dribble - An advanced dribbling move involving a player moving the basketball from one hand to the other by bouncing it between their legs. This is a great way to keep the basketball protected from your opponent while changing directions.

Throw In - The process of passing the basketball from out of bounds into the court.

Timeout - Coaches have a certain number of timeouts per quarter or half depending on the league their coaching in. Timeouts are used to rest players, motivate the team, make substitutions, change strategy, etc.

Tip-Off - The jump ball that starts every basketball game.

Top of the Key - The area above the three-point line in the middle of the court and closest to the half-way line. This is an important spot to keep filled in most offenses.

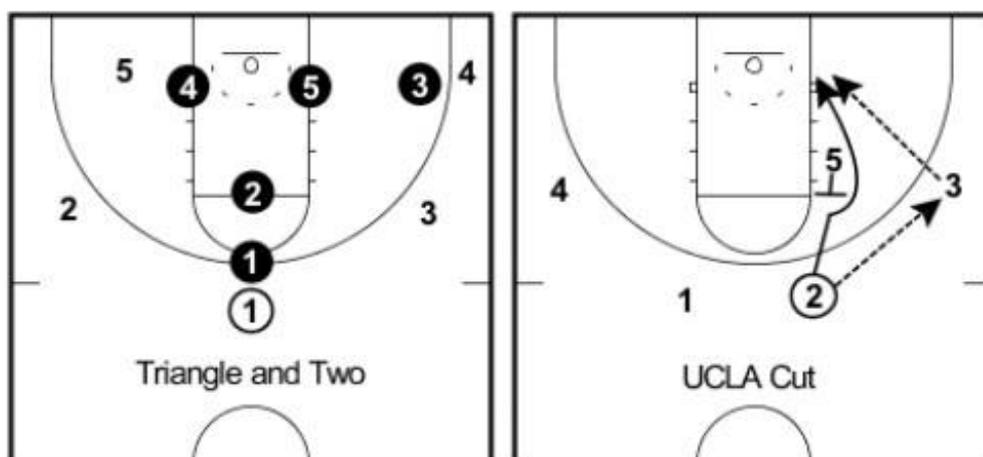
Trailer - An offensive player who plays behind the basketball as it's been advanced up the court. This player is usually one of the post players and should always be in position for a safety pass across court if the point guard gets trapped.

Transition - The term 'transition' is used to describe the movement from offense to defense or defense to offense after a change of possession.

Trap - Refer to 'Double Team'.

Travel - A traveling violation is difficult to describe in writing, but is in place to prevent players from taking more than one step while holding the basketball. This rule also prevents players from moving or changing their pivot foot once it's been established.

Triangle and Two - A defensive strategy used against teams with two dominant players. This defense involves playing two defenders man-to-man and then creating a triangle zone with the three other defenders.



Triangle Offense - The triangle offense is a continuity basketball offense that combines perfect spacing with a series of actions based on player decisions resulting in a beautiful basketball offensive system.

Triple Double - The word 'triple-double' is used when a player scores in double-digits in three positive statistical categories. For example, 21 points, 11 rebounds, and 10 assists.

Turnover - A turnover occurs when a player loses possession of the basketball before a shot attempt. This most often occurs due to a poor pass or a violation.

-- U --

UCLA Cut - A UCLA cut involves a player on the perimeter making a pass to the wing and then cutting to the strong-side block off a screen on the high post (elbow).

UCLA Screen - The UCLA screen is the back screen that allows a perimeter player to perform a UCLA cut. This screen is set on the elbow of the high post.

Up-and-Under - An offensive low post move involving a post player with their back to the basket faking a turnaround jump shot and then stepping in for the layup when the defender leaves their feet.

-- V --

V-Cut - A v-cut is the most common type of cut used to get open on the perimeter. It involves a player cutting inside the three-point line, planting their foot, and then exploding back out to the perimeter to receive a pass or fill an open spot.

Violation - An infraction of the rules that isn't a foul. This will usually be called against the team on offense and results in a loss of possession. For example, a double-dribble violation or a 5-second violation.

-- W --

Weak Side - The side of the court opposite of where the basketball is currently located.

Wing - An area of the court located at the intersection of free-throw line extended and the three-point line.

WNBA - The Women's National Basketball Association is a professional basketball league located in North America. The league consists of 12 teams and features many of the best female basketball players on the planet.

-- Z --

Zipper Cut - A 'zipper cut' is a cut made by a player from the low block straight up to the slot area behind the three-point line.

Zone - A defensive strategy coaches will use that require defenders to guard specific areas of the court instead of opposition players.

And that's it!

If there are any basketball terms you want the definition of that aren't listed above, make a request in the comment section below and I'll add it to the list.

501 Awesome Basketball Quotes

 basketballforcoaches.com/basketball-quotes/



I love collecting and sharing basketball quotes.

Basketball quotes are terrific for motivating and inspiring coaches and athletes. Countless times I've recited various quotes to my players or fellow coaches and they always have a positive effect.

As you go through the basketball quotes below, I encourage you to write down any that inspire you. There will be quotes that seem to jump out of the screen at you because they make sense to your current situation and your basketball philosophy.

The basketball quotes are arranged alphabetically by the coach or player's first name and then there's large miscellaneous section at the end. If you don't have time to go through the entire post make sure to bookmark this page and come back some other time. There's a lot of gems that I know you'll love reading.

I hope you enjoy the 501 basketball quotes below!

Bill Russell Basketball Quotes

“Create unselfishness as the most important team attribute” – Bill Russell

“Concentration and mental toughness are the margins of victory” – Bill Russell

“The most important thing to me is the friends that I’ve made” – Bill Russell

“The most important measure of how good a game I played was how much better I’d made my teammates play” – Bill Russell

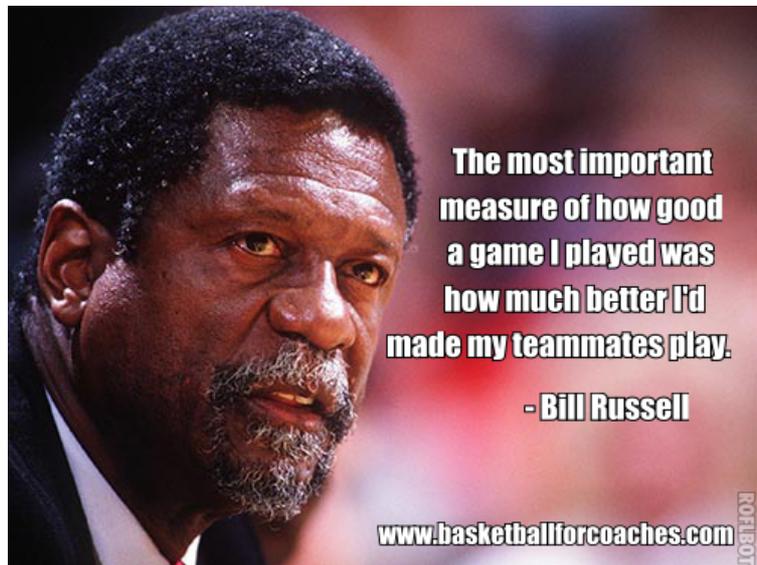
“Remember that basketball is a game of habits. If you make the other guy deviate from his habits, you’ve got him” – Bill Russell

“Commitment separates those who live their dreams from those who live their lives regretting the opportunities they have squandered” – Bill Russell

“What distinguishes a great player is his presence. When he goes on to the court, his presence dominates the atmosphere” – Bill Russell

“The only important statistic is the final score” – Bill Russell

“The idea is not to block every shot. The idea is to make your opponent believe that you might block every shot” – Bill Russell



Bob Knight Basketball Quotes

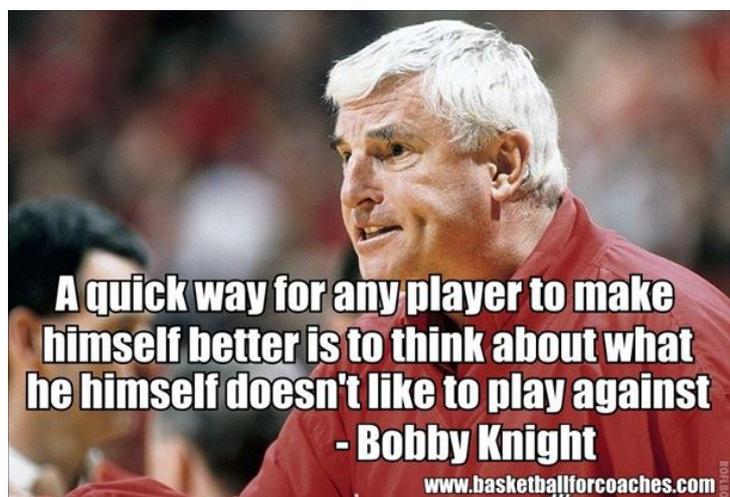
“The single most important aspect of coaching is running effective practices” – Bob Knight

“The key is not the ‘will to win’... everybody has that. It is the will to prepare to win that is important” – Bob Knight

“You don’t play against opponents; you play against the game of basketball” – Bob Knight

“The goal is to make practice more difficult, physically/mentally, than anything your players will face during a game” – Bob Knight

“Basketball is a full court game, so every drill must be done full court” – Bob Knight



"I always designed my practice plans the night before and then made tweaks a few hours before practice began" – Bob Knight

"I hate casual shooting. Every shot is preceded by working to get open and catch and shoot under game like conditions" – Bob Knight

"What is the best thing you can do in a close game? Drive to the basket and put pressure on the defense! Not jack up jump shots" – Bob Knight

"Passing is your best weapon against man to man. Dribble penetration is your best weapon against zone" – Bob Knight

"Players must be able to carry out simple instructions from the bench to the court. If they can't, then they can't play" – Bob Knight

"Discipline is doing what has to be done, when it has to be done, as well as it can be done, and doing it that way all the time" – Bob Knight

"I just love the game of basketball so much. The game! I don't need the 18,000 people screaming and all the peripheral things. To me, the most enjoyable part is the practice and preparation" – Bob Knight

"Mental is to the physical as four is to one" – Bob Knight

"Offense is not equal opportunity" – Bob Knight

"Perform drills that force your players to think" – Bob Knight

"I sit and wonder why no one uses the shot fake. The shot fake, when used correctly, can eliminate a defender" – Bob Knight

"Coaches shouldn't have to push you to work hard, you should push yourself to work hard because you want to be a great player" – Bob Knight

"A quick way for any player to make himself better is to think about what he himself doesn't like to play against" – Bob Knight

"Good basketball always starts with good defense!" – Bob Knight

"My practices were not set up to be easy or enjoyed" – Bob Knight

"In order to achieve to achieve positive results, one must work for them, not hope for them" – Bob Knight

"Defense is all about helping. No one can guard a good dribbler, You have to walk kids through how to help and then how to help the helper" – Bob Knight

Brad Stevens Basketball Quotes

"The key is to maintain an evenness. Try to play one possession at a time, regardless of what happened on the last possession" – Brad Stevens

"You have a choice to make when you're not playing. Either you're invested and a great teammate, or your not" – Brad Stevens

"The game honors toughness" – Brad Stevens

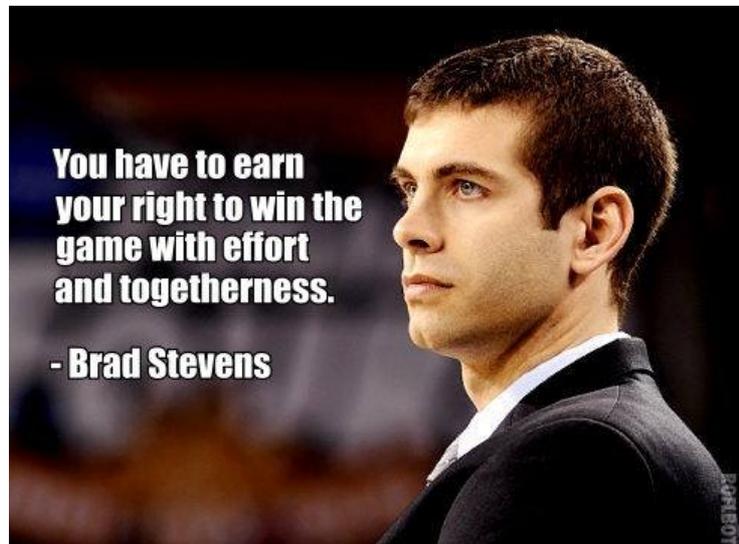
"We're building a culture of accountability, trust, and togetherness. Entitlement will not be tolerated" – Brad Stevens

"The difference between a good defensive team and a bad defensive team is as little as three possessions" – Brad Stevens

"You have to earn your right to win the game with effort and togetherness" – Brad Stevens

"How good can we expect to be if our best player is not our best teammate" – Brad Stevens

"My goal is to win the next game one possession at a time. That's it. I don't have any other goals" – Brad Stevens



Dean Smith Basketball Quotes

"You should always sub a player out when you see them not going full speed or they're playing selfish basketball" – Dean Smith

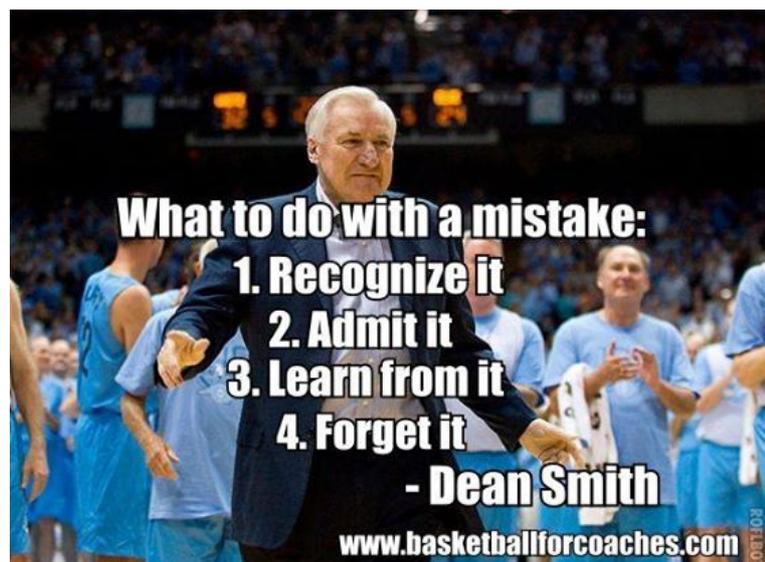
"What do you do with a mistake: recognize it, admit it, learn from it, forget it" – Dean Smith

"I always mean what I say, but I don't always say what I'm thinking" – Dean Smith

"I would never recruit a player who yells at his teammates, disrespected his high school coach, or scores 33 points a game and his team goes 10-10" – Dean Smith

"One player's selfish attitude can poison a locker room and make it hard, if not impossible, to establish team work" – Dean Smith

"There is a lot of basketball beyond our control, but a player should never let anyone try



harder than he does” – Dean Smith

*“Basketball is a beautiful game when the five players on the court play with one heartbeat”
– Dean Smith*

“If you make every game a life and death proposition, you’re going to have problems. For one thing, you’ll be dead a lot” – Dean Smith

“Basketball is a team game. But that doesn’t mean all five players should take the same amount of shots” – Dean Smith

“One player’s selfish attitude can poison the locker room and make it hard, if not impossible, to establish teamwork” – Dean Smith

“Over coaching is the worst thing you can do to a player”– Dean Smith

“Only praise behavior that you want to be repeated. Never use false praise” – Dean Smith

“Praise behaviour that you want repeated” – Dean Smith

Doc Rivers Basketball Quotes

“Sometimes you will hate me because I will tell you the truth about your game. And the truth can hurt/humble you” – Doc Rivers

“Encourage ‘random’ picks on the ball because they cannot be scouted” – Doc Rivers

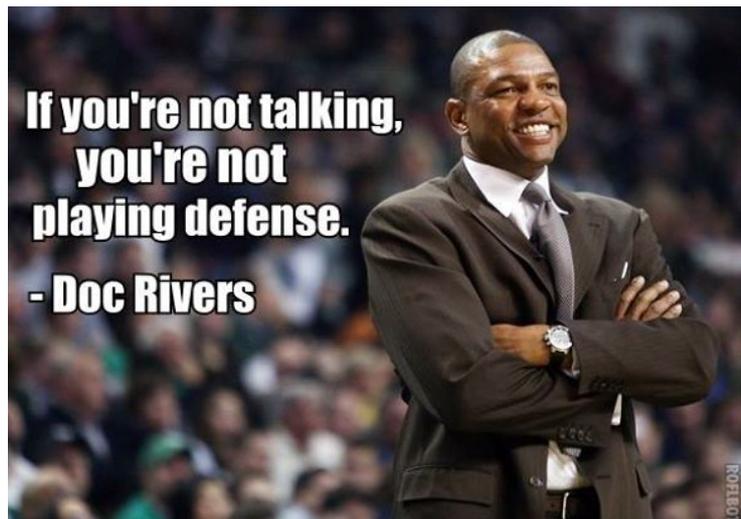
“I’m looking for activity. I put players in and take them out based on effort and defense, not making or missing shots” – Doc Rivers

“Do you want to choose winning over standing out? It’s a choice every player on every championship team has to do” – Doc Rivers

“If you’re not talking, you’re not playing defense” – Doc Rivers

“Good players want to be coached... Great players want to be told the truth”– Doc Rivers

“How competitive can you be without losing your discipline?” – Doc Rivers

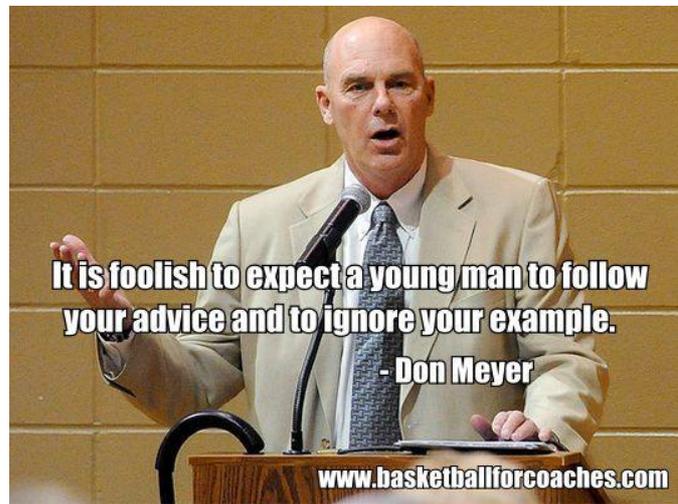


Don Meyer Basketball Quotes

"You can pick captains, but you can't pick leaders. Whoever controls the locker room controls the team" – Don Meyer

"Positioning, anticipation and technique create quickness. Therefore, you can always get quicker" – Don Meyer

"Plays are not as important as players, and players are not as important as teammates" – Don Meyer



"I have learned that peace is not the absence of trial, trouble, or torment but the presence of calm in the midst of them" – Coach Don Meyer

"If you want to thank me, go do something for somebody else" – Don Meyer

"Sometimes the best recruits are the ones you don't get" – Don Meyer

"Recognize and reward players who put the team first, not just the gifted ones" – Don Meyer

"Practice shared suffering. If one guy messes up, everyone runs. If one guy does well, everyone benefits" – Don Meyer

"Discover your gift, develop your gift, and then give it away every day" – Don Meyer

"There's only one thing we can control, and that is how hard we play" – Don Meyer

"It doesn't cost nothing to be nice to people" – Don Meyer

"It doesn't matter where you coach, it's why you coach" – Don Meyer

"Play off your great player... great teams have a go-to player and they play off of him" – Don Meyer

"It is not what you teach, but what you emphasize" – Don Meyer

"Your program must have an overriding purpose which is clearly visible and which teaches lessons beyond winning" – Don Meyer

"Shout praise and whisper criticism" – Don Meyer

"You can have discipline and be demanding without being demeaning" – Don Meyer

"When you watch the game, be a student of the game" – Don Meyer

"Some parents would rather have their son get all-state than his team win the state championship" – Don Meyer

"Make the practices like games and the games like practices" – Don Meyer

“You never realize the value of coaching until your children play for a coach”– Don Meyer

“In the end, what your own troops do is more important than who they are marching against” – Don Meyer

“It is foolish to expect a young man to follow your advice and to ignore your example”– Don Meyer

“Players who are late are saying that their time is more important than the team”– Don Meyer

“Simplify the game as much as possible. When you add, you must subtract”– Don Meyer

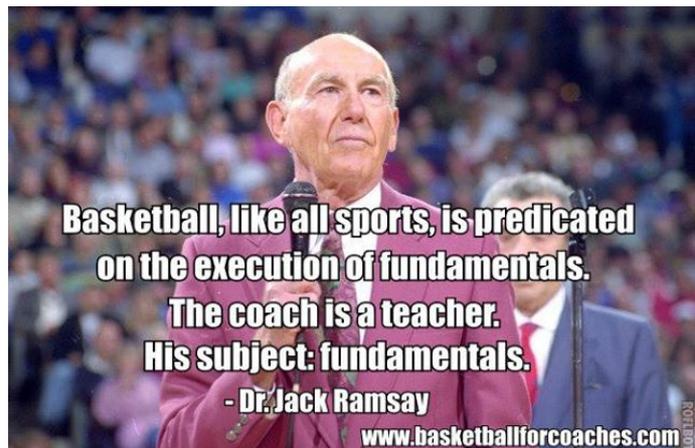
“Successful programs consist of people working hard, working together, while never worrying about who gets the credit” – Don Meyer

“Anytime you get an award as a coach, you’ve got to be the ultimate fool to think it wasn’t your assistant coaches and all the players responsible for the award” – Don Meyer

“The worst day coaching is better than the best day doing anything else”– Coach Meyer

Dr. Jack Ramsay Basketball Quotes

“Basketball, like all sports, is predicated on the execution of fundamentals. The coach is a teacher. His subject: fundamentals” – Dr Jack Ramsay



“Teams that play together beat those teams with superior players who play more as individuals” – Dr. Jack Ramsay

“Even the greatest players accept coaching and value the need for discipline and the order that it brings to the team” – Dr. Jack Ramsay

“I believe you win games by what you do from your first practice until your first game”– Dr. Jack Ramsay

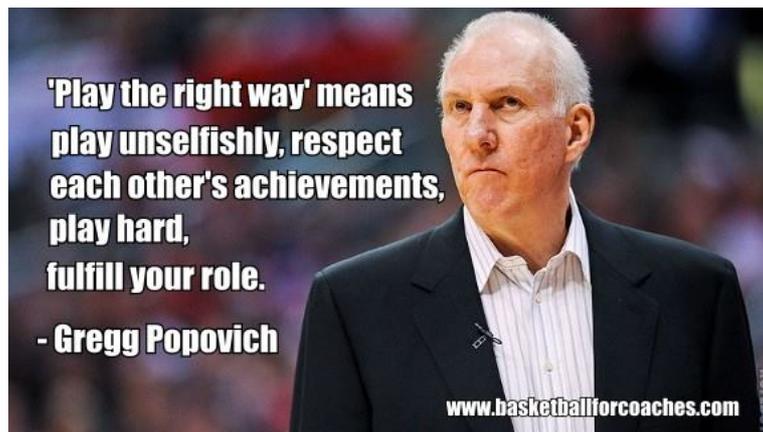
“Players draw confidence from a poised, alert coach who anticipates changing in game conditions” – Dr. Jack Ramsay

“The highest level of achievement is attained by the teams with the best conditioned players” – Dr. Jack Ramsay

“A key basketball skill is imagery. The best players “see” situations before they happen so they can be prepared” – Dr. Jack Ramsay

“Winning is more related to good defense than good offense”– Dr. Jack Ramsay

Gregg Popovich Basketball Quotes



"It's not about any one person. You've got to get over yourself and realize that it takes a group to get this thing done" – Gregg Popovich

"'Play the right way' means play unselfishly, respect each other's achievements, play hard, fulfill your role" – Gregg Popovich

"I can't make every decision for you. I don't have 14 timeouts. You guys got to get together and talk" – Gregg Popovich

"Stop by stop by stop. Play aggressively. Sprint back on 'D' and pay attention to how we're supposed to guard as a team" – Gregg Popovich

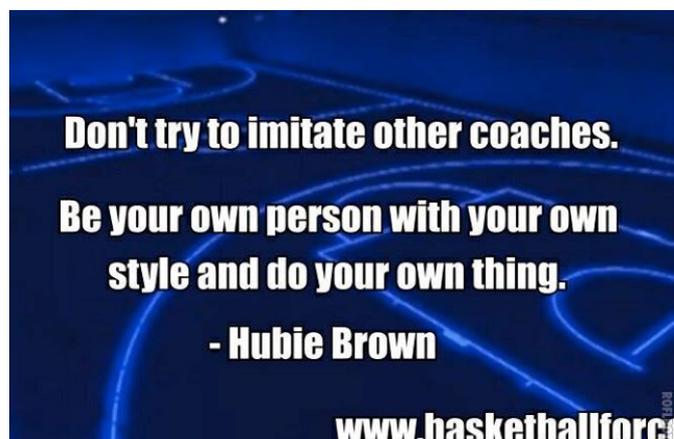
"We believe in people executing their role and caring about the team more than anything individually" – Gregg Popovich

"No one is bigger than the team. If you can't do things our way, you're not getting time here and we don't care who you are" – Gregg Popovich

Hubie Brown Basketball Quotes

"X & O's aren't worth a damn without a team. If your team isn't with you it doesn't matter what you draw up. The team must respect what the coach is asking them to do" – Hubie Brown

"Winning teams at the NBA level, the college level, and the high school level all play team basketball. Championship teams have 5 players on the same page at all times" – Hubie Brown



"Don't try to imitate other coaches. Be your own person with your own style and do your own thing" – Hubie Brown

"The greatest sin a coach can commit is to allow kids to slide by. This goes for the classroom as well as the court" – Hubie Brown

"Use different basketball offensive alignments to cause confusion for the other team" – Hubie Brown

"If something works for another school, use it. Don't act like you are too good to use other ideas" – Hubie Brown

Jeff Van Gundy Basketball Quotes

"Your decisions reveal your priorities"
– Jeff Van Gundy

"Your best player has to set a tone of intolerance for anything that gets in the way of winning" – Jeff Van Gundy

"Just concentrate on what you're supposed to do" – Jeff Van Gundy

"Shooting percentage is just as much about decision making as it is about technique" – Jeff Van Gundy

"Your best players have to unite and inspire the group... otherwise, they'll divide the group"
– Jeff Van Gundy

"I think coaches sometimes foul their own players out of game by benching them too long when in foul trouble" – Jeff Van Gundy

"Players with high character get better. Players with a serious approach get better. The fools never get better" – Jeff Van Gundy

"You need your best players to play their best when their best is needed" – Jeff van Gundy

"Don't worry about being cool. Worry about being the best" – Jeff Van Gundy

"The best teams play for each other, not with each other" – Jeff Van Gundy

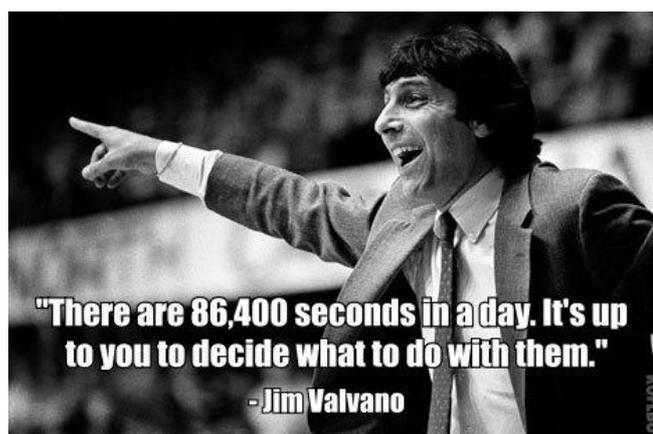


Jim Valvano Basketball Quotes

"Other people go to the office. I get to coach. I know I've been blessed" – Jim Valvano

"A person really doesn't become whole, until he becomes a part of something that's bigger than himself" – Jim Valvano

"To go from where you are to where you want to be: you have to have a dream, a goal, and you have to be willing to



work for it” – Jim Valvano

“Never give up. Failure and rejection are just the first steps to succeeding”– Jim Valvano

“Be a dreamer. If you don’t know how to dream, you’re dead”– Jim Valvano

“All really successful coaches have a system”– Jim Valvano

“If you laugh, you think, and you cry, that’s a full day. That’s a heck of a day. You do that seven days a week, you’re going to have something special” – Jim Valvano

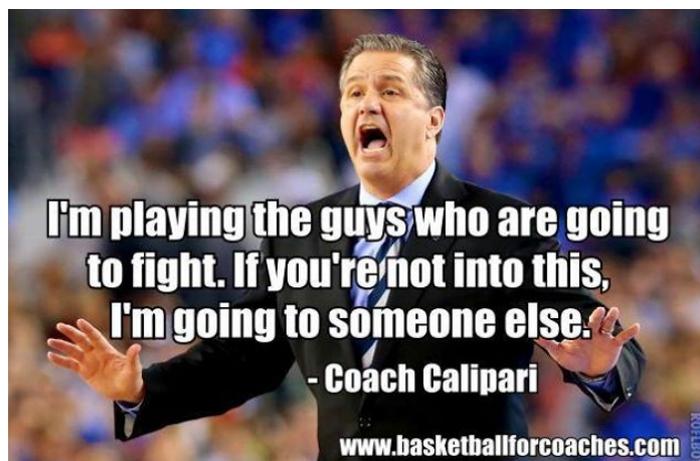
“There are 86,400 seconds in a day. It’s up to you to decide what to do with them”– Jim Valvano

John Calipari Basketball Quotes

“What type of teammates do you want to play with? Be that teammate yourself” – John Calipari

“I’m playing the guys who are going to fight. If you’re not into this, I’m going to someone else” – Coach Calipari

“You have to lose yourself in the team and you have to lose yourself in the game” – John Calipari



“If I walk in a home and a kid disrespects a woman, his mother or grandmother, then I am out... I wont recruit them” – John Calipari

“Practice gotta be harder than the games and it never is unless you want it to be as a player. The coach can’t drive that” – John Calipari

“It’s not just about working hard, it’s about working together. You have to care more about the team than you do about yourself” – John Calipari

“You understand, you do not invent stuff on this team. Guys that invent stuff will not play for me. Make the easy play” – John Calipari

“What do you do to help us win when you’re not scoring baskets?”– John Calipari

John Wooden Basketball Quotes

"The most important key to achieving great success is to decide upon your goal and launch, get started, take action, move" – John Wooden

"When the legs go, the heart soon follows" – John Wooden

"Young men need more models, not critics" – John Wooden

*"1. Be on time.
2. Never criticize a teammate.
3. Never use profanity" – John Wooden*

"You'd like to see your team reasonably happy, but that's not your job. Gain their respect and get them to accept their roles" – John Wooden

"I do not judge success based on championships; rather, I judge it on how close we came to realizing our potential" – John Wooden

"My philosophy of defense is to keep the pressure on an opponent until you get to his emotions" – John Wooden

"The more concerned we become over the things we can't control, the less we will do with the things we can control" – John Wooden

"A coach must never forget that he is a leader and not merely a person with authority" – John Wooden

"Remember this, the choices you make in life, make you" – John Wooden

"What you are as a person is far more important than what you are as a basketball player" – John Wooden

"The better conditioned team will probably win in the long run" – John Wooden

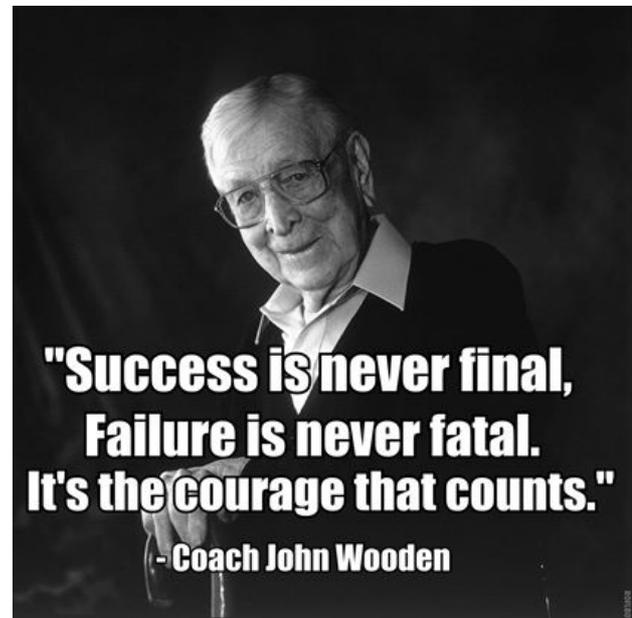
"I continually stress to my players that all I expect from them at practice and in the games is their maximum effort" – John Wooden

"I found the bench to be the greatest ally when I had to make individuals comply with what was best for the team" – John Wooden

"The best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother" – John Wooden

"Push yourself to keep improving or you'll stay as close to the bottom as you are to the top" – John Wooden

"I would spend almost as much time planning a practice as conducting it. Everything was planned out each day" – John Wooden



“Be quick without hurrying” – John Wooden

“It’s important to keep trying to do what you think is right no matter how hard it is or how often you fail. Never stop trying” – John Wooden

“When opportunity comes, it’s too late to prepare” – John Wooden

“Let me give so much time to the improvement of myself that I shall have no time to criticize others” – John Wooden

“Don’t measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but by what you should have accomplished with your ability” – John Wooden

“A coach is someone who can give correction without causing resentment” – John Wooden

“A player who makes a team great is better than a great player” – John Wooden

“The best competition I have is against myself to become better” – John Wooden

“Seek opportunities to show you care. The smallest gestures often make the biggest difference” – John Wooden

“You discipline those under your supervision to correct, to help, and to improve. Not to punish” – John Wooden

“You can’t let praise or criticism get to you. It’s a weakness to get caught up in either one” – John Wooden

“Discipline yourself, and others won’t need to” – John Wooden

“The main ingredient of stardom is the rest of the team” – John Wooden

“The true athlete should have character, not be a character” – John Wooden

“Confidence comes from being prepared” – John Wooden

“If you’re not making mistakes, then you’re not doing anything. I’m positive that a doer makes mistakes” – John Wooden

“Leaders are interested in finding the best way rather than having their own way” – John Wooden

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Basketball Quotes

“When you’re a coach you’ve got to go up the ladder, you’ve got to be ready to travel. That’s the nature of coaching” – Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

“Great players are willing to give up their own personal achievement for the achievement of the group. It enhances everybody” – Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

“As a parent, I have a job as a role model to my children, and by extension, to other young people” – Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

“One man can be a crucial ingredient on a team, but one man cannot make a team” – Kareem Abdul Jabbar

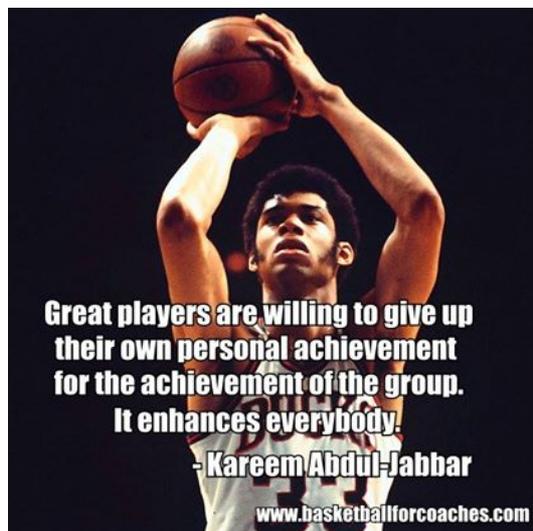
“The extra pass and the extra effort on defense always get the job done” – Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

“You have to be able to center yourself, to let all of your emotions go. Don’t ever forget that you play with your soul as well as your body” – Kareem Abdul Jabbar

“I tell kids to pursue their basketball dreams, but I tell them not to let that be their only dream” – Kareem Abdul Jabbar

“I try to do the right thing at the right time. They may just be little things, but usually they make the difference between winning and losing” – Kareem Abdul Jabbar

“It’s OK to make mistakes. That’s how we learn. When we compete, we make mistakes” – Kareem Abdul-Jabbar



Kevin Eastman Basketball Quotes

“It takes three things to be a ‘special’ player: talent, character, and competitive fire” – Kevin Eastman

“The pass is a very powerful team builder; whereas the dribble can destroy the spirit of teams and crack the foundation of team play” – Kevin Eastman

“Cutting is so important to great offense. Players must understand that every cut you make is not always for you. Hard cuts often get others open” – Kevin Eastman

“Put great thought to what and how you practice. Once practice is done you can never get that time back. Did you simulate the game?” – Kevin Eastman



“Most important ingredient to winning: no personal agendas. The commitment has to be ‘us’ driven not ‘me’ driven” – Kevin Eastman

“There is a direct correlation between the number of ball reversals and defensive breakdowns” – Kevin Eastman

“Coaching is making players do what they don’t want to do so they can become the player they want to become” – Kevin Eastman

“To be a great teacher of the game you must study the game; know your craft & be proud of your knowledge; but never satisfied with your knowledge” – Kevin Eastman

“Interesting thing about the best leaders is that they immerse themselves in both teaching and learning. Growth comes by both” – Kevin Eastman

“If you give shooters the right to shoot, you must give them the right to miss”– Kevin Eastman

Larry Bird Basketball Quotes

“Leadership is diving for a loose ball. It’s about being able to take it as well as dish it out. That’s the only way your going to get respect from other players” – Larry Bird

“Practice habits were crucial to my development in basketball. I didn’t play against the toughest competition in high school, but one reason I was able to do well in college was that I mastered the fundamentals. You’ve got to have them down before you can even think about playing” – Larry Bird

“I don’t know if I practiced more than anybody, but I sure practiced enough. I still wonder if somebody – somewhere – was practicing more than me” – Larry Bird

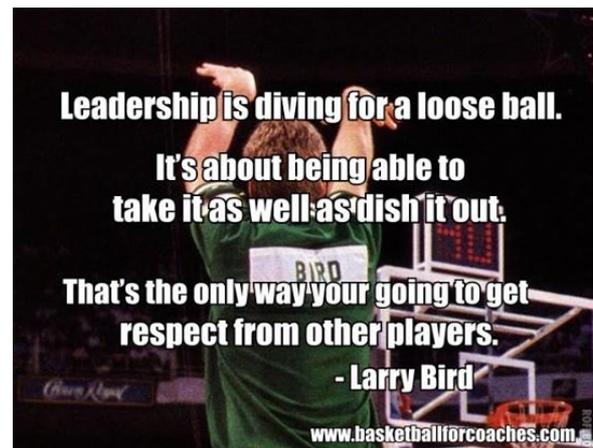
“Push yourself again and again. Don’t give an inch until the final buzzer sounds”– Larry Bird

“When I was young, I never wanted to leave the court until I got things exactly correct. My dream was to become a pro” – Larry Bird

“It doesn’t matter who scores the points. It’s who gets the ball to the scorer”– Larry Bird

“Once you are labeled ‘the best’ you want to stay up there, and you can’t do it by loafing around” – Larry Bird

“I’ve got a theory that if you give 100 percent all of the time, somehow things will work out in the end” – Larry Bird



“Coaches can talk and talk and talk about something, but if you get it on tape and show it to them, it is so much more effective” – Larry Bird

“Don’t let winning make you soft. Don’t let losing make you quit. Don’t let your teammates down in any situation” – Larry Bird

“There are many times when you are better off practicing than playing; but most people just don’t understand that” – Larry Bird

Larry Brown Basketball Quotes

“Failure does not come from losing, but from not trying” – Larry Brown

“The point guard is there to serve others; to keep them involved and organised” – Larry Brown

“As a coach, I feel if you can get your players to play hard and together on the defensive end, they will automatically be unselfish at the offensive end” – Larry Brown

“I feel all great teams have two things in common: defense and rebounding.

So, we stress defense and rebounding every day as the most important aspects in the game to win” – Larry Brown

“Kids today don’t know the difference between instruction and criticism” – Larry Brown

“All the successful teams I’ve ever seen have 3 characteristics: They play unselfish, they play together, and they play hard” – Larry Brown



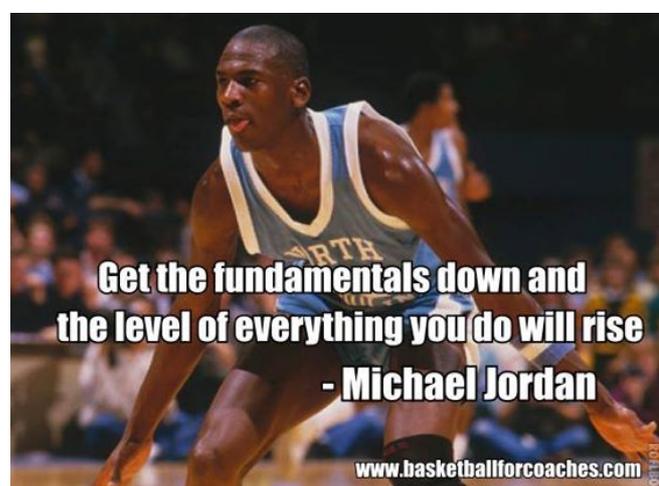
Michael Jordan Basketball Quotes

“Limits, like fears, are often just an illusion” – Michael Jordan

“I’m a firm believer in goal setting. Step by step. I can’t see any other way of accomplishing anything” – Michael Jordan

“Get the fundamentals down and the level of everything you do will rise” – Michael Jordan

“Accept a loss as a learning experience, and never point fingers at your teammates” – Michael Jordan



“Success doesn’t stop when you get there” – Michael Jordan

“If you’re trying to achieve, there will be roadblocks. I’ve had them; everybody has had them” – Michael Jordan

“There have been times when I have failed. But there have never been times when I thought I would fail” – Michael Jordan

“Being afraid on the court means you’re not confident of your skills”– Michael Jordan

“I don’t do things half-heartedly. Because I know if I do, then I can expect half-hearted results” – Michael Jordan

“Heart is what separates the good from the great” – Michael Jordan

“If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it” – Michael Jordan

“I’m not out there sweating for 3 hrs just to find out what it’s like to sweat”– Michael Jordan

“If it turns out that my best wasn’t good enough, at least I won’t look back and say that I was afraid to try” – Michael Jordan

“Sometimes, things may not go your way, but the effort should be there every single night” – Michael Jordan

“You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them”– Michael Jordan

Mike Krzyzewski Basketball Quotes

“Defense is one man guarding the ball and four others helping him” – Mike Krzyzewski

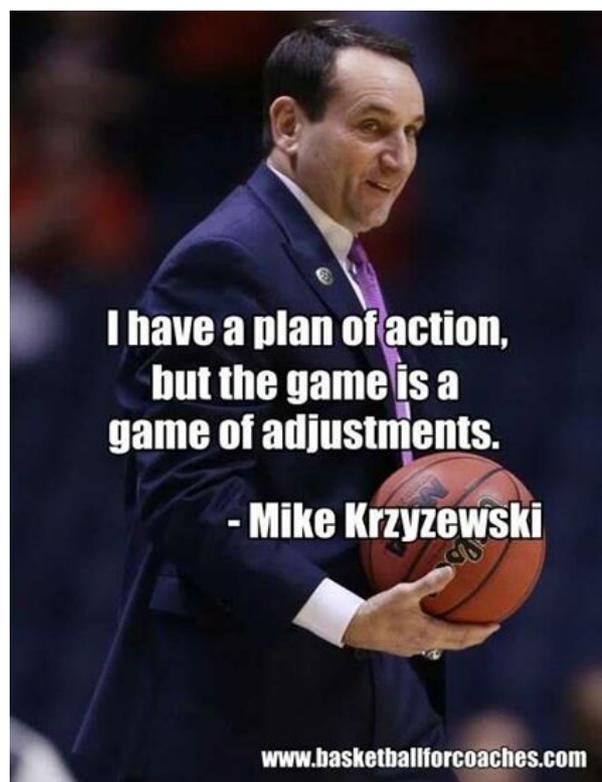
“Everyone wants to be on a team. They want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. They want to be in a situation where they feel that they are doing something for the greater good” – Mike Krzyzewski

“I’m looking for players who make their teammates better. You do that with enthusiasm and passion” – Mike Krzyzewski

“Everybody wants to take responsibility when you win, but when you fail, all these fingers are pointing” – Mike Krzyzewski

“Every season is a journey. Every journey is a lifetime” – Mike Krzyzewski

“A common mistake among those who work in sport is spending a disproportional amount



of time on “x’s and o’s” as compared to time spent learning about people” – Mike Krzyzewski

“In developing teams, I don’t believe in rules. I believe in standards. Rules don’t promote teamwork, standards do” – Mike Krzyzewski

“If what you have did yesterday still looks big to you... You haven’t done much today”– Mike Krzyzewski

“When you win, sometimes it overshadows a poor performance”– Mike Krzyzewski

“I have a plan of action, but the game is a game of adjustments”– Mike Krzyzewski

“Play and practice like you are trying to make the team”– Mike Krzyzewski

“Champions play as they practice. Create a consistency of excellence in all your habits”– Mike Krzyzewski

“Don’t confuse your path with your destination. Just because its stormy now doesn’t mean you aren’t headed for sunshine” – Mike Krzyzewski

“Effort is fully replenishable. There is no need to save any of it. Leave every bit you have on the playing field” – Mike Krzyzewski

“You don’t just be a team. You become a team. Through tough games you find that you need each other” – Mike Krzyzewski

“The thing I love the most about teaching, is that you can connect with and see an individual or group exceed their limits” – Mike Krzyzewski

“Goals should be realistic, attainable, and shared among all members of the team”– Mike Krzyzewski

“Teamwork is the beauty of our sport, where you have five acting as one”– Mike Krzyzewski

“Believe that the loose ball that you are chasing has your name wirtten on it”– Mike Krzyzewski

“If a team cannot perform with excellence at a moment’s notice, they probably will fail in the long run” – Mike Krzyzewski

“There are 5 fundamental qualities that make every team great: communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring, and pride” – Mike Krzyzewski

“I don’t look at myself as a basketball coach. I look at myself as a leader who happens to coach basketball” – Mike Krzyzewski

“I have a rule on my team: when we talk to one another, we look each other right in the eye, because I think it’s tough to lie to somebody. You give respect to somebody” – Mike Krzyzewski

“Footwork is one of the primary prerequisites to becoming a great player” – Mike

Krzyzewski

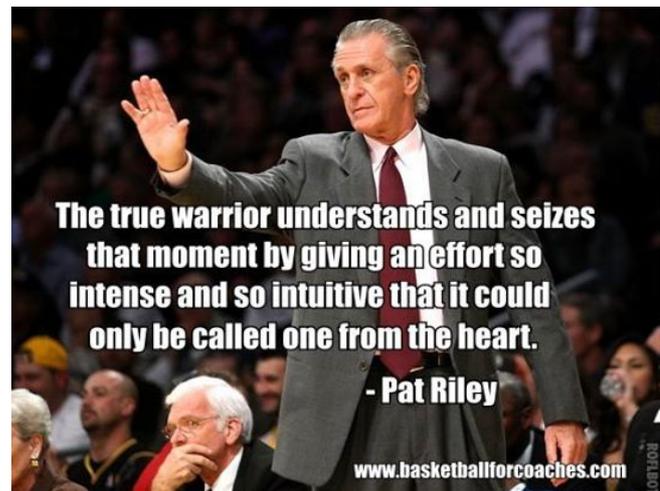
“Each group and each youngster is different. As a leader or coach, you get to know what they need” – Mike Krzyzewski

“If the only reason I coached was to win basketball games, my life would be pretty shallow” – Mike Krzyzewski

Pat Riley Basketball Quotes

“Great players and great teams want to be driven. They want to be pushed to the edge. They don’t want to be cheated. Ordinary players and average teams want it to be easy” – Pat Riley

“The true warrior understands and seizes that moment by giving an effort so intense and so intuitive that it could only be called one from the heart” – Pat Riley



“Great teamwork is the only way we create the breakthroughs that define our careers” – Pat Riley

“In all the research you do as a coach, studying other coaches and championship-type situations, you find that all those teams combined talent with great defense. You’ve got to stop other teams to win” – Pat Riley

“It’s what you get from games you lose that is extremely important” – Pat Riley

“No rebounds – no rings” – Pat Riley

“If you get tough mentally, you can get tough physically and overcome fatigue” – Pat Riley

“Great effort springs naturally from a great attitude” – Pat Riley

“Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better” – Pat Riley

“To have long-term success as a coach or in any position of leadership, you have to be obsessed in some way” – Pat Riley

“There are only two options regarding commitment... you’re either in or you’re out. There’s no such thing as life in-between” – Pat Riley

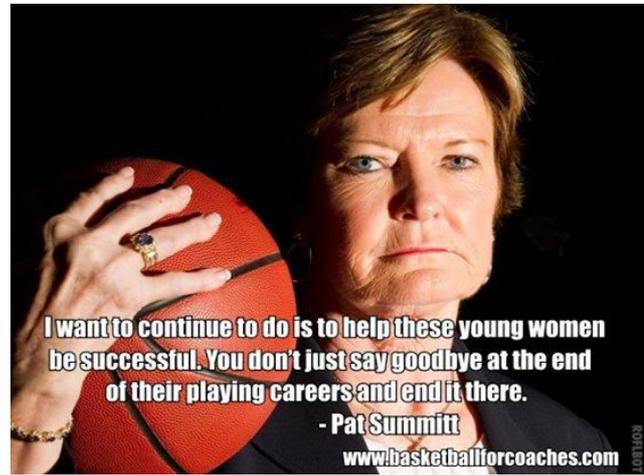
“Never be ready to play yesterday. Being ready to play today is what’s important” – Pat Riley

Pat Summitt Basketball Quotes

"I want to continue to do is to help these young women be successful. You don't just say goodbye at the end of their playing careers and end it there" – Pat Summitt

"You can't always be the most talented person in the room. But you can be the most competitive" – Pat Summitt

"Admit to and make yourself accountable for mistakes. How can you improve if you're never wrong?" – Pat Summitt



"We communicate all the time, even when we don't realize it. Be aware of body language"– Pat Summitt

"Discipline is the only sure way I know to convince people to believe in themselves"– Pat Summitt

"Teamwork doesn't come naturally. It must be taught" – Pat Summitt

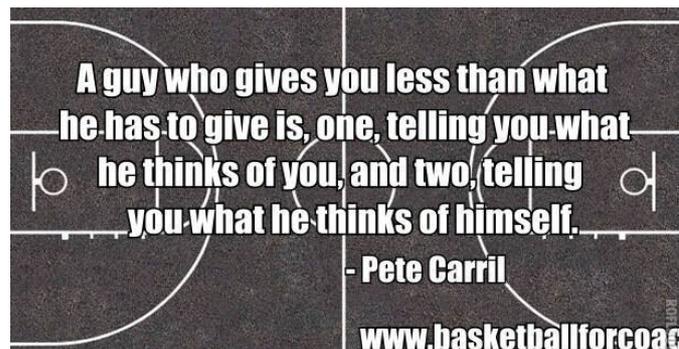
"Confidence is what happens when you've done the hard work that entitles you to succeed" – Pat Summitt

"Sometimes you learn more from losing than winning. Losing forces you to reexamine"– Pat Summitt

Pete Carril Basketball Quotes

"I don't recruit players who are nasty to their parents. I look for players who realize the world doesn't revolve around them" – Pete Carril

"A guy who gives you less than what he has to give is, one, telling you what he thinks of you, and two, telling you what he thinks of himself" – Pete Carril



"Coaches win practices, players win games"– Pete Carril

"Bad shooters are always open" – Pete Carril

"The quality of the pass leads directly to the quality of the shot"– Pete Carril

"Get the kids to understand that they shouldn't worry about who makes the shot, only whether or not the shot is made" – Pete Carril

"The two ingredients for success in basketball are playing hard and playing intelligently"– Pete Carril

Phil Jackson Basketball Quotes

"You can't force your will on people. If you want them to act differently, you need to inspire them to change themselves" – Phil Jackson

"I thrive on challenges, and there is no more imposing challenge for someone in my profession than winning an NBA title" – Phil Jackson

"Always keep an open mind and a compassionate heart" – Phil Jackson

"Once you've done the mental work, there comes a point where you have to throw yourself into the action and put your heart on the line" – Phil Jackson

"Maturity begins to grow when you can sense your concern for others out-weighting your concern for yourself" – Phil Jackson

"Winning is important to me, but what brings me real joy is the experience of being fully engaged in whatever I'm doing" – Phil Jackson

"Basketball is a simple game. Your goal is penetration, get the ball close to the basket, and there are three ways to do that. Pass, dribble and offensive rebound" – Phil Jackson

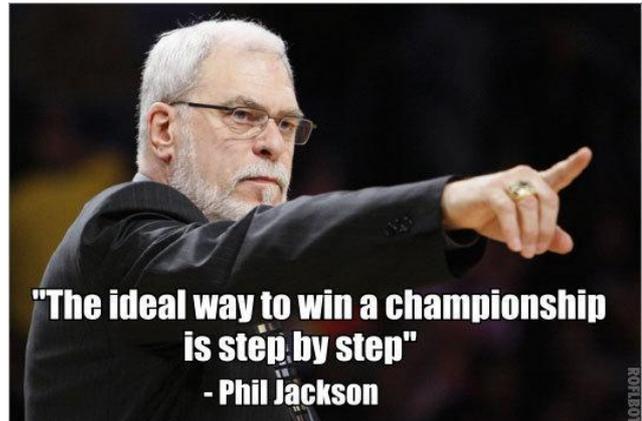
"Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the Me for the We" – Phil Jackson

"Not only is there more to life than basketball, there's a lot more to basketball than basketball" – Phil Jackson

"Basketball is a sport that involves the subtle interweaving of players at full speed to the point where they are thinking and moving as one" – Phil Jackson

"In basketball — as in life — true joy comes from being fully present in each and every moment, not just when things are going your way" – Phil Jackson

"The greatness of Michael Jordan is his competitive drive. The weakness of Michael Jordan is his competitive drive" – Phil Jackson



Red Auerbach Basketball Quotes

“Basketball is like war in that offensive weapons are developed first, and it always takes a while for the defense to catch up” – Red Auerbach

“You don’t win games as a coach during games. You win games as a coach before games. Players win during games, not coaches” – Red Auerbach

“Everyone is born with a certain potential. You may never achieve your full potential, but how close you come depends on how much you’re willing to pay the price” – Red Auerbach

“I can’t stand a ballplayer who plays in fear. Any fellow who has a good shot has got to take it and keep taking it. So he misses – so what?” – Red Auerbach

“It’s not what you tell them, it’s what they hear” – Red Auerbach

“Be and look prepared. Be a man on integrity. Never break your word. Don’t have two sets of standards. Stand up for your players. Show them you care on and off the court” – Red Auerbach

“The coach should be the absolute boss, but he still should maintain an open mind” – Red Auerbach

“I don’t believe in statistics. There are too many factors that can’t be measured. You can’t measure a ballplayer’s heart” – Red Auerbach

“Some say you have to use your five best players, but I found out you win with the five that fit together best as a team” – Red Auerbach



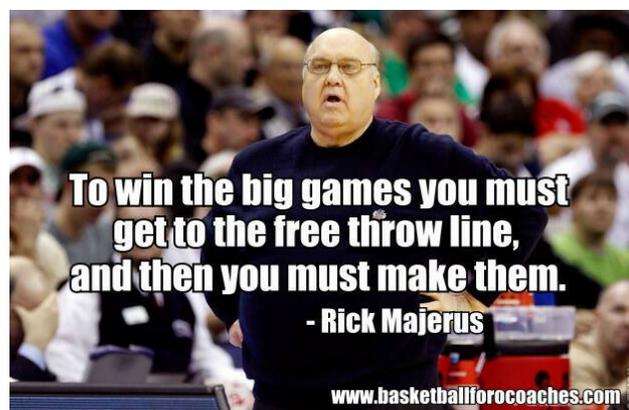
Rick Majerus Basketball Quotes

“Most lay-ups and two foot jump shots around the goal are missed by not putting the ball up high enough on the backboard” – Rick Majerus

“To win the big games you must get to the free throw line, and then you must make them” – Rick Majerus

“One of the biggest reasons I like coaching college ball is the kids. I feel I can impact players’ lives” – Rick Majerus

“Switch if you have to! It’s not the mismatch that beats you, it’s the open shot!” – Rick Majerus



“My players on defense must have a hand-up on every shot. If not, they run sprints”– Rick Majerus

“Those to whom defense is not important will have the best seat in the game”– Rick Majerus

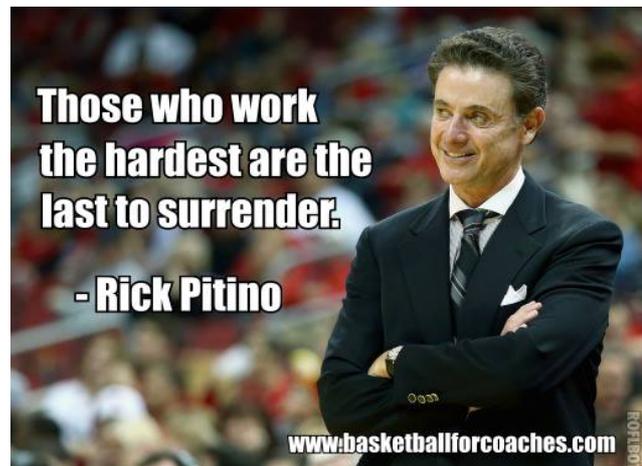
“If you want to have a lot of success, you need to have a lot of failure”– Rick Majerus

Rick Pitino Basketball Quotes

“Failure is good. It’s fertilizer. Everything I’ve learned about coaching, I’ve learned from making mistakes” – Rick Pitino

“If you are not willing to work hard and establish discipline in your life, then all your dreams are merely pipe dreams” – Rick Pitino

“Set higher standards for your own performance than anyone else around you, and your only competition will be with yourself” – Rick Pitino



“The basic premise of my system is to fatigue your opponents with constant pressure defensively and constant movement offensively” – Rick Pitino

“Success is determined by your daily choices and habits” – Rick Pitino

“Excellence is the unlimited ability to improve the quality of what you have to offer”– Rick Pitino

“Learning what not to do is sometimes more important than learning what to do”– Rick Pitino

“True motivation is not getting people to play to their potential. It’s getting people to play beyond their potential” – Rick Pitino

“The key to coaching is not what you do, but the way you do it. The intangibles, the motivational parts of the game are the most important facets of it” – Rick Pitino

“Inferior guards play on the sidelines and great guards play in the middle. Isiah, Magic, Chris Paul, all get to the middle” – Rick Pitino

“It’s better to have a good player with the basketball in late game situations than to have plays” – Rick Pitino

“The more you lose, the more positive you have to become. When you’re winning, you can ride players harder because their self-esteem is high. If you are losing and you try to be tough, you’re asking for dissension” – Rick Pitino

“Long term success is a direct result of what you achieve everyday. Goals provide your daily routine” – Rick Pitino

“Don’t coach mad” – Rick Pitino

Tim Grover Basketball Quotes

“No trainer or coach or expert can make you good or great or unstoppable if you’re not going to do the work” – Tim Grover

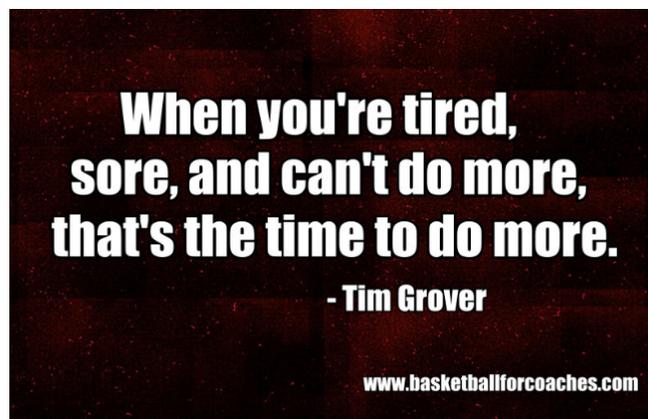
“Success isn’t the same as talent. The world is full of incredibly talented people who never succeed at anything” – Tim Grover

“Mental toughness is believing, without a doubt, that whatever happens, you got this” – Tim Grover

“Bottom line – if you want success of any kind; you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable” – Tim Grover

“When you’re tired, sore, and can’t do more, that’s the time to do more” – Tim Grover

“Success isn’t the same as talent. The world is full of incredibly talented people who never succeed at anything” – Tim Grover



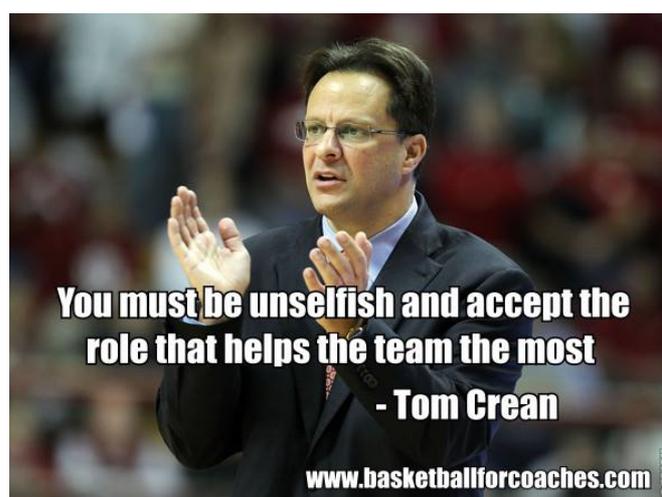
Tom Crean Basketball Quotes

“One of the biggest keys to offense is eliminating the weakside help that allows defenders to stop penetration from the wing” – Tom Crean

“You’ve got to get a toughness and a level of basketball IQ that matchup because that’s what the best teams have” – Tom Crean

“Never let fundamentals and building skills take a backseat to game planning. Game plans win games. Fundamentals win championships” – Tom Crean

“Players that learn the value of hard work, commitment, teamwork, and sacrifice are the ones that make their teams great” – Tom Crean



“As a coach, I’m never going to do anything to embarrass you. As a player, you can never do anything to embarrass the program” – Tom Crean

“You must be unselfish and accept the role that helps the team the most” – Tom Crean

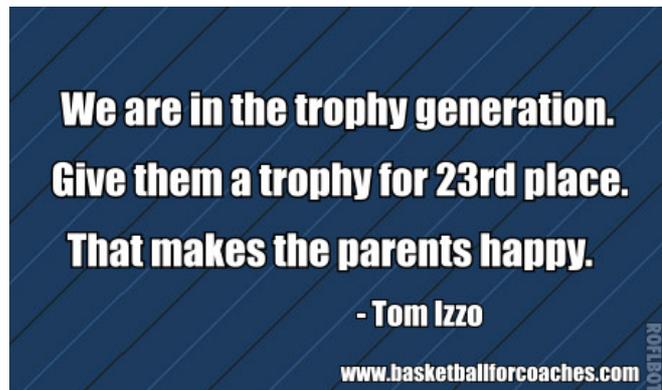
“Not talking on the floor is the least recognized form of selfishness but maybe the most dangerous to your team having success” – Tom Crean

Tom Izzo Basketball Quotes

“I haven’t always recruited for the best talent. I’ve taken a few guys who would fit for different reasons. Leadership. Toughness” – Tom Izzo

“Today’s society wants to skip the process. And I hate that” – Tom Izzo

“We are in the trophy generation. Give them a trophy for 23rd place. That makes the parents happy” – Tom Izzo



“We want men here, not just players. Players are a dime a dozen” – Tom Izzo

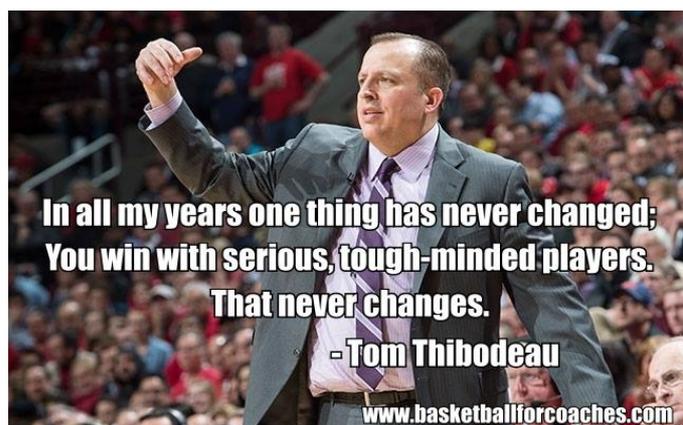
“Discipline is the greatest form of love you can show someone. Great players crave discipline” – Tom Izzo

Tom Thibodeau Basketball Quotes

“You have to have a mentality. This is a business. This ain’t hanging out having a good time” – Tom Thibodeau

“You learn from everybody. You learn from the players. You learn from great coaches. You learn from great teams” – Tom Thibodeau

“People always talk about going on offensive runs. But you can go on defensive runs too” – Tom Thibodeau



“The guys who take shortcuts, who aren’t ready, they fail when their opportunity comes” – Tom Thibodeau

“In all my years one thing has never changed; You win with serious, tough-minded players. That never changes” – Tom Thibodeau

Exclusive Bonus! Download the 501 Awesome Basketball Quotes blog post in a printer friendly PDF by [clicking here!](#)

Miscellaneous Basketball Quotes

"He who controlleth the backboard, controlleth the game" – Adolph Rupp

"Your defense will save you on the nights that your offense isn't working" – Adolph Rupp

"Help one kid at a time. He'll maybe go back and help a few more" – Al McGuire

"Winning is overemphasized. The only time it is really important is in surgery and war" – Al McGuire

"It doesn't matter how athletic or skilled a player is, if they have a low I.Q., they won't be very good" – Alan Stein

"People do not differ in their desire to win; they differ in the price they are willing to pay to win" – Alan Stein

"Commitment means staying loyal to what you said you were going to do, long after the mood you said it in has left you" – Anonymous

"Talent sets the floor, character sets the ceiling" – Bill Belichick

"On a team it's not the strength of the individual players, but the strength of the unit and how they all function together" – Bill Belichick

"Mental Toughness is doing the right thing for the team when it's not the best thing for you" – Bill Belichick

"Until you can reach in and grab that kids heart, you can't coach him" – Bill McNeess

"You can easily separate 'team guys' from 'me guys' by how they accept coaching. The guys that accept it are about winning" – Bill Parcells

"Winning coaches look for opportunities to praise. Anything that reflects a commitment to the team is praiseworthy" – Bill Parcells

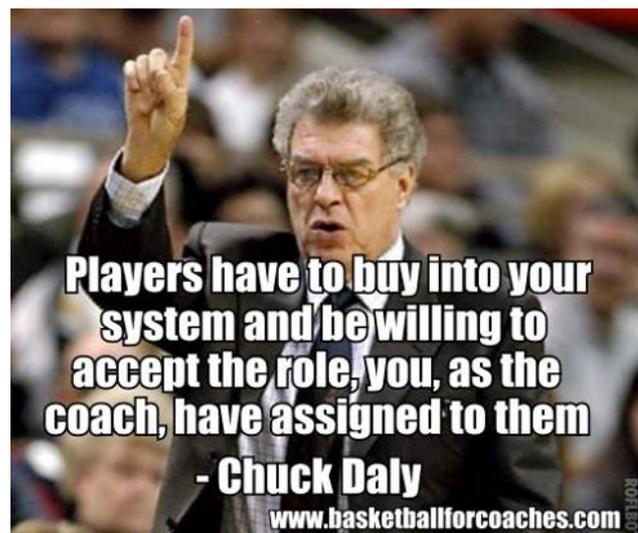
"A team divided against itself can break down at any moment. The least bit of pressure or adversity will crack it apart" – Bill Parcells

"Desire outweighs footwork when it comes to crashing the glass" – Bill Self

"Champions behave like champions before they are champions" – Bill Walsh

"Winning is about having the whole team on the same page" – Bill Walton

"Systems win! Believe in your system, and then sell it to your players" – Billy Donovan



“False Hustle = cheap fouls, lunging, reaching, etc” – Billy Donovan

“If I can’t expect someone to be accountable off the floor, how can I expect them to guard a pick and roll? Or get a rebound?” – Billy Donovan

“If you don’t feel you have something to prove every day, you’ll never improve”– Billy Donovan

“As players see themselves getting better through skill sessions, they will want to get in the gym more” – Billy Donovan

“I’m still waiting for perfection. In the meantime, I’ll settle for persistence” – Bo Ryan

“I didn’t get into teaching and coaching for the number of wins or the money. It was a passion for trying to help young people” – Bo Ryan

“Shot fakes and ball fakes work. No one uses more than Wisconsin. It’s amazing how many people don’t use them” – Bo Ryan

“I recruit hungry kids who love the game and want to get better and feel they have more questions than answers” – Bo Ryan

“Do your best when no one is looking. If you do that, then you can be successful in anything that you put your mind to” – Bob Cousy

“I dribbled by the hour with my left hand when I was young. I didn’t have full control, but I got so I could move the ball back and forth from one hand to the other without breaking the cadence of my dribble. I wasn’t dribbling behind my back or setting up any trick stuff, but I was laying the groundwork for it” – Bob Cousy

“Basketball is not an equal opportunity game. If you can’t shoot it well, you don’t get to shoot” – Bob Donewald

“A bad day coaching basketball is better than a good day doing almost anything else”– Bob Hurley

“This is basketball, not figure skating. You don’t get extra points for degree of difficulty”– Bob Hurley

“Developing better people should be the number one goal for any coach when dealing with kids” – Bobby Orr

“I never think about missing a free throw. All that goes through my mind when I’m at the line is seeing the ball go through the bottom of the net” – Brad Daugherty

“There’s a disposition great defenders have — a genuine pride that scores are a problem, people that score on me is a problem” – Brett Brown

“I always laugh when people ask me about rebounding techniques. I’ve got a technique It’s called just go get the damn ball” – Charles Barkley

"I know that I'm never as good or bad as any single performance. I've never believed my critics or my worshippers, and I've always been able to leave the game at the arena" – Charles Barkley

"Kids are great. That's one of the best things about our business, all the kids you get to meet. It's a shame they have to grow up to be regular people and come to the games and call you names" – Charles Barkley

"If you are afraid of failure you don't deserve to be successful"– Charles Barkley

"It's discouraging to make a mistake, but it's humiliating when you find out you're so unimportant that nobody noticed it" – Chuck Daly

"Defense doesn't break down on the help, it breaks down on the recovery"– Chuck Daly

"Players have to buy into your system and be willing to accept the role, you, as the coach, have assigned to them" – Chuck Daly

"Offense is spacing and spacing is offense" – Chuck Daly

"If you're going to have to beg them to play, it's not going to work"– Chuck Daly

"I'm a lot better coach when I have really good players"– Chuck Daly

"Leadership is difficult. It is a lonely responsibility. The best leaders are servants. It is always about others" – Dale Brown

"The only lasting form of discipline is self-imposed discipline" – Dale Brown

"The best teams have chemistry. They communicate with each other and sacrifice personal glory for the common goal" – Dave DeBusschere

"Basketball is a game of sacrificing yourself for the next guy, being a team that takes good shots, and taking the right shots" – David Blatt

"You're always going to face criticism, you're always going to face challenges, but those things are there to make you stronger and more committed" – David Robinson

"Our job is to teach young people how to do things that make them successful on the court, in the classroom, and after graduation" – David Shaw

"There has never been a great 'silent' defense"– Del Harris

"Practice to beat the best"– Dick Bennett

"We cannot accept in victory what we would not accept in defeat"– Dick Bennett

"For us to be successful on defense, we must get back and stop the basketball, eliminate easy baskets, keep the ball out of the lane, and bother the shooters" – Dick Bennett

"Most of my learning and philosophy regarding coaching basketball was developed after great frustration" – Dick Bennett

“What you lack in talent can be made up with desire, hustle and giving 110% all the time” – Don Zimmer

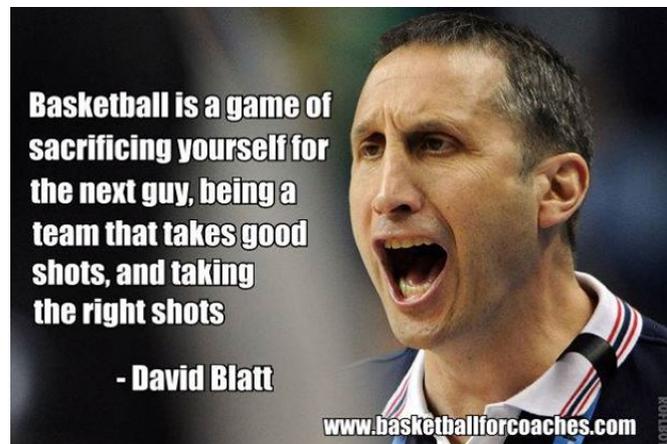
“Pressure works, not by stealing the ball, but by changing momentum” – Donnie Jones

“The great thing about basketball is you work as hard as you can to individually get better so that your team can win” – Doug Collins

“Don’t ever have a rule that you won’t enforce with your best player” – Doug Collins

“When your teammate looks you in the eye and holds you accountable, that’s the greatest kind of leadership there is” – Doug Collins

“Work as hard as you can to become as good an individual player as you can to help your team win” – Doug Collins



“It is as big a mistake to turn down a good shot as it is to take a bad one” – Ed Murphy

“Coaching is a profession of love. You can’t coach people unless you love them” – Eddie Robinson

“Every time you compete, try harder to improve on your last performance. Give nothing short of your very best effort” – Elgin Baylor

“Coaching is easy. Winning is the hard part” – Elgin Baylor

“At the end of the day, no matter how well you score, you’ve got to be able to stop people” – Eric Musselman

“If your bigs rim run at full speed it not only increases the potential for a quick layup, but opens up court for guards” – Fred Hoiberg

“Yeah, I’m going to try to win the national championship next year. But I’m not going to kill myself doing it. I’m not going to kill my players either. You really start to realize there’s a lot more to what we’re trying to do than winning games” – Geno Auriemma

“I don’t hire good coaches, I hire good people. If they turn out to be good coaches, too, that’s a plus” – Geno Auriemma

“Everyday we are going to fight lazy and soft. It’s completely unacceptable. You have to be demanding” – George Karl

“When your best player puts it on the line every day, the other guys can’t cut corners” – George Karl

“It’s not up to anyone else to make me give my best” – Hakeem Olajuwon

"I seek to leave the world a litter better place than I found it"– James Naismith

"Be strong in body, clean in mind, lofty in ideals" – James Naismith

"A lot of late nights in the gym, a lot of early mornings, especially when your friends are going out, you're going to the gym, those are the sacrifices that you have to make if you want to be an NBA basketball player" – Jason Kidd

"I have had some bad shooting games but that doesn't stop me from getting the ball to my teammates" – Jason Kidd

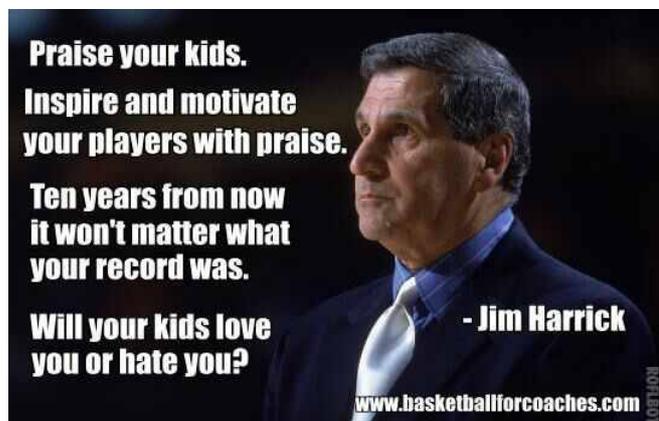
"Championship teams are built on being prepared, playing unselfishly and being held accountable" – Jason Kidd

"The players I respected most were the toughest players, not those who talked a good game or blocked a shot and acted like a fool" – Jay Bilas

"Hard work is not punishment. Hard work is the price of admission for the opportunity to reach sustained excellence" – Jay Bilas

"The tough player is the one who is difficult to play against and easy to play with" – Jay Bilas

"The greatest compliment to any player is he is a great teammate. We can't all be great players, but we can all be great teammates" – Jay Bilas



"I don't need my players to like me. I need them to play for me"– Jerry Sloan

"In 19 years Stockton never once lost a suicide drill in practice. Well, there was one day. He was sick. But he still ran it" – Jerry Sloan

"The secret is to have eight great players and four others who will cheer like crazy"– Jerry Tarkanian

"Confidence is everything in this game, if you don't think you can, you won't"– Jerry West

"You can't get much done in life if you only work on the days when you feel good"– Jerry West

"Don't let talent get in way of team performance. Great players do what's outstanding for team, not what makes them stand out" – Jerry West

"Anything can happen with hard work and dedication"– Jerry West

"Your ability to communicate to your young people will determine your success"– Jim Harrick

"Praise your kids. Inspire and motivate your players with praise. Ten years from now it won't matter what your record was. Will your kids love you or hate you?" – Jim Harrick

"On good teams coaches hold players accountable, on great teams players hold players accountable" – Joe Dumars

"Freshman want to play. Sophomores want to start. Juniors want to score. Seniors want to win" – John Beilein

"If you are honest with yourself and can look into a mirror and believe that you have given 100 percent, you should feel proud. If you cannot, then there is more work to be done" – John Havlicek

"We win because we play together as a team" – John Havlicek

"Whether I start or come off the bench makes no difference to me. My game has always been go as hard as I can as long as I can" – John Havlicek

"One of the hardest things a player must learn to do is when to start a dribble and when to stop a dribble" – John Thompson

"Keep it simple. I'm not interested in trying to prove to my players that I'm a genius" – John Thompson

"You need to be tough enough to make the hustle plays, run down loose balls, run down long boards and communicate on defense" – John Thompson

"You need to work as hard to be a great teammate as you do to be a great player" – Jon Gordon

"Everyone wants to do what the great ones do; but very few are willing to do what they did to become great" – Jon Gordon

"I think I started learning lessons about being a good person long before I ever knew what basketball was. And that starts in the home, it starts with the parental influence" – Julius Erving

"Goals determine what you're going to be" – Julius Erving

"Being a professional is doing the things you love to do, on the days you don't feel like doing them" – Julius Erving

"A team is a group of players who support one another on court and who think of the group before they think of themselves" – KC Jones

“Our offensive philosophy is to simply find a way to get the ball into the hands of our team’s best player” – Kelvin Sampson

“You don’t go through life, you grow through life” – Kevin Ollie

“The secret of winning is working more as a team, less as individuals” – Knute Rockne



“It’s not about the number of hours you practice, it’s about the number of hours your mind is present during the practice” – Kobe Bryant

“You always have to be on edge. You always have to take every practice, every game, like it is your last” – Kobe Bryant

“You must have your player’s heads and hearts before they will do anything for you” – Lawrence Frank

“Winning is the first priority. Individual development is important, but if each guy gets better, the team gets better” – Lawrence Frank

“I love seeing my teammates succeed. That’s what I get more excited about than anything” – LeBron James

“I learned early that if I wanted to achieve anything in life, I’d have to do it myself. I learned that I had to be accountable” – Lenny Wilkins

“The most important quality I look for in a player is accountability. You’ve got to be accountable for who you are. It’s too easy to blame things on someone else” – Lenny Wilkins

“You’ve got to be accountable for who you are. It’s too easy to blame things on someone else” – Lenny Wilkins

“Always acknowledge hustle plays in practice” – Lou Campanelli

“It always amazes me that spectators want to coach, coaches want to officiate, and officials just want to watch the game” – Lou Holtz

“Any guy who can maintain a positive attitude without much playing time earns my respect” – Magic Johnson

“All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them” – Magic Johnson

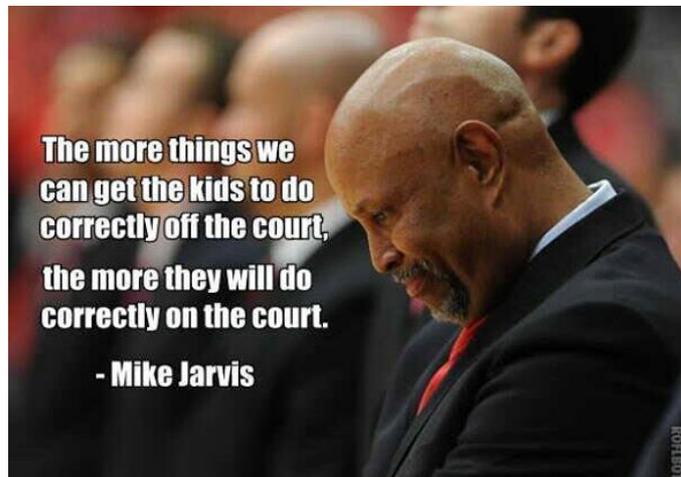
“Ask not what your teammates can do for you. Ask what you can do for your teammates” – Magic Johnson

“Everybody on a championship team doesn’t get publicity, but everyone can say they are a champion” – Magic Johnson

“It’s fun to play defense. It’s fun to watch the opponent sweat on offense, start complaining to the officials, and eventually be taken out of the game because he’s making so many offensive mistakes” – Maury John

“Emphasize small goals when you have a team that isn’t going to win a lot of games”– Mike Dunlap

“The more things we can get kids to do correctly off the court, the more they will do correctly on the court” – Mike Jarvis



“You don’t need great skill to be a tough rebounder; being a rebounder is all about effort, determination, and physicality” – Mike Malone

“Evaluate wins and losses objectively, focusing more on effort and execution than on the outcome of the game” – Morgan Wootten

“Help your players to control their emotions – do this through example”– Norm Sloan

“I would rather have a player who has mastered two or three moves than to try to teach him six or seven” – Norm Sloan

“Our conditioning program begins the first day of class. The running portion is very demanding. It has physiological advantages, as well as psychological advantages” – Norm Sloan

“Character is huge for me. Does he care about winning or does he care about playing?”– Otis Smith

“Professional coaches measure success in rings. College coaches measure success in championships. High School coaches measure success to titles. Youth coaches measure success in smiles” – Paul McAllister

“The key to any game is to use your strengths and hide your weaknesses”– Paul Westphal

“Have fun doing whatever it is that you desire to accomplish. Learn it one step at a time, emphasizing the fundamentals, and do it because you love it, not because it’s work” – Paul Westphal

“You can run a lot of plays when your X is twice as big as the other guys’ O. It makes your X’s and O’s pretty good” – Paul Westphal

“Love never fails. Character never Quits. And with patience and persistence, dreams do come true” – Pete Maravich

"When you work on getting better at something, don't do it half speed" – Ray Allen

"I was taught to play the game from a total team concept. To be able to do everything reasonably well and some things extraordinarily well. If I'm not shooting well, I'll try to be an asset in other ways – like defense, passing, rebounding, and hustle" – Rick Barry

"I recruit character as much as I recruit ability. And if you've built a team of character, they can handle moments that others cannot and they accept coaching on how to manage pressure" – Roy Williams

"Be led by your dreams. Not by your problems" – Roy Williams

"I expect to coach execution not effort" – Roy Williams

"Never underestimate the heart of a champion" – Rudy Tomjanovich

"One of the hardest things for a ball player to do is to accept his role" – Scottie Pippen

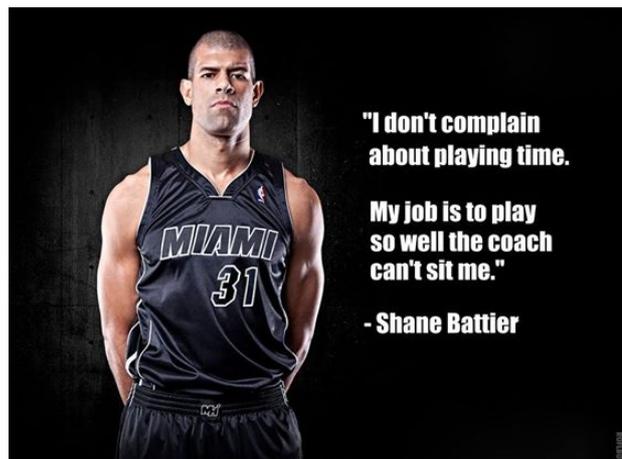
"We have the mentality of the hunter. We want to be the most enthusiastic team in the country. That's what we can control" – Shaka Smart

"I don't complain about playing time. My job is to play so well the coach can't sit me" – Shane Battier

"The day I stopped worrying about stats is the day I started winning" – Shaquille O'Neal

"Coaching is not what you know, but what you can get your players to do on the court" – Stan Van Gundy

"We try to stress the little things. Because little things lead to big things" – Steve Alford



"You create shots for yourself by what you do without the ball more than what you do after you get it" – Steve Alford

"I know the strengths and weaknesses of my teammates. I make my passing decisions accordingly" – Steve Nash

"The pick and roll is more about bodies and eyes than speed and being fast" – Steve Nash

"You should always want your coach to be critical. It gives you an opportunity to learn and to overcome adversity" – Steve Nash

"If every basketball player worked as hard as I did, I'd be out of a job" – Steve Nash

"Empower the people around you, from the janitor to the athletic director. You do that by being sincere, caring about others, and then putting it into practice" – Sue Gunter

"Players act like the floor is slanted; they run downhill on fast breaks and jog uphill when

getting back on defense” – Tates Locke

“The fundamentals of the game are the same wherever you go: pass, dribble, shoot, defend, rebound, screen, play hard and together” – Terry Stotts

“There is no substitution for hustle, and if you don’t hustle there will be substitution” – Tex Winter

“Good defensive play is as much a matter of hustle, desire and pride as it is anything else” – Tex Winter

“Don’t be afraid to let your players know how much you care about them” – Thad Matta

“Working hard is one thing, but working hard with purpose is what separates the good from the great” – Thad Matta

“The biggest thing is getting our guys to understand, you can’t let one mistake compound into another mistake” – Thad Matta

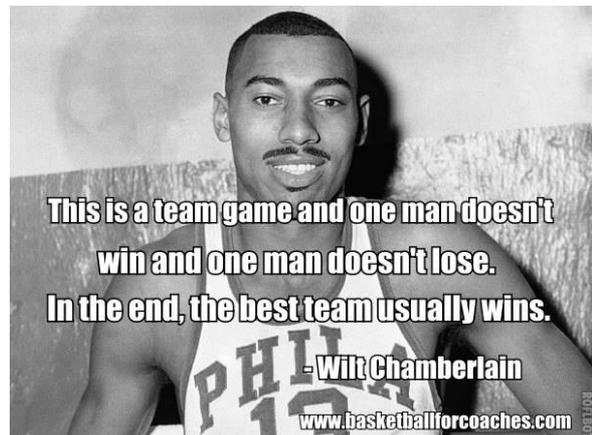
“We are unselfish and we trust each other” – Tim Duncan

“You’ve got to stay ready, especially around here. That’s what we preach, you’ll get your opportunity whether it comes at the beginning or in the middle or in the end whenever it may be. When your time comes, you need to be ready to go because you’re going to earn your minutes” – Tim Duncan

“We are unselfish and we trust each other” – Tim Duncan

“The time when there is no one there to feel sorry for you or to cheer for you is when a player is made” – Tim Duncan

“This is a team game and one man doesn’t win and one man doesn’t lose. In the end, the best team usually wins” – Wilt Chamberlain



Conclusion

If you’ve made it all the way to the bottom of the page, congratulations! You’ve battled your way through 501 basketball quotes and a little over 10,000 words.

Basketball Positions: Key Roles and Responsibilities (explained)



Traditionally, basketball has 5 specific positions on the court.

Two guards, two forwards, and a center.

1. Point guard
2. Shooting guard
3. Small forward
4. Power forward
5. Center

Each of these basketball positions has their own roles and responsibilities.

Many years ago, the players who filled these positions would stick solely to their role and avoid doing anything that was outside their position...

The center and power forward would dominate 90% of the rebounding but very rarely dribble the basketball. The guards would dribble the basketball up and down the court but very rarely would they enter the key area.

While basketball has advanced a lot in recent times, the players who fill these basketball positions still have specific responsibilities.

Let's break down each position...

The 7 Basketball Positions Explained

1. Point guard



Notable Point Guards: *Chris Paul, Magic Johnson, Steph Curry, and John Stockton.*

The point guard (also known as the floor general or the 'one') is often one of the shortest players on the team and is responsible for advancing the basketball up the court and setting up the team's offense.

This requires the point guard to be highly skilled at dribbling and passing while rarely turning the basketball over to the opposition.

Once the offense has been set up, the point guard must be able to read what the defense is doing and make smart decisions. A high level of basketball IQ is crucial for this position which is why the point guard is often referred to as the on-court coach.

The player filling the point guard position must be unselfish (there's nothing worse than a selfish point guard) and aim to get their teammates involved on the offensive end of the floor.

This requires crystal clear knowledge of the playbook as well as understanding their teammate's strengths and weaknesses. Knowing what areas of the court your teammates thrive in allows the offense to take advantage of mismatches.

As with all positions, the point guard should be able to knock down an open outside shot and also penetrate and pass to their teammates.

Defensively, the point guard is responsible for guarding and disrupting the opposition's main ball-handler. They do this by playing aggressive (but smart) full-court defense attempting to tip the basketball loose but ensuring they always stay between their opponent and the basket.

2. Shooting Guard



Notable Shooting Guards: Michael Jordan, James Harden, Kobe Bryant, and Reggie Miller.

The shooting guard (also known as the off guard or 'two') is often one of the shorter players on the team and generally starts an offensive possession on the wing.

This is a scoring position and is often be filled by the team's best outside shooter. But the shooting guard position requires more than outside shooting...

This player must be able to shoot consistently from outside, midrange, and close to the basket, as well as be able to make a variety of layups including floaters, euro steps, and reverse layups.

Being able to score from anywhere on the floor means the shooting guard is always a threat and many basketball plays can be ran for them.

They're also the team's secondary ball-handler and can help advance the basketball up the court if the point guard is competing against a tough opposition defender.

On the defensive end of the floor, a great shooting guard defender is quick and able to avoid screens from the opposition's bigs.

3. Small Forward



Notable Small Forwards: LeBron James, Scottie Pippen, Kevin Durant, and Larry Bird.

The small forward (also known as the 'three') is often the most versatile of the 5 basketball positions on the court both offensively and defensively.

They're long and athletic which allows them to be incredibly disruptive on the defensive end of the court and usually makes them the team's best defensive player.

The best small forwards also have an offensive game...

Similar to the shooting guard position, they're able to shoot consistently from outside, score inside, and also penetrate and create for their teammates.

To put it simply, they're the 'swiss army knife' of a basketball team. They can do everything on a basketball court!

This includes helping out the two 'biggs' with rebounding the basketball on the defensive end of the floor.

4. Power Forward



Notable Power Forwards: Tim Duncan, Dennis Rodman, Karl Malone, and Kevin Love.

The power forward (also known as the 'four') is usually the second tallest player on the team and is required to be both strong and skilled.

In past years, the player in this position always played close to the rim and scored the majority of their points in the paint.

In today's game, the power forward needs a good midrange jump shot (especially from the short corner) and will be even more effective if they're able to consistently hit a three-point shot. Players who can do this are known as a 'stretch four'.

Whether this player spends most of their time inside the three-point line or on the perimeter will depend on the offense the coach chooses to run with their team.

Defensively, having size and strength is important for boxing out their opponent and securing rebounds.

5. Center



Notable Centers: Shaquille O'Neal, Joel Embiid, Wilt Chamberlain, and Bill Russell.

The center (also known as the 'five') is usually the tallest and strongest player on the team and spends most of the game close to the basket.

Offensively, most centers don't have a consistent midrange shot or a three-point shot, nor are they typically the focus of most offenses.

Instead, they will often score the majority of their points by staying close to the rim and scoring off offensive rebounds or by receiving short passes when a perimeter player penetrates and their defender is forced to provide help defense.

This requires that they have good hands and a high basketball IQ to know where to move around the rim to give passers the best angle.

The best centers have a good post game and can score with a variety of moves from the low post area. This is especially necessary when they get switched onto a smaller and weaker player. Defensively, the two main responsibilities of a center is to defend the basket and rebound the basketball.

The center doesn't necessarily need to be a great shot blocker (though that certainly helps); simply taking up space in the paint and forcing opponents to change their shots is often enough to prevent a score.

6. Sixth Man



Notable Sixth Men: Manu Ginobili, Eric Gordon, Jamal Crawford, and Jason Terry.

The 6th man is the first player to come off the bench and enter the game.

This player can vary from game-to-game, but on most teams there is a specific sixth man who enters each game first off the bench.

In regards to skill level, the sixth man is often as skilled as the 5 starting players. Possibly more skilled than several of them (it's never a good idea to start with your 5 best players on the court).

They're usually a versatile player who can fill a number of different basketball positions. Who they substitute off the court will usually depend on matchups and which player starts the game poorly.

The main requirement of a sixth man is that they must bring energy to the game when they step on the court.

7. The Bench



The rest of the players who begin the game on the sideline (usually 2 - 4 more players) are known as 'the bench'.

The amount of minutes the players on the bench will get on the court vary significantly depending on the level of competition the team's playing.

For youth basketball, I always recommend coaches give all players an even amount of court time until the last few minutes of a close game.

For high school or older, the players on the bench often have much less of a role on the team in regards to playing time. Some will get 10 - 15 minutes, and others won't play a minute at all.

Regardless of how many minutes they receive on the court, the bench needs to be constantly positive and encouraging the players on the court.

Never overlook the importance of having a great bench presence.

Conclusion

In today's game, things are a little different than described above...

We've now entered into an era of 'positionless basketball'.

Meaning all players are now required to do a bit of everything regardless of which basketball position they're listed as.

There are now 7-foot-tall point guards who can hold their own against the best big men in the league when competing for rebounds. Just as there are centers who can easily lead the fast break.

If you want your players to compete in the most elite competitions in the world one day, you must be training them to play (and guard) any position on the court.

Basketball Rules – An Uncomplicated Guide



Basketball Rules

An Uncomplicated

Guide for New Coaches

Have you ever attempted to read a 196-page official basketball rules book?

I have (more than once) and it's not something I recommend beginner coaches or players place high on their to-do list.

The official basketball rules books are filled with a ton of complicated words and scenarios. Many I had to re-read numerous times to understand.

This can be a problem.

Many of the coaches in youth basketball leagues today are parents of the players kindly volunteering their time to coach the team.

If any of them ask to see a list of rules, they're either met with a blank stare or handed a rules book so long it would take months to finish.

We can't expect volunteer coaches to sit down and painfully struggle through 196-pages of complicated basketball rules and regulations.

If we did, they simply wouldn't coach.

That's where the BFC basketball rules guide comes in...

The aim of this blog post is to educate coaches, parents, and players on the main rules of basketball in a quick and easy-to-understand guide.

After reading this, coaches should be able to step into a basketball coaching role and have confidence they understand the basics of what they can and can't do.

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Basketball Rules Overview
Court and Equipment
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Please Note: Rules will vary slightly depending on the league, level, and where in the world the game is being played. I'll do my best to point out the rules that vary, but make sure to check with your league to be sure.

Basketball Rules Overview:

- A game of basketball is played with two teams of 5 players on the court.
- Teams are allowed to have a maximum of 12 players on their roster. Five players on the court and seven players on the bench.
- The objective of the game is to score in the opponent's basket and prevent them from scoring in the basket your team is defending.
- The game starts with a jump ball in the center of the court with two opponents facing the direction of their opponent's basket.
- After an opponent score, the opposition must pass the basketball in from behind the baseline.
- Players can only move the basketball around the court by dribbling or passing.
- The winner of the game is the team who scores the most points in their opponent's basket at the end of game time.

Court and Equipment

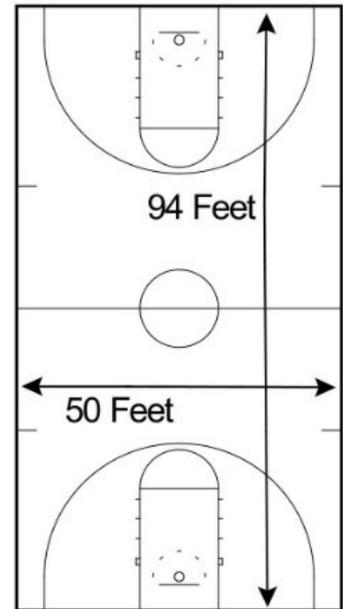
- The court is a rectangle which can vary slightly in dimensions. Generally 94 feet in length and 50 feet in width.
- The baskets are located on a backboard at each end of the basketball court and are elevated 10 feet above the ground.

- The free-throw line is 15 feet from the face of the backboard.
- The distance of the three-point line varies depending on the level of basketball being played.

High school = 19 feet, 9 inches.
 NCAA = 20 feet, 9 inches.
 NBA = 23 feet, 9 inches.

- The charge circle is a semi-circle surrounding the hoop at a distance of 4 feet. No charges can be taken within this area.
- Each hoop is a perfect circle 18-inches in diameter.
- Basketballs come in a variety of sizes to make playing easier for different ages.

Youth basketball = Size 5 = 22 inch circumference.
 Women's basketball = Size 6 = 28.5 inch circumference.
 Men's basketball = Size 7 = 29.5 inch circumference.



Clock Timing

- A game's duration will depend on the league and age group and will generally either be...

1. Two Halves – A game consisting of two halves will usually be 15 – 20 minutes in duration for each half.

2. Four Quarters – A game consisting of four quarters will usually be 8 – 12 minutes in duration each quarter.

- Half-time can last anywhere from 3 minutes – 15 minutes depending on the age group and level the teams are playing at. Shorter time for younger age groups, longer time for professional level teams.
- The clock will stop on all dead ball situations in the final 1 minute of the first half and final 2 minutes of the second half.
- The clock will stop for the duration of all timeouts.

Overtime

- At the end of regulation, if the scores are tied, there will be an overtime period of 3 – 5 minutes.
- After this time, if the score is still tied, the teams will compete for another overtime period. This continues until at the conclusion of an overtime a winner has been decided.
- Each team is allowed one timeout during overtime.
- The fouls from the 2nd half of the game carry over to the overtime periods.

Scoring Rules

- Each free-throw is worth one point.
- Each field goal (midrange shot, layup, post move, etc) is worth two points.
- Each shot made from behind the three-point line is worth three points.

(Note: If any part of the player's foot is on the three-point line when shooting, the shot will be worth 2 points.)

Substitutions

- A substitution is when you swap a player from the bench with a player on the basketball court. This is used to allow players to rest and recover throughout the game as well as give all players on the team a chance to participate.
- A coach is allowed to make an unlimited amount of substitutions throughout the game.
- A coach is allowed to substitute their players on and off the court on any dead-ball situation (after fouls, violations, timeouts, free-throws, etc).
- A substitution is called by asking the scoring table for a 'sub' and then waiting for a stoppage in play where the referee will give you time to substitute players.
- Do not substitute players without waiting for the referee to signal for you to do so or it will result in a technical foul on your team.

(A quick reminder that BFC recommends even playing time at all ages up until the high school level.)

Timeouts



- A timeout is a stoppage in play that allows the coach to talk to the players and allows the players to rest and hydrate.
- Each team is allowed to call two timeouts per half (these cannot be carried over from the first half to the second half).
- The duration of a single timeout is one minute.
- During a timeout, the coach can make substitutions.

Personal Fouls

Although regarded as a non-contact sport, everyone who has participated in or watched basketball knows that is not the case.

With 10 players on the court competing at a high intensity and attempting to gain an advantage over their opponent, it's impossible for there to not be contact throughout the game.

So – what differentiates legal contact from plays where a foul is called?

A foul is called when a player makes illegal contact with an opponent that results in an advantage.

When a foul is called, live play immediately stops. Which team receives the basketball will depend on many factors that I'll cover over the next few paragraphs.

Here are the 6 most common personal foul types:

1. Reaching In

Occurs when a defender reaches in to steal the basketball and makes illegal contact with their opponent.

The contact made is usually the defender slapping the dribbler's arm or wrist.

2. Holding

A holding foul is called when a player uses their hands or arms to limit or prevent an opponent's movement around the court.

3. Blocking

A blocking foul is called when a player uses their body to limit or prevent an opponent's movement on the court without establishing position.

4. Charging

A charging foul is called when a defensive player has established position and an offensive player runs into them.

This can happen with or without the basketball.

5. Pushing

A pushing foul is called when a player extends their arms forcefully to move an opponent on the court.

6. Illegal Screen

An illegal screen is called when an offensive player who is setting a screen on a defender has not established position when the opposition makes contact with them.

Penalties for Fouling

- If a foul is whistled while an opponent is in the motion of shooting the basketball, the offensive player will receive free-throws.

2 Free-Throws = If a player is fouled while attempting a field goal within the three-point line (layup, post move, midrange shot, etc).

3 Free-Throws = If a player is fouled while attempting a field goal beyond the three-point line.

- If a shot attempted while being fouled is successful, the points for that shot count and they will be rewarded with only 1 additional free-throw regardless of where on the floor the contact was made.
- On all non-shooting personal fouls, the team who was fouled receives the basketball at the closest point out-of-bounds from where the foul was made.
- If a team commits more than the legal number of fouls in a half or quarter, the player who was fouled will receive two free-throws for each additional foul.
- A player is 'fouled out' and must spend the rest of the game on the bench after they have accumulated 5 fouls throughout the duration of a game.

Special Fouls

After struggling with the definitions for the following special fouls for a long time, I decided to copy the definitions from the NFHS High School Basketball Rules Book.

Here they are...

1. Technical Foul

A technical foul is called when a coach or player brings the game of basketball into disrepute and is not made in relation to contact.

This could be actions like yelling at a referee, flopping, kicking a basketball, using inappropriate language, holding onto the rim after a dunk, etc.

When a player or coach has received two technical fouls, they will be ejected from the game and required to leave the playing area.

Penalty: 1 or 2 free-throws (depending on the league) for any opposition player on the court and then possession.

2. Flagrant Foul

A flagrant foul may be a personal or technical foul of a violent or savage nature, or a technical non-contact foul which displays unacceptable conduct. It may or may not be intentional.

This could include actions like hitting, kicking, or pushing another player. *Penalty: 1 or 2 free-throws (depending on the league) for any opposition player on the court and then possession.*

3. Unsportsmanlike Foul

An unsporting foul is a non-contact technical foul which consists of unfair, unethical, dishonorable conduct or any behavior not in accordance with the spirit of fair play.

Penalty: 1 or 2 free-throws (depending on the league) for any opposition player on the court and then possession.

4. Intentional Foul

An intentional foul is a personal or technical foul that may or may not be premeditated and is not based solely on the severity of the act.

Penalty: 1 or 2 free-throws (depending on the league) for any opposition player on the court and then possession.

Game Violations



When a violation occurs, play is immediately stopped and the team who committed the violation loses possession of the basketball.

The basketball is then passed in from outside the court by the opposition at the closest point to where the violation occurred.

1. Out-of-Bounds Violation

The basketball is ruled out-of-bounds when it touches either a player, the floor, or an object that is out of bounds.

The possession of the basketball goes to the opposing team of the player who was the last to touch the basketball.

If the basketball lands on the line, that is still considered out of bounds.

2. Traveling Violation

Traveling is difficult to describe in writing, but is in place to prevent players from taking more than one step while holding the basketball.

This rule also prevents players from moving or changing their pivot foot once it's been established.

3. Double Dribble Violation

A double dribble can occur in two situations:

1. A player dribbles the basketball, picks up their dribble, and then dribbles the basketball again.
2. When a player touches the basketball with both hands while dribbling.

4. Held Ball Violation

When two opponents grab the basketball at the same time and it cannot be gained by a single player quickly, a held ball violation will be called.

The basketball is given to each team on a rotating basis depending on the possession arrow which will be discussed later on in the article.

5. Goaltending Violation

A goaltending violation is called if an offensive or defensive player makes contact with the basketball while it's in the downward flight after a shot or if a player touches the basketball when it's in the vertical cylinder above the hoop.

If the offensive player receives a goaltending violation, the basket is called off and their opponent receives possession of the basketball.

If the defensive player receives a goaltending violation, the basketball is counted and the defense will then receive the basketball similar to a normally made shot.

6. Back-Court Violation

Once the basketball has been fully established in the offense's front court, they are not allowed to cross back over the half-court line into the back-court.

If they do, the penalty is a turnover.

The only exception to this is if a defensive player was to tap the basketball over the half-court line. Then the offense can sprint back and retrieve it.

Time Violations

1. 3-Seconds in the Key Violation

The 'three seconds in the key' rule is used to prevent offensive players from standing in the key for long periods of time.

Instead, players must continually move around the court keeping the key open for dribble penetration. Once a shot has been attempted, a 3-second violation cannot be called.

The offensive team can also be called for a 3-second violation in some leagues.

Penalty: A violation is called and the basketball is given to the opposition.

2. 5-Second Inbounds

Once a player passing in from out of bounds receives the basketball from the referee, they then have 5 seconds to pass the basketball in to one of their teammates.

Penalty: A violation is called and the basketball is given to the opposition.

3. 5-Second Closely Guarded Violation

This violation is rarely called, but it's important to know.

An offensive player in the frontcourt with possession of the basketball can be called for a 5-second violation if they're being guarded within 6 feet and fail to pass, shoot, or dribble within 5 seconds.

Penalty: A violation is called and the basketball is given to the opposition.

4. 8-Seconds Back Court Violation

After gaining possession of the basketball in the backcourt, the offensive team is required to advance the basketball over the half-way line within 8 seconds.

The count is continued if the opposition deflects the basketball but stopped if the opposition takes possession of the basketball.

In some leagues, the time limit is 10 seconds instead of 8 seconds.

Penalty: A violation is called and the basketball is given to the opposition.

5. Shot Clock Violation

A shot clock is used to increase the speed of the game and prevent teams from stalling the basketball.

After taking possession of the basketball, the offensive team has a specific amount of seconds to advance down the court and attempt a shot which makes contact with the rim.

The length of the shot clock can vary depending on the level of basketball and will usually be somewhere from 35 seconds to 24 seconds.

If a shot is taken by the offensive team and the basketball hits the rim, the shot clock is reset to 0 no matter which team takes possession.

This rule is used in all professional and college level basketball. Some states have begun to implement the rule in high school, too.

Penalty: A violation is called and the basketball is given to the opposition.

Free-Throws

A player is rewarded with a free-throw opportunity after being fouled while shooting the basketball, after the opponent has exceeded their foul limit, or after the opponent commits a technical or flagrant/unsportsmanlike foul.

This results in one, two, or three uncontested shots from the free-throw line all worth one point each.

Here are the rules when a player is shooting free-throws...

Lane Violation – Shooter

The player shooting a free-throw is not allowed to jump or step over the free-throw line until the basketball has touched the rim.

Doing so will result in a violation and the basketball awarded to the opposition team on the sideline.

Lane Violation – Non-Shooters

The other 9 players on the court during free-throws must also follow specific rules...

- The four players behind the three-point line are not allowed to cross over the three-point line until the basketball has touched the rim.
- The five players lined up on the edges of the key can step into the key as soon as the basketball has left the shooters hands.
- If the defensive team breaks any of these rules, the player shooting free-throws receives one extra shot if their current shot is missed. If the free-throw shooter makes the shot on a defensive lane violation, the shot counts and play continues.
- If one of the offensive players breaks one of these rules, the free-throw does not count and the opposition receives the basketball out-of-bounds.

Possession Arrow

The possession arrow is used after every held-ball or when the referees are unsure on an out-of-bounds call.

The initial direction of the arrow is determined by the jump ball that commences the game. The team who does not secure first possession of the basketball will receive the basketball at the next jump ball.

The possession arrow then alternates between the two teams for the remainder of the game.

Injuries

- Coaches, parents, and team members on the sideline must wait until the referee has given permission before entering the court to attend to the injured player.
- If live play is stopped to address an injury from a player on the court, that player cannot stay in the game and must be substituted. They can be brought back into the game at the next opportunity.

Dr. James Naismith Original Rules

To see how much the rules of basketball have changed since it was first invented back in January 1892, here are the original 13 rules of basketball created by Dr. James Naismith...

- 1. The ball may be thrown in any direction with one or both hands.*
- 2. The ball may be batted in any direction with one or both hands.*
- 3. A player cannot run with the ball. The player must throw it from the spot on which he catches it, allowance to be made for a man who catches the ball when running at a good speed if he tries to stop.*
- 4. The ball must be held in or between the hands; the arms or body must not be used for holding it.*
- 5. No shouldering, holding, pushing, tripping, or striking in any way the person of an opponent shall be allowed; the first infringement of this rule by any player shall count as a foul, the second shall disqualify him until the next goal is made. Or, if there was evident intent to injure the person, for the whole of the game. No substitute allowed.*
- 6. A foul is striking at the ball with the fist, violation of rules 3, 4, and such as described in Rule 5.*
- 7. If either side makes three consecutive fouls, it shall count a goal for the opponent.*
- 8. A goal shall be made when the ball is thrown or batted from the grounds into the basket and stays there, providing those defending the goal do not touch or disturb the goal. If the ball rests on the edges, and the opponent moves the basket, it shall count as a goal.*
- 9. When the ball goes out of bounds, it shall be thrown into the field of play by the person first touching it. In the case of a dispute, the umpire shall throw it straight into the field. The thrower-in is allowed five seconds; if he holds it longer, it shall go to the opponent. If any side persists in delaying the game, the umpire shall call a foul on that side.*
- 10. The umpire shall be judge of the men and shall note the fouls and notify the referee when three consecutive fouls have been made. He shall have the power to disqualify men according to Rule 5.*

11. The referee shall be judge of the ball and shall decide when the ball is in play, in bounds, to which side it belongs, and shall keep the time. He shall decide when a goal has been made, and keep account of the goals with any other duties that are usually performed by a referee.

12. The time shall be two 15-minute halves, with five minutes' rest between.

13. The side making the most goals in that time shall be declared the winner. In the case of a draw, the game may, by agreement of the captains, be continued until another goal is made.

Conclusion

There are a few important points I want to wrap up this guide with...

1. Take this BFC Basketball Rules Guide as a general overview of the common basketball rules. If you want to be 100% sure on the basketball rules in the league you're coaching, get in contact with the people who run your league and clarify the rules you're not sure about.

2. Referees are human. They're not going to get every basketball call correct just as you or I wouldn't if we were in their place. Once a call has been made, no amount of complaining a coach or player does will change it.

3. This basketball rules guide was not created to compete with the comprehensive rule books that are available like the Official FIBA Rules and NFHS Basketball Rules Book.

4. As stated at the start of the article, rules change all the time and vary between different leagues and age groups. While I will try to keep this list updated, I can't make it specific to all levels and rules will be changed, added, or removed over time.

Basketball Tryouts Advice – 28 Experts Share Their Secrets

 basketballforcoaches.com/tryouts-advice/



With basketball tryouts about to begin for the new season, I've received numerous emails asking for advice on basketball tryouts.

Since my last ['expert post' on practice mistakes](#) received so much positive feedback, I decided to use this as an opportunity to once again ask some of the greatest minds in basketball to share their knowledge.

I asked 28 experts this question...

“What are the top 2 or 3 pieces of advice you'd give to a beginner coach conducting basketball tryouts this season?”

Just like the last post, I've created a handy list so that you can skip down the page to your favorite expert if you wish.

[Alan Stein](#), [Augie Johnston](#)

[Brian McCormick](#), [Bryan Burrell](#)

[Damin Altizer](#), [Darrell Johnson](#), [Dave Hopla](#)

[Ganon Baker](#)

[Janis Meredith](#), [Jeremy Russotti](#), [Jim Burson](#), [John Leonzo](#), [John O'Sullivan](#), [Jordan Delp](#)

[Koran Godwin](#), [Kyle Ohman](#)

[Lamar Hull](#), [Lemar Griffin](#)

[Mark Adams](#), [Matt Monroe](#), [Mike Costello](#), [Mike O'Halloran](#)

[Quinn McDowell](#)

[Randy Brown](#), [Ryan Walker](#)

Scott Fields

Tamir Goodman, Tim Springer

Wesley Kosel

Advice on Basketball Tryouts for Coaches

Alan Stein – Stronger Team

1. Give every player a fair chance to show their stuff.

Create an environment of both open (small sided games) and closed (shooting/ball handling drills) that gives every player a chance to showcase their talent (and/or lack of it!).

2. Have an organized plan and execute it!

Approach try-outs no different than a normal practice.

3. Have empathy

This is a very stressful time for players (especially those on the bubble) and handle everything with love and grace.



Augie Johnston – Baller Boot Camp

1. Go into basketball tryouts with an outline of what you need personnel and position wise.

You don't want to cut a player that could fill a void you'll have later in the season.

2. Understand that a lot of players don't really "play their game" during tryouts.

Essentially good players, but just because they are in a tryout situation they panic.

For example, you'll have a guy that normally shares the ball and makes good decisions, but during tryouts, he thinks he has to "outperform" others and takes bad shots and doesn't pass. Take him aside and explain that's not what you're looking for.

While you'll have the complete opposite as well. Players that are scared to shoot just because it's tryouts when normally they play with confidence and make plays. You need to try and see past that which is not always easy.

3. If you only have 12 roster spots and have to cut a few players, that you know love the game, offer them positions as team managers that will practice with the team and sit on the bench during games.

You never know another player might quit or get injured for the season. That's a perfect opportunity for them to join the team.



Brian McCormick – 180 Shooter

The relative age effect is real. When you have a freshmen or junior varsity team, you have 15-year-olds who biologically are more like 18-year-olds, and some who are more like 13-year-olds. Of course, the 18-year-old is better than a 13-year-old right now.



What is your goal? What qualities do they possess? Look for more than who is the biggest, strongest player right now.

You never know when the skinny, awkward 6'5 freshman will become a 7'0 senior who goes on to play at an Ivy League school or the small point guard will mature into your varsity starter.

I took a job late, and the other coaches wanted to cut a player because he could not do the three-man weave, and he looked out of shape. When we played actual games, his team won. He started almost every game that season for us and was arguably our second best player.

Play games. I'll never understand how coaches make decisions about players based on drills.

I worked a camp once where we drafted players. We ran our own stations and had 20 minutes with each group. Then, we drafted. Every other coach did drills: Shooting drills, layup drills, defensive drills, etc. I played 3v3. I drafted 3 of the top 10 players although there were 12 teams.

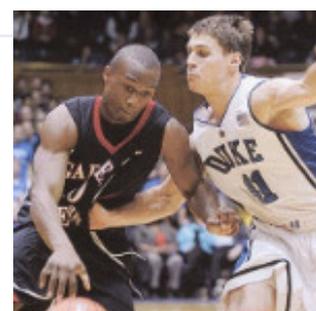
It is about the ability to play the game, not to look good in drills.

Bryan Burrell – New Age Elite Sports

The advice, I'd give a beginner coach for running basketball tryouts would be:

1. Keep it simple and come with a practice plan

Organize your practice plan according to how you want to evaluate each player. If you want to evaluate players offensive fundamentals, set up shooting and basketball drills. If you want to evaluate defensive abilities, insert drills that would put players in position to guard someone.



2. Pay attention to the intangibles (effort, leadership, communication, and etc) of each player

Each player that makes the team won't be a rotation player, but it's important to keep players that will not only work hard but believe the team is greater than me.

3. Before tryouts start, introduce yourself to players to begin building relationships with your players

Inform each player trying out what you're looking for, and how they can improve their chances to make your team.

Damin Altizer – DR1VEN Training

1. Find The Difference Makers

Without question, finding guys who can handle the skills necessary to help your team to success is important. Just as important, is finding guys who are completely selfless and completely bought in to doing whatever is necessary to help the team succeed.



The kids helping others up in tryouts, encouraging even if they're not actively participating in a drill, thanking the coach afterward for the opportunity; these kids make teams better regardless of their impact on the box score.

Ideally, you find kids who embrace it all, energy is infectious and if you have a team of selfless, energy guys, it'll be a successful season.

2. Find Gamers, Not Drillers

Drill work is essential in basketball tryouts but, putting guys in read and react game situational drills will help better evaluate who can play and who can only drill.

3. Situational Scrimmages

If possible, have your players play situation games: 3-on-3 where they have to use a ball screen, 5-on-5 where they can't shoot until they get a back door or pin-down, etc.

Depending upon how you see your team playing, try and simulate those situations to see how kids respond. Avoid letting 5-on-5 try-out scrimmages turn into glorified 1-on-1 where players are trying to only show what they can.

Darrell Johnson – Cross Over Hoops

1. Look for attitude and effort

Every team needs a few players who are always going hard, always diving for loose balls, always competing, always talking, always having a good attitude, etc.



Even if these players are not your most talented, their enthusiasm will rub off on the other players and improve the culture of the team. If a player has a bad attitude, cut him before it rubs off on the other players.

Culture is the key to success.

2. Look for practice players

Look for players who are going to push your first team.

Even if this player will never play in a game, they can be a very valuable asset to the team if they know their role, play good defense, and make your best players work and improve every day in practice.

3. Look for potential

You never know how a young player is going to develop, so keep an eye out for potential in young players. Many times, young players are skilled enough to play, but not athletic enough to play because their body has not matured yet.

For example, not every freshman is physically ready to compete at the varsity level, but with time, their athleticism will develop as their body matures.

Dave Hopla – DaveHopla.com

I would tell coaches to:

1. Stress fundamentals. Shooting, passing, and dribbling. Fundamentals never go out of style.
2. Teach players how to play instead of trying to teach them plays.



Ganon Baker – Elev8 Basketball

1. The tryout should be a mix of individual and team skill sessions with a good portion of the tryout 3 on 3 and 5 on 5. Have other coaches ref so you can get a good evaluation.
2. The good players with talent will stand out, you will know who they are. It's the players 9-13 or 14 (depending on how many players you want in your team) that will determine a fun and successful season.



The Points below are some good skills to look for. If these players have at least two or more of them, TAKE THEM!

- High energy on both ends
- Talking on both ends
- Great teammate, always touching and acknowledging their peers
- Sprint lanes
- Sprint to screen
- Talk – “ELC”
- Stop dribble penetration by 2nd bounce – “Catch their first move”
- Post's post deep
- Attack basket for score, foul, or assist
- Offensive rebound the ball
- Get to FT line
- Get a defensive rebound
- Win the 50/50 loose ball

- Draw a charge

Janis Meredith – JBM Thinks

As a sports parent, I would say this:

You may have heard reports of kids trying out, but sports parents want you to put all that aside and give each athlete a fair chance. When choosing your team, remember the importance of hard work, a team-player attitude, and coachability.



My husband, who's coached for 28 years, says he'd much rather have kids with a good attitude and a hard work ethic than kids with great skill and no heart. Parents understand that you will want to choose talented athletes for your team, but keep in mind that kids with a team-player attitude, good work ethic and a coachable spirit can also be valuable assets to your team even if they are not quite as skilled as other athletes.

Remember these are just kids; they are not yet as good as they will be if they get good coaching and are allowed to enjoy the game while developing skills and learning character lessons. See past the flash, and look for the potential.

And when you decide your team, and players are cut, parents like to know why. Give them constructive criticism and a plan of action for how their child can improve and be ready for tryouts next time around. Tell them specific things that their child needs to work on and encourage that child to keep playing if he loves the game, no matter where it is. It may be on another team, or it may be in a non-competitive setting with friends or family.

Jeremy Russotti – 1 Percent Club

1. Setting intensity and climate of the gym is important

You have to set the tone from the first minute about how the rest of the 2 hours will go.

2. Ball touches

Make sure there are a lot of basketballs and your able to have a lot of action going on at once. The easiest way to evaluate is to allow the players lots of opportunities to shine (or not shine). Different stations with small groups for the different skill levels will allow that to happen. You don't want players or parents to not feel their child was given a fair chance.



3. Competition

Put them in stressful environments. You will find out who your horses are that will go to bat for you.

Jim Burson – JimBurson.com

1. Don't cut anyone on the first cut!
2. Try and be as objective as possible
3. Be aware of parents' feelings and don't overreact when they love their kid more than they love you.



John Leonzo – John Leonzo Basketball

1. Remember that you are coaching a program, not just a team for 1 year

Experienced coaches have the ability to make decisions for the team in the present while still forecasting what needs to happen in their program in the future. With that being said, I believe that it is vital for a beginning coach to be looking for players that are coachable and willing to buy into the culture that is going to be created.



Know what character and player qualities are important to you, find them in the players trying out, and then cultivate them over the season. You only get to build the foundation once, so be sure not to cut corners.

2. Selfishness kills teams more than talent helps teams

Remember that all that glitters is not gold. Refuse to be blinded by talent and skill alone. Pay attention to who is a good teammate, who works hard, who sacrifices their body when they play.

Coach K always uses the analogy of a team being like 5 fingers: If they are spread out and not connected they lack power, be when brought together in a fist they can do much more.

John O'Sullivan – Changing the Game Project

1. **Be honest:** in your selections and your feedback to players who did not make it.
2. **Be open:** to a meeting with players/families who get cut and tell them what needs to happen to be successful in the future.
3. **Be vulnerable:** admit you could be wrong, and challenge a player to train hard and prove that you made a mistake next year.



Jordan Delp – Pure Sweat Basketball

1. Be efficient

Do not waste time on drills or anything else that does not translate to what your players will experience on the court. You have a limited amount of time to evaluate and decide on your team, so be prepared well in advance and make sure you are determining who can fit into your system.



Determine what actions and skills you want to see out of your players and find the ones that best fit the mold. Plan your work and then go work your plan!

2. Compete in a variety of situations

Yes, you need to see how your players play in full court, 5-on-5 play; but, you also should see how they react and perform in various situations as well. Before basketball tryouts, make sure to develop simple, efficient drills that simulate different actions your players will need to excel in on both ends of the floor.

This can be as simple as a 3-on-3 wing ball screen drill, dictating how the offense attacks and how the defense plays the screening action. Seeing players in controlled 1-on-1 situations is a phenomenal way to drill down on individual players as well.

3. Find the right mix

History is littered with talented teams that failed to have success because they lacked chemistry. Your job is not to find the 12-15 best players, it is to find the 12-15 players that best fit together and then help them reach their potential.

Yes, talent is certainly a must. But coachable talent that cares more about the “WE” than the “ME” is what breeds success and will help you build a long-term winning culture.

Koran Godwin – Jump Start Hoops

I would advise a beginning coach to focus on conditioning, skill work and 5 on 5 team play.

Conditioning: Wind sprints will allow you to separate the serious players from the seasonal ones. Not that you expect everyone to be in tip top shape but you will get an idea of who has been prepping for tryouts.



Skill work: Incorporate drills that allow you to evaluate ball handling, passing, shooting and finishing at the basket. This is an important part of the tryout as you get to see each player's skill set. Most players separate themselves from the competition in these drills.

5 on 5 Team Play: Some would say that this is the most important part of the tryout as you get to see the players compete in a game like setting. You get to evaluate each player on offense and defense.

All three of these focus areas go hand in hand. If you are able to design a try out schedule that incorporates the aforementioned areas you have a solid foundation to start evaluating your players.

Kyle Ohman – Basketball HQ

Going into basketball tryouts you most likely have a good idea of the top 8 or so players that are going to be on your team (depending on the size of your school). So really you are trying to figure out the best fits for the remainder of your team. These players have a big impact on a team because they either improve or take away from the culture that you are trying to build in your program.



So here are 3 aspects that you should focus on in tryouts; Conditioning, Competition, and Mental Toughness.

Conditioning: If a player shows up out of shape it almost always means that they are not fully engaged in being there and being a part of the team. There are some exceptions to this; recovering from injury, multi-sport athlete, etc. So do drills and exercises that are going to reveal a player's level of conditioning, and you will find out which players are committed, or not.

Competition: You want players that are going to raise the level of competition in practice and in games. This means that you may take a player that is a little bit less skilled because he or she gets after it in practice and will create a high level of intensity for the team.

Mental Toughness: A great way to evaluate mental toughness is conditioning and high-intensity drills. Is a player able to function mentally when they are tired or when they have to remember a set of moves in a quick paced drill? All this is important for finding the players that are going to be able to execute down the stretch of a close game in the season.

The bottom line is that you are looking to create the best team, not find the best 12 players. You want players that are going to fill roles and add value to the team as a whole. Good luck creating your winning team!

Lamar Hull – Inspirational Basketball

My advice would be to have a good coaching staff that can help you evaluate talent and determine what is needed for your basketball team to succeed. Secondly, have a game plan for each tryout session.

Focus on fundamentals, conditioning, teamwork, talking, and basketball IQ.

Putting a focus on these things will help you evaluate talent, weed out the players who don't want to be on the court, and find the players that have put a lot of time and effort in their skills.



Lemar Griffin – Grind Time Hoops

1. Remember that players are nervous and will sometimes do things to impress you that are not apart of their game, encourage them to play their game to the best of their abilities throughout the entire tryout process.
2. Most coaches don't do this but try to stress defense! Almost every player will walk in the gym ready to show their offensive abilities, try to find the guy who is eager to play defense.
3. Keep it simple.



Mark Adams – Mark Adams Basketball

1. Make sure you have all the required school/county/state paperwork (physicals, release forms, etc.) for every student – athlete that tries out. You should also have a Progress Report that includes academic and behavior information on every player.
2. Make sure your basketball tryouts include well-devised drills that allow players to demonstrate their skills. (ball handling, passing, shooting, defense, rebounding, decision making, etc.)
3. If you know certain players are definitely making the team – allow the ones 'on the fence' and others more reps and scrimmage/playing time so you can better evaluate.
4. You don't always pick the 12 or 15 best players. Often you pick the players that will make for the best team!



Matt Monroe – Hoops Roundtable

Try-outs can be one of, if not the, most difficult time of the season. Decisions have to be made to shape your team that may make or break your season and have a huge impact on those trying out.

Below are a couple of thoughts when conducting try-outs as a beginner coach:

- Implement drills that will show whether or not players have the skills that you are looking for.
- Make sure you simulate game-like situations.
- Organize practice in a way in which all players are participating as frequently as possible.
- Document everything – keep attendance of who is trying out, record notes on your observations of players, and think about developing a rubric in which to score players who are trying out.
- Make sure you communicate and interact with every player at the try-outs – don't just



focus on the “top” players.

- Get multiple looks and have your assistant coaches see each player to get a different perspective.
- When making cuts, meet with each individual player who is being cut if possible, provide them feedback, and thank them for taking a chance and trying for the team.
- Do your best to make try-outs a positive experience for everyone involved.
- Instruct those who made the team to carry themselves with humility around school and be mindful of those who were not as fortunate.

Mike Costello – Pure Sweat Basketball

1. Be able to justify who you put on your team and why

My first year I took notes on every player so if any parent/admin wanted to know why a kid made a certain team etc I had notes to show.



2. Set the tone early

What will you stand for as a new coach? This is your first chance to make an impression

Mike O’Halloran – Youth Basketball Practice Plans

1. As a general rule: the younger the player, the more value you should place on a player’s athleticism versus basketball skill set.

While there are no absolutes, young players that are very raw in terms of skill, yet are athletic – good speed, strength, good eye-hand coordination, etc. – can make significant improvements quickly and strong contributions to your team. While others who have practiced more might have slight advantages to begin the season, increased practice time for all players over the course of the season will level that off, and the advantages can change.



Typically, younger players haven’t put in so many practice hours that their skill sets are elite. So, it’s easier for more athletic kids to catch up and surpass more skilled, tryout players. However, for older aged kids, it becomes more difficult to play catch up, despite better athleticism, when others have had many seasons to practice and refine their skills.

2.) Figure out an age appropriate rebounding challenge and use it at basketball tryouts.

Rebounding tests court awareness, desire, anticipation, speed to the ball, boxing out technique and more.

A well-executed rebounding drill is one of the best ways to distinguish top players in a group, and it seems to be under-tested in tryouts. In most basketball games, the best rebounding team wins. You want great rebounders on your team.

3.) You can count on 90% of players being more nervous at tryouts than they will be at any point during the season.

Look for ways that you can get your players to relax. Lighten the mood. Tell a joke. Assure them that everyone will have an opportunity to play on a team (if that's the case, and it should be). Share a story about a time you were nervous. Create some dialogue with players so they get to know each other and you.

Players will perform their best when they're comfortable. Let players and parents know before, during and after tryouts that "players develop at different speeds. The players that make the "B" team in 6th, 7th and 8th grades might be "A" team players come high school, and visa versa. Whatever team you're assigned, work on improving your game, being a good teammate, and having fun."

Tryouts might be the first impression you make with many of your players and their parents. Make sure it's a good one.

Quinn McDowell – Arete Hoops

Basketball tryouts can be an intimidating and scary time for everyone involved! There is an inherent pressure in having to "try out" for a team that can cause players to be nervous and not perform to their capacity.



Here are 3 things to keep in mind as you prepare for your next tryout.

1. Emphasize the "Controllables"

Without fail, every player will head into the tryout with the pressure of "having to make shots" to make sure the coach notices me. In reality, there is nothing worse for a player to focus on than 'having to make shots' when heading into a tryout situation.

Repeatedly emphasize that you are looking for players who do the little things that they can control and you don't care about who scores the points or makes shots. Stress the importance of the little things like focus, hustle, defense, team play, and communication.

Focusing on these things will take pressure off the players and will make for a better tryout all-around.

2. Be Open and Honest

Cutting players in a tryout setting is never fun, but the more honest and open you are up front the easier the process will be for everyone. Acknowledge at the beginning of the tryout that this is a difficult process, but just because you get cut this year doesn't mean that it will be the same every season.

Communicate clearly the process you will use to make cuts and do your best to give as much feedback as possible to the kids that don't make the team. Any kind of feedback you can give to kids that are cut shows that you care for each player and have a genuine

interest in their future.

You never know how kids will develop down the road, and the players you cut today might be the players that win you games in the future! This is especially true in a school setting. There are countless stories of kids that get cut from a middle school team but go on to become a star on Varsity.

3. Remember Basketball is Fun!

Don't let your players forget that basketball is a fun! Try and create a fun environment during basketball tryouts that emphasize hard work, competition, and teamwork.

These are the elements of basketball that make people fall in love with the game, so do your best to structure your tryouts to bring these principles to the forefront. Bring energy and enthusiasm to the tryout and the players will follow your lead!

Randy Brown – CoachRB.com

My advice is the same for coaches at all experience levels of coaching. To me, it is so important to “prepare” to coach than the actual coaching itself.



1. Create a personal philosophy of coaching.

What do you stand for when you walk onto the floor? Who are you as a leader of young people? Do you consider yourself a coach or a teacher?

Write down no more than a page and include items such as;

- Why do you coach?
- What are the values of the game you want to instill?
- What are your top 3?
- What value do you put on organization and preparation?
- What is your philosophy of teaching skills and developing players?
- Are you a “process” guy or a “results” guy?
- What are your overall offensive and defensive philosophies?

2. What are you going to teach?

This comes only with a well thought out plan that has taken lots of time to create. Coaching by the “seat of your pants” is not the way to honor the game.

Refer to your Top 3 when you are putting together an overall plan for practice then break down the whole into pieces, then the pieces into drills, and finally, the drills into skills.

3. Be honest and determine whether you can competently teach the game and all of its parts.

Hubie Brown said it best; “Teach ONLY what you know how to teach.”

As I said, I’m an organization and preparation guy. If you can accomplish these three things your experience as a practice coach will be enhanced 10 fold!

Ryan Walker – Ryan Walker Basketball

The first thing I would suggest is making sure you involve the entire staff on every level in the program during the evaluation and know the type of player that fits the system.

Second, during basketball tryouts be sure to put the players in the game like situations for your system on both offense and defense.

And lastly, make sure you communicate exactly what the program goals and vision is to the players before tryouts so that they can bring the necessary energy and enthusiasm while putting their best foot forward.



Scott Fields – CoachScottFields.com

1) Set the tone of the program – You must create the culture of the program from day one.

- a. Work ethic established.
- b. The discipline that is expected daily.
- c. The intensity.

2) Create a competitive environment daily – The team is only as strong as it weakest player

- a. All drills must be competitive.
- b. Everything is done at game speed.

3) Cover skill development daily

- a. This allows for teaching of fundamentals that are appropriate for the age and level.
- b. this also allows you as a coach to assess strengths and weaknesses of the group.

4) Coach them up every day

- a. Teach them like they are martians. Show, demonstrate, and teach every proper detail. Don’t assume they know what you know.
- b. The players will learn, grow and develop every day

5) Establish the pride it is to be apart of some special

The team must be the priority. The opportunity to wear the jersey must be honored.



Tamir Goodman – Zone 190

My top three pieces of advice for a beginning coach regarding basketball tryouts:

1. Try to find a way to get to know the athletes as people even before you get to know them as players.

For example, what challenges are they dealing with in their lives? Let the players get to know you as a person as well. You want to appear confident and competent as a coach, while also letting them know you are human.

2. Break the athletes up into the smallest groups possible and have them begin with very basic drills.

This way, each player will feel like he or she got a fair look and hopefully, the players will get a confidence boost by starting out with familiar drills. You as a coach will get a more honest look at the player's talents and abilities.

3. If you have to cut a player but you see that the player is dedicated, find a creative way to have him or her be a part of the team.

Maybe he/she could film practice, be a rebounder or a team manager/statistician. Be very clear as to what you expect the player to work on ahead of next year's tryouts.



Tim Springer – Spartan PT

1. What is your system? Offense and defense.

You need to pick players that best fit that.

2. Who works the hardest and has the best attitude.

You are going to spend a lot of time with these players of the next few months. Make sure it is an enjoyable process by the quality of players you pick.

3. Look for upside in a player, not just current ability.

As well as that, look for things the players do well. Not just what they can't do.



Wesley Kosel – HoopsChalkTalk.com

1. Have the tryout mimic a typical practice for your team

Make the players trying out run through the same drills and plays that your team will throughout the season. You want to see how these prospective players can fit into your system.

2. Be honest with the kids

When it comes time to make the cuts, be upfront and honest about why he/she didn't make the team. I'm a fan of talking to the players face to face.



That's it! Thank you.

A huge thank you to every expert that took the time to participate in this expert post.

I hope you've all learned as much from the answers as I have. There's always some awesome nuggets of information.

Please share this post with another coach who will be conducting basketball tryouts this season!

Body Fuel – The Difference Between Carbohydrates, Protein and Fats

 basketballforcoaches.com/body-fuel/

Understanding your body's fuel system will give your players an edge during game time. They'll be able to make educated decisions about how their diet affects their play.

Your body has three main types of nutrients (called "macronutrients"): carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

I'm not going to go into a ton of detail about each of them.



Photo Credit: [floodkoff](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

Why not?

Because you don't need to know **everything**. Too much information and you and your players will become confused and forget it all. At least, that's what happened to me the first couple of times anyway. You need to know the essentials... the things that are most important to athletes.

Here's the essential things you need to know about each fuel source.

Carbohydrates: Your Body's Primary Fuel Source

Carbohydrates are your body's main fuel source.

There are two types of carbohydrates: simple and complex.

Simple carbohydrates are carbs that your body can break down into glucose and burn as energy almost immediately. If you eat a slice of watermelon, it only takes about 20 minutes before the sugar hits your blood stream. High doses of simple sugars can cause sugar spikes and crashes, while small doses can help give an immediate energy boost.

Complex carbohydrates are carbs that your body needs to digest and slowly break down. They're converted into simple sugars over time as your body metabolizes the carbs. Bread, rice and vegetables are examples of complex carbs.

It's important to note that not all carbs are created equal. Though a Kit-Kat bar and a banana are both simple carbs, the latter has far more nutrition and causes less of an insulin spike than the Kit-Kat bar. As a rule of thumb, opt for whole foods rather than processed foods and avoid processed sugars.

Fats: A Multi-Purpose Nutrient

Fats serve several important functions in the body. For one, they're a store of energy. When your body needs more energy than it has glucose, it breaks down fat. Fat also helps your body process vitamins. The body also uses fats as a temporary storage system for toxins, before they can be carried out of the body.

There are many different kinds of fats. The so-called "unhealthy fats" are trans-fats and saturated fats. These tend to be found in fast foods, hydrogenated oils, baked foods, butter and certain kinds of animal meats.

The "healthy fats" are monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats. Nuts, avocados, olives and other natural sources of fats have these kinds of healthy fats.

Proteins: Your Body's Building Blocks

Proteins are the primary building block for your body's tissues. The amino acid chains form different patterns to create different kinds of tissues. Think of it like the raw materials that your body uses to form new muscles.

Protein is generally not used as an energy source unless the body has no other option. It uses carbohydrates first, then fats and finally breaks down muscles and uses protein if no other options are present.

These are the three essential building blocks to your body's fuel system. Make sure you have enough carbs to fuel your workout, enough proteins to build new muscles and enough healthy fats to keep your body running smoothly.

Is there anything you consider important that I left out about each of these fuel sources? Let me know in the comments.

– Coach Mac

Box and 1 Defense *Complete Coaching Guide*



C O A C H M A C

basketballforcoaches.com

The Box and 1 Defense - Complete Coaching Guide



Do you ever come up against teams with a single dominant player? One player that scores a majority of their team's points every game?

When you do come up against a team like that, it's the perfect opportunity to implement the box and 1 defense.

The box and 1 defense is a junk defense commonly used against teams with one great offensive player surrounded by players of less offensive talent.

Quick Note: For those that aren't familiar with the term, a 'junk defense' is a defense that combines man-to-man and zone principles together.

The defense involves one defender (the chaser) playing man-to-man defense on the opposition's best offensive threat while the other four defenders set up in a box formation and play zone.

The main objective is to disrupt and confuse the opposition by giving them something they've rarely played against and force them to adjust their entire offense accordingly.

Strengths

1. Causes Mass Confusion – By implementing a box and 1 defense, you're forcing the opposition to run an offense completely different to their normal playing style.

Having relied on their star player to do a bulk of the scoring throughout the season, the other players will now be forced to attack and contribute to the scoreboard.

Forcing the opposition to make massive changes to their game-plan is always a good thing for the defense.

2. Their Star Player Will Get Frustrated – Imagine how frustrating it will be for their star player (who usually dominates the basketball) to be unable to get open while their teammates pass the basketball around and take shots.

This will often lead to the star player committing silly fouls by pushing off to get open, getting angry at their teammates for not getting them the basketball, and they'll often take bad shots when they finally do get the basketball in hopes to get on the scoreboard.

3. It Will Fatigue Their Star Player – If the chaser performs their job properly, the opposition's star player will have an incredibly tough time trying to get open which will lead to them getting fatigued quickly.

This is why I recommend rotating 2 or 3 defensive players through the chaser position so that they can all give their 100% effort at all times and then get a quick rest.

4. Easy to Implement – There's not an easier zone defense in existence than the box zone with 4 players. Everyone's roles are obvious and it won't take long for your players to understand it.

This allows you to teach the defense to your players before or during a game and you won't need to spend 8 hours of practice time teaching it to them.

Weaknesses

1. Middle of the Zone – The middle of a zone is always the most vulnerable position on the court for the offense to exploit. It's imperative that your weak side players are always in the correct position to deny the pass into the middle of the zone.

2. Doesn't Work as Well Against Star Big Men – This defense works best against a player that scores a majority of their points from the perimeter or off the drive.

If their star player scores a majority of their points from inside off post ups, the box formation can make the key too crowded and less effective.

3. Can't be used against great shooting teams – Since there are only two players guarding the entire three-point line excluding the corners, the opposition is going to get some open shots.

If you're playing against a team with great shooters, this defense won't be your best option.

Box and 1 Rules

Here are the three main rules of the box and 1 defense...

1. Star Player's Touches Must be Limited – The entire defense is centered around keeping the basketball out of the opposition's star player's hands. The chaser must be in complete denial the entire time and not worrying about anything else.

2. Three Box Players Must Rebound – Whenever a shot is attempted by the opposition, there should be one person contesting the shot and three players forming a triangle around the rim for the rebound.

3. Everyone Collapses When the Star Player Gets the Basketball – When the star defender does get the basketball, all 4 box defenders must collapse back into their box positions.

Roles and Responsibilities

When running the box and 1 defense, there are three positions players can be in...

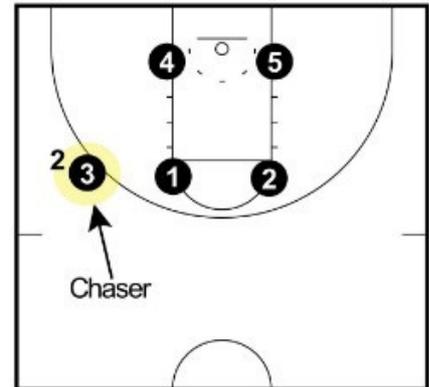
1. Chaser (Star Defender)

This is the player that is given the difficult task of guarding the opposition's star offensive player. Their only role is to make the game as difficult as possible for the opposition's star player.

They do this by being in complete denial whenever the player they're on doesn't have the basketball. They don't need to worry about being in help position, they don't need to worry about rotating... their only focus should be keeping the basketball out of the star player's hands.

This player must be a smart defender and willing to work incredibly hard.

They must also be disciplined because the star player is going to get frustrated and push off, throw elbows, talk trash, etc. The chaser can't react to any of it. They must keep their cool and continue to defend smart.

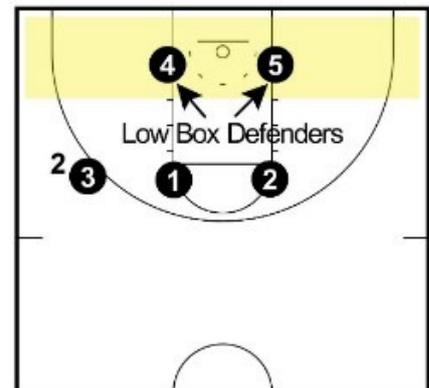


2. Low Box Defenders

The low box defenders are in charge of defending the low post, defending the basketball when it's in the corner, and always being ready to help if they're on the weak-side.

They must also be great rebounders.

These players must be prepared to front the post whenever the basketball is on their side of the court and understand that it's always a requirement for them to crash the boards hard unless they're contesting a shot.

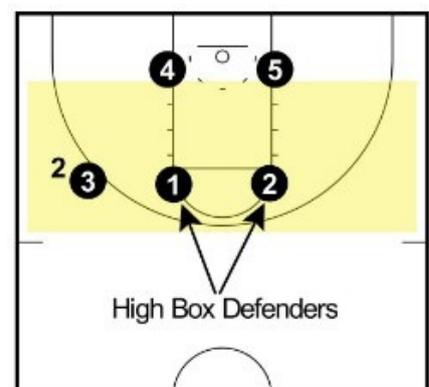


3. High Box Defenders

The high box defenders are in charge of keeping the basketball out of the high post and defending the perimeter whenever the basketball is on their side of the court.

These defenders are preferably quick and good on-ball defenders since they'll be required to do a lot of sprinting around the court! High box defenders

If a shot is taken and they're not the player contesting the shot, they must also go after rebounds.



How to Run the Box and 1 Defense

The first step to running the box and 1 defense is to decide which of your players is going to take on the task of being the chaser.

Once you've decided on the chaser, of your other four players, you will usually assign your two tallest to be the low box defenders, and the two shortest to be the high box defenders. Although this doesn't always need to be the case. The coach must decide what's best for the team!

In the following paragraphs, I'll speak mostly about the box defenders since we know what the chaser should be doing at all times... denying the basketball to the star player!

When the Star Player has the Basketball

When their star player manages to receive the basketball (which will happen), all box defenders immediately collapse into the original box set depending on where the basketball is on the floor.

This box formation gives us great help defense all over the court if the star player decides to attack.

An added benefit is that this will leave their teammates open on the perimeter which will encourage them to pass the basketball.

Players know that they'll look like a selfish player if they're not passing to their wide open teammates. This is a good thing for the defense. We want the basketball out of their hands!



Basketball at the Top of the Key

When the basketball is at the top of the key, there will not be a specific player defending the basketball.

The two high box defenders will be near the high post deterring the player with the basketball from making a pass into the middle of the zone. We allow them to pass the basketball around the perimeter.

The two low box defenders should each have a foot inside the lane on their respective sides.

The chaser will be in complete denial.



Basketball on the Wing

When the basketball has been passed to a wing player, it's the strong side high box player's responsibility to close out and defend the basketball. Since we just want to keep the basketball outside the key, they should have an even stance and not be pushing the offensive player to a specific area of the court.

The weak-side high box player will slide across to the middle of the lane and deny the high post.

The strong-side low box player must fight their way to front the post and the weak-side low box player should slide across to split line so that they can prevent any lob passes over the top.

We always want the strong-side low box players fronting the low post because if the basketball is passed to the corner, it's their responsibility to close out and contest the shot.

The chaser will be in complete denial.



Basketball in the Corner

When the basketball is in the corner it's the responsibility of the strong-side low box player to close out and defend the basketball. It's important that this player doesn't allow them to drive along the baseline.

The weak-side low box player must slide across and defend the player on the low block if there is one. If not, they're in help position.

The weak-side guard drops into the gap and denies the pass into the middle of the key.

The strong-side guard has a couple of options similar to most zones:

1. Drop back – This will prevent any pass inside the key from the corner but will allow the offense to pass the basketball back out to their wing player.

2. Hard deny the wing player – If you're not playing against a smart offensive team that will cut into the open space, you can consider hard denying the reversal pass and see if you can force the offensive player to make a tough pass and turn the basketball over. Although this will leave a big hole in the middle of the key!

3. Trap the corner – I don't often recommend trapping the corner in the box and 1 but it can be done. When the pass is made to the corner, the strong-side high box player immediately drops down and double the corner, the weak-side high box player sprints across and denies the reversal pass, and then it's up to the weak-side low box player to intercept the pass to one of the other two players.

The chaser will, as always, be in complete denial anywhere on the court.



Basketball in the High Post

When the basketball finds itself at the high post I prefer to double with the high box defenders than to bring another defender up.

There're a few reasons for this:

1. We don't want to leave a single defender to cover the entire baseline.
2. A box and 1 defense shouldn't be run against great shooting teams so a couple of open outside shots is better than giving away a layup.

At the end of the day, when the basketball gets into the high post, it's a pick your poison scenario. That's why we need to fight hard to keep it out of there!

The low box defenders should hold their ground on the blocks and not allow the dump down pass. The high box players will double the high post and then scramble to recover.



Basketball in the Low Post

The low box players must do everything they can to ensure that a post player doesn't get a seal on them in the low post. Your players should always be fronting the post or, at least, nudging the post player out if they have position.

If the opposition gets a seal on the strong-side defender, we play them straight up and hope they don't take advantage of the open corner three-point shot (again, we have to pick what we give up with this defense).

If they do kick it out to the corner, the strong-side high box player can challenge the shot if they're sure the opposition will take it.

When this happens, both low post players must box out their players and secure the rebound!



Rebounding

Rebounding in the box and 1 is actually quite good for a zone. The reason for this is because there will be an obvious rebounding triangle after each shot is taken from outside as you'll see in the following diagrams.

Whenever a long shot is put up, 1 of the box defenders will contest the shot and the other 3 must crash the boards and go after the rebound.

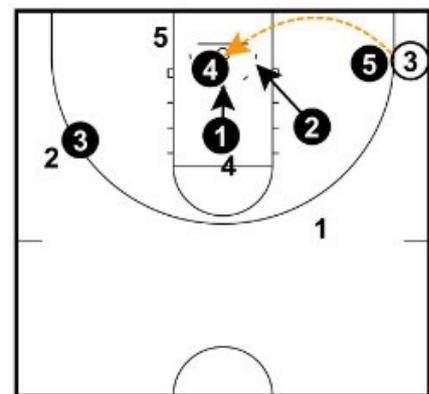
The chaser should always box out their player and keep them away from the basketball. This will keep their star player frustrated and they will often pick up a few silly fouls trying to get the basketball.

Let's look at a few examples...

Shot from the Corner

When the shot is taken from the corner, the strong-side low box defender will contest the shot.

The weak-side low box defender will be in charge of rebounding on the weak side since this is where the shot has the highest chance of landing if missed, the weak-side high box player will rebound from the top, and the strong-side high box player must cut down and rebound on the strong side of the triangle.



Shot from the Wing

When the shot is taken from the wing, the strong-side high box defender will contest the shot.

This leaves both low post defenders to box out and rebound on their respective sides while the weak-side high box player must attack the top of the rebounding triangle and go after the rebound.



Shot from the Top

When the shot is taken from the top of the key it's a little different.

If the shooter is shading to one side of the court and one of the high post defenders thinks they can get a hand up to contest the shot, they should do it and then the other high post defender rebounds from the top.

If none of the defenders can challenge the shot, both should turn and rebound.



If there's an offensive player on the high post during this shot, make sure one of your high post defenders gets a body on them and boxes out!

Defending Skip Passes

Defending skip passes is incredibly simple in the box and 1 defense although not always incredibly effective.

If the basketball is skipped across the court, the player who is tasked with covering that area must simply hustle and close out. Simple, isn't it?

This is another reason why it's difficult to use the box and 1 against a good shooting team.

Let's go over the three most common skip passes...

Wing to Corner Skip Pass

When the basketball is skipped from the wing to the corner, the weak-side low box defender who was on split line must hustle to get out and contest the shot.

It's crucial that this defender does not give up the baseline drive when closing out.



Corner to Wing Skip Pass

On the corner to wing skip pass, the weak-side high box player will close out on the player with the basketball.

We want this player closing out evenly and not directing the offensive player to one side or the other. It's better to give up a contested long-range shot than allow them to blow past us.



Top to Corner Skip Pass

On the top to corner skip pass, the closest low box player must close out on the basketball without giving up the baseline drive.

This pass can be a killer for the defense if the low box player is screened. This is why your players must always be on their toes anticipating screens and getting the best position.



Variations

Diamond and 1 Defense

The diamond and 1 defense is very similar to the box and 1 except that instead of the four box players setting up in a box formation, they set up in a triangle formation.

This allows much better protection around the perimeter since there will be 3 defenders instead of 2, but gives much less help on the inside since there will only be 1 inside defender.

Teams who decide to go with the diamond and 1 will usually have an incredibly dominant big man or be a team that's playing against a team of great outside shooters.

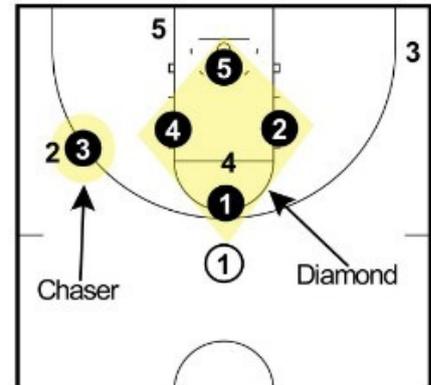
The biggest weakness for this defense is when the opposition gets the basketball into the high post, preventing inside scoring, and also rebounding the basketball.

How it works:

The top of the diamond will cover the basketball when it's at the top of the key and also deny the high post when the basketball's anywhere else on the floor.

The two wing defenders of the diamond and 1 zone will be required to defend the entire wing on their respective sides from the high wing all the way to the corner.

The inside defender will be must be great at protecting the rim above all else. They will be required to defend both blocks, rebound, and challenge any shot around the rim.



Conclusion

By implementing the box and 1 defense, you force a one-dimensional team to beat you with their players that don't usually make an impact on the scoreboard.

The box and 1 does this effectively by causing massive disruption to the offense.

This isn't a staple defense you should use every game. This defense should be used only against certain teams where you think it will be effective.

You might not use it a lot, but it's a great defense to have in the back of your mind. Who knows, you might need it one day!

Cutting Up a Zone Defense with the Milton Zone Attack

 basketballforcoaches.com/milton-zone-attack/



Today I will share one series of concepts I have developed to attack a zone.

The concept I am sharing here will work against any zone with minor adjustments to deployment of players, spacing and knowing who to screen. That said, for the sake of keeping this post simple and understandable, I will make reference to attacking a 2-3 zone.

I would also like to note before starting that I love talking X's & O's, especially when it comes to attacking zones. Hence, anyone who finds these concepts interesting who would also like to talk about them in more detail, I would enthusiastically invite you to reach out to me through my coaching & leadership site at www.coachmattkramer.com. I am a firm believer that when coaches share with other coaches, we all win!

I hope every coach who gives this a look finds something useful!

The Premise:

I heard legendary Syracuse Head Coach Jim Boeheim once explain that he favors playing a zone because most coaches best offensive stuff is designed to be run against man-to-man defense.

Whereas this is not a direct quote, the message is pretty clear to me: most coaches build a comprehensive offensive system or package against man-to-man defense and practice exhaustively against man-to-man, so when 'a Syracuse' jumps up on a schedule, there is perhaps less creativity in the way most teams attack a zone, which makes it easier, in a manner of speaking, for a zone team to prepare.

Now, I'm not suggesting I have found an answer to crack the vaunted Syracuse zone because that zone is the best 2-3 zone in the world, coached by the best coach to ever

coach the 2-3 zone, executed by players the basketball gods created to be the best at defending in the 2-3 zone. What I am suggesting is that when my team runs into a team that favors the zone, we are going to implement a scheme that tests that zone's ability to defend all aspects of good offensive basketball.

With no disrespect meant to anyone, I have found that many zones prey on the 'vanilla' attack of most teams' zone offenses and, thus, are not coached to defend all the possibilities of our zone offensive approach when we execute well.

Here are the 5 key ideas that make up the foundation of the Milton Zone Attack:

1. Ball movement
2. Spacing and varied deployment of players
3. Screening the zone in various places to extend it.
4. Overloading to distort the zone
5. Cutting through the zone to confuse it

Base Concepts:

We have two different base concepts we operate out of against any zone: A one-post continuity concept we call "Hoban" (named after the high school I attended); and a standard two-post look with a one-guard front and two on the wings we call "Double."

Today, I am going to give you the basic continuity to our "Hoban" zone offense and a couple wrinkles we run out of it to really test any zone defense.

"Hoban"

Hoban starts with a point, two wings, a high post deployed on the foul line and a player on the low block.

For the sake of making things easy to follow, call the man on the point the '1'; the man on the right wing the '2'; the man on the left wing the '3'; the man in the high post the '5'; and the man on the block the '4'. (I stress here that we are NOT locked into this numbering; I do a ton of adjusting and manipulating of our players to create different opportunities and mismatches and I encourage any coach using this stuff to do the same.)

The Continuity:

a). The ball starts in the hands of the 1 and he will enter to a wing... let's say to 2 on the right wing.

On the entry to the wing, 4 creates a 'heavy side' by moving into the ball side corner which immediately puts the defense in an overload situation.

b). 2 passes the ball from wing to 4 in the corner and then 2 cuts to the ball side block for a possible return pass.

Assuming 4 does not have a shot, he checks 2 on the 'Hoban cut' as he dribbles up out of the corner attacking the top defender in the 2-3.

If 2 does not receive a pass on the 'Hoban cut' he slides through to the back side corner and 5 dives to the ball side box as the ball is being dribbled up out of the corner.

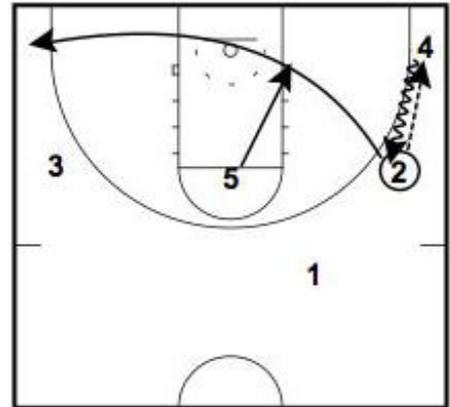
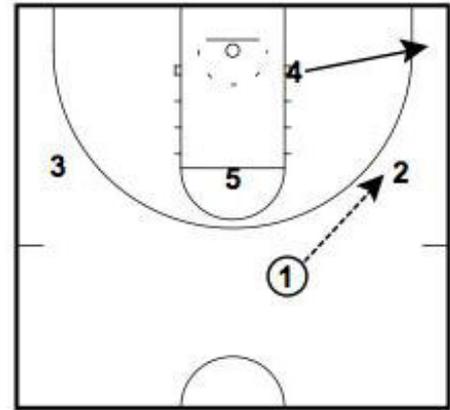
The 'dive' to the box by the 5 off of 2's Hoban cut creates a tricky situation for the zone to defend and will often result in a 1 on 1 opportunity on the block. (While all this is going on, 3 should be sitting on the back side wing in a soft spot looking to catch a skip pass and 1 should be moving to a spot where he can receive the reversal pass.)

c). 4, having dribbled up to the right wing, reverses the ball back to 1 on the point.

When the ball comes back to the 1, 5 moves back to the high post.

1 has 4 basic options when he catches the reversal pass: shoot; check the high post for a direct entry; attack the top of the zone going away from the pass and make two defenders play him; and/or reverse the ball to 3 on the left wing.

Assuming he chooses to reverse the ball to 3, it is easy to see the left side of the floor has now become the 'heavy side' of the floor, 2 having cut through to the left corner. At this point, the continuity continues.

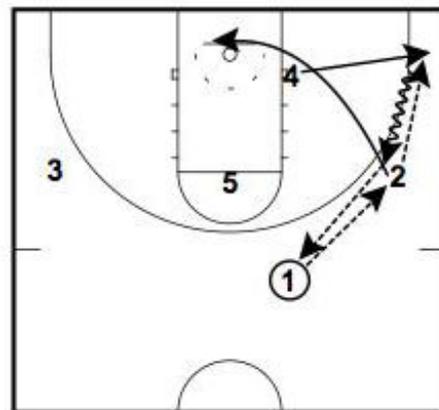


a). Ball is passed from 1 on the point to 2 on the wing.

4 slides to the ball side corner as he always does to create the 'heavy side.'

2 passes to 4 in the corner then makes the Hoban cut to the ball-side block as 4 checks him and dribbles up out of the corner toward the wing.

While this is going on, 1 moves so he can receive an easy pass from 4.



b). 4 passes to 1 and 1 quickly 'freeze dribbles' the zone by going one hard dribble away from 4's pass. (The freeze dribble is crucial because it gets the zone to move toward the normal continuity of the offense and sets up the screening that is about to take place.)

2 (instead of sliding through to the back side corner like he normally would) stops under the basket and pops back to the strong-side of the screen set by 4 for an open jump shot. 4 will screen the man who was just guarding him in the zone, typically the bottom man in a 2-3 zone. 1 reverse pivots and throws back to the 2 for a shot coming off of 4's screen.



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c). If the defender jumps over the screen set by 4, we teach the 4 to let him do it, in other words don't fight with the defender and get caught for an illegal screen.

If the defender does this, it allows the screener (4) to slip inside the zone for a direct pass from 1. (Often times what happens here is that this screening variation gets the 2 open on the first run for an easy look at a three-pointer then we get the slip on the second run).



Either way, we are giving the defense a myriad of things to guard.

Over time, this tends to extend even the best of zones, which allows a variety of windows for us to pass and drive through.

“Baseline Run It” Call:

I like to have what I call a “Run It” for every set we run against a zone and man-to-man

defense.

When the words “Run It” are added after the call it tells our players we are running a counter to the initial concept – often times a lob or back door wrinkle.

In this case, “Baseline Run It” is a counter that results in a lob for an easy basket (Last year that meant an alley-oop dunk for our Navy-bound scholarship forward Mo Lewis.)

a). Same as with “Baseline,” “Baseline Run It” starts with a pass from 1 to 2 on the wing and 2 passing to 4 in the ball side corner on the heavy side.

2 then makes his Hoban cut through to the ball side box as 4 dribbles up out of the corner and looks to reverse the ball to 1.

b). As the pass goes to 1 on this wrinkle, we are preying on the defender reading the play and making sure not to bite and suck in on the freeze dribble.

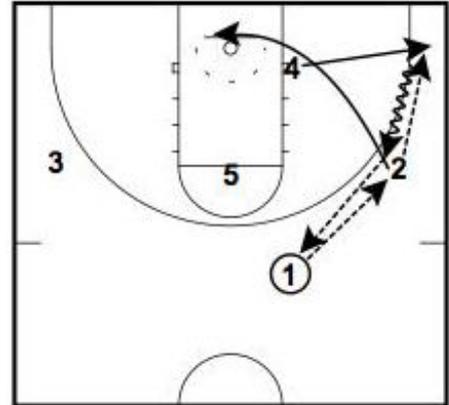
3, instead of sitting on the back side wing as he normally would, moves a bit higher, perhaps as high as the lane-line extended to receive a reversal pass from 1.

This time, instead of freeze dribbling, the 1 quickly hits 3; 2, who had stopped on the block after the Hoban cut sets a back screen on the bottom man of the zone as the ball is passed to 3 and 4 runs off the baseline side of the screen toward the basket for the lob pass.

The 5, who has remained in the high post, typically occupies the attention of the middle man in the zone enough to give the 4 a free run at dunking the lob.

c). If the middle defender in the zone stays home and takes the lob away – very unlikely the first couple runs – we like 3 to hit 5 in the high post, 4 to continue through to pin the baseline defender outside on the ball side and the 2, who set the screen on the baseline defender on the right side to reverse pivot and seal his man outside. This puts the ball in the hands of the 5 at the high post with two great opportunities to pass to open players (2 & 4) near the basket inside a zone that has been extended and compromised.

This puts the ball in the hands of the 5 at the high post with two great opportunities to pass to open players (2 & 4) near the basket inside a zone that has been extended and compromised.





Final Thoughts:

Hoban and the “Baseline” and “Baseline Run It” wrinkles that we run out of that basic continuity are just a few examples of how we go about attacking a zone. In my experience, unless a zone is exceptionally well coached and a team is 100% committed to it, these concepts are enough. Taught effectively – obviously with capable players – this stuff will cut up any zone.

However, there are teams at the higher levels who are very well-schooled in their zones, so we are ready with a package of other concepts to make sure we are prepared to vary our attack for any situation.

I hope the ideas I have given here are found to be useful. Anyone who would like to discuss these ideas further or talk about the other concepts we use against the zone – or anything else basketball – please visit my site at www.coachmattkramer.com where all content is 100% free.

Do's and Don'ts of Social Media For Basketball Players

 basketballforcoaches.com/dos-and-donts-of-social-media/

If you want put yourself in the best position to be recruited to the best college it means you can't use social media like your friends do, like it or not.

As we've talked about in a [previous social media post](#), college coaches are crossing athletes off their lists because of the content they're posting on social media.

Now don't get me wrong... I'm not against athletes using social media. At all. There are many benefits to using it and it's a great way to stay in contact with friends and family and have some fun, but there are a few things athletes need to be aware of if they're looking to impress recruiters.



Below I've listed 12 things I believe it's important for athletes to keep in mind. Not all of them are compulsory, but they're good for all athletes to know.

Do's

1. Do use correct spelling and grammar

Not compulsory... but will make you look more mature than other players that recruiters may be looking at.

2. Do share your accomplishments

Some players I've talked to believe they may look arrogant by posting or tweeting about their accomplishments on social media. While it's best not to go overboard on this, there's nothing wrong with sharing the accomplishments you've worked hard to achieve. Remember not to disrespect the competition and to praise and thank others whenever you get a chance.

3. Do connect with coaches, skill trainers, and others that may help you

There are thousands of coaches and skill trainers on social media and they're all out there looking to connect with others. Get in touch with them! Especially ones you find that live close to you. You never know what opportunities may arise.

4. Do remember that people can see the time of your tweet or post

If you're sending out tweets at 2am and you have an early morning training the next day it's going to explain why you're struggling to give top effort the next day.

5. Do watch what you re-tweet

Don't re-tweet anything you wouldn't write yourself. Just because you didn't write it originally doesn't matter. By re-tweeting it you're telling recruiters and your other followers that you share the same thoughts.

6. Do recognize the accomplishments of others

Recognize and give a shout out when other people you know achieve something great.

Don'ts

1. Don't use an inappropriate Twitter handle

First and foremost, the Twitter handle or username you're going to be using to promote yourself on social media must not make you look bad or immature.

2. Don't get into arguments online

This is a must. As an athlete you'll always be in the spotlight, and criticism, whether warranted or not, comes with being in the spotlight. There will be criticism directed your way and all players wanting to be great need to be the bigger person and not retaliate. The last thing you want to do is say something angrily online out of frustration.

3. Don't post anything negative about your coach, team-mates, or the competition

There's nothing that will cross you off a recruiters list quicker than bad mouthing your coach, teammates, or the competition. Doing so will show poor attitude and a lack of character.

4. Don't use profanity or derogatory words

There's no need for them and using them is a terrible habit to adopt. Using them makes you look very unprofessional and immature.

5. Don't post about getting drunk or using illicit substances

Whether you drink alcohol or not, there's no reason to be sharing it on FaceBook or Twitter. As for illicit substances, if you're using them stop. They've wrecked far too many lives and they're not worth it. Don't succumb to peer pressure and use them.

6. Don't share your password with anyone

You don't want your friends giving you a bad name by posting inappropriate content trying to be funny.

Conclusion

To put it in a nut-shell, recruiters use social media to determine your character. They use your posts to find out who you really are. How you interact with others, what you like to do with your spare time, etc.

You need to present yourself the best way you can and following the tips above will go a long way to help you do that.

Players: If you wouldn't want your parents or coach to read it, don't post it.

Coaches: Consider running a social media seminar/meeting at the beginning of your basketball season. Let the players know the importance social media can play in their future.

Dribble Drive Offense – Complete Coaching Guide

 basketballforcoaches.com/dribble-drive-offense/



When Vance Walberg created the Dribble Drive Offense more than twenty years ago, his goal was to develop an offense that fit the personnel he was coaching at the time.

He didn't have many tall post players, but he did have a lot of quick guards who could get to the rim.

Thinking outside the box, he came up with an offense based on dribble penetration and outside shooting which is now popular at the youth, high school, college, and professional levels today.

Coach Walberg originally name this offense 'Attack, Attack, Skip, Attack, Attack'.

Or 'AASAA' for short.

Who Should Run the Dribble Drive Offense?

The dribble drive motion is a great offense for all ages and skill levels.

It's best utilized by teams who have aggressive and capable ball-handlers who can attack their opponents in one-on-one situations and get to the rim and finish.

If possible, teams should also have several players who have the ability to knock down open three-point shots. This will make it difficult for defenders to help on drives and will punish them if they choose to.

Finally, this offense is hard to run without players who have a high basketball IQ. While this offense definitely develops it, players must be able to make smart decisions on whether to shoot or pass.

Strengths of the Dribble Drive Offense

Players Make Decisions - Players have a lot of freedom to make decisions when running the dribble drive offense as there are no strict offensive guidelines.

Creates High Percentage Shots - Teams who implement this offense will get a lot of layups and open three-pointers if run correctly. These are both great shots that lead to a high points per possession average.

Draws Fouls - With players consistently attacking the rim, there are a lot of opportunities for players to draw fouls. This leads to more free-throw opportunities and puts the opposition in foul trouble.

Positionless Offense - Although there is a post player inside, any player on the team can fill any of the five positions on the floor.

Post Space - If you do choose to take advantage of a mismatch inside, there is a lot of space inside the key with the other four players spread out around the three-point line.

Weaknesses of the Dribble Drive Offense

Tendency to Over Dribble - Since the dribble drive motion offense relies on dribble penetration, it's possible that some players will elect to dribble immediately when there are better options like passing to a teammate.

Can Lead to More Turnovers - Attacking the paint and then kicking out to a teammate behind the three-point line is a difficult pass to make. This can lead to more turnovers than a more 'perimeter passing' offense like the 5-out motion.

Lack of Offensive Guidelines - The dribble drive offense can be difficult for players who are used to being told exactly what to do and exactly when to do it (set plays do this).

Lack of Screens - On-ball and off-ball screens are one of the best ways to create an advantage for the offensive team. These actions aren't common in the dribble drive offense.

Tendency to 'Ball-Watch' - Most young players are used to standing and watching when a teammate attacks the rim. In this offense, they must learn to move to open space on dribble penetration.

Spacing is Difficult - With all the dribble penetration, players can find it difficult to read their teammates and keep even spacing around the perimeter.

Settling for Three-Pointers - Another disadvantage I've found when running the dribble drive motion is players settling for three-pointers when they have even a half-second of time. Have to attack if you're not making outside shots.

Dribble Drive Offense Rules

1. Always be in 'Attack Mode' - This mentality is crucial for effectively running this offense. On every catch, players should be looking to attack their on-ball defender and get to the hoop or create for a teammate.

2. Post Player Always Weakside - In this version of the dribble drive offense, the post player should continually move to the weakside depending on the location of the basketball. Unless they have a clear advantage and the coach wants an isolation.

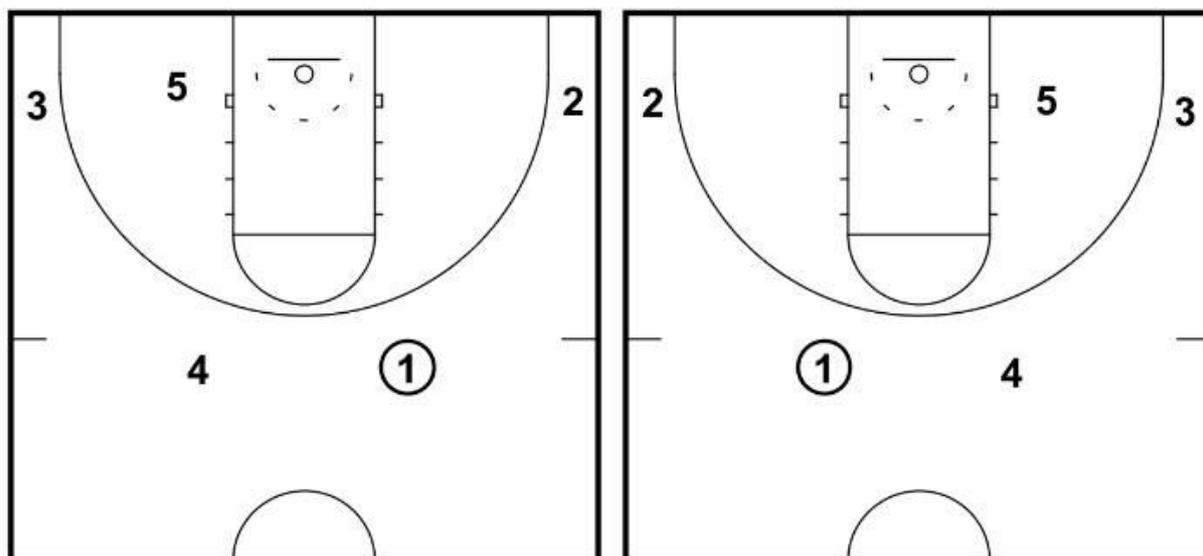
3. Spacing is a Top Priority - Players should always be thinking about if they're spacing the floor correctly. Apart from the post player and driver, players should always stay behind the three-point line.

4. Don't Hold the Basketball - If you can't attack your defender and get to the rim, move the basketball. We want to keep the defense moving so that holes open up and the defense is forced into closeouts.

5. Don't Pass and Stand - After passing, players must cut or move so that the defense is forced to stay locked in. This will prevent them from playing effective help defense.

Dribble Drive Offense Setup

The Dribble Drive Motion Offense starts in a 4-out 1-in setup.



- Two players in the slots at the top of the key (1 and 4).
- Two players in the corners (2 and 3).
- One post player in the weak-side short corner (5).

It's important to note that all of these positions are interchangeable. Don't be afraid to insert a guard into the post area if they have a mismatch on the inside and they aren't a great three-point shooter.

How to Run the Dribble Drive Offense

We're going to avoid all the fancy terminology and keep things as simple and effective as possible.

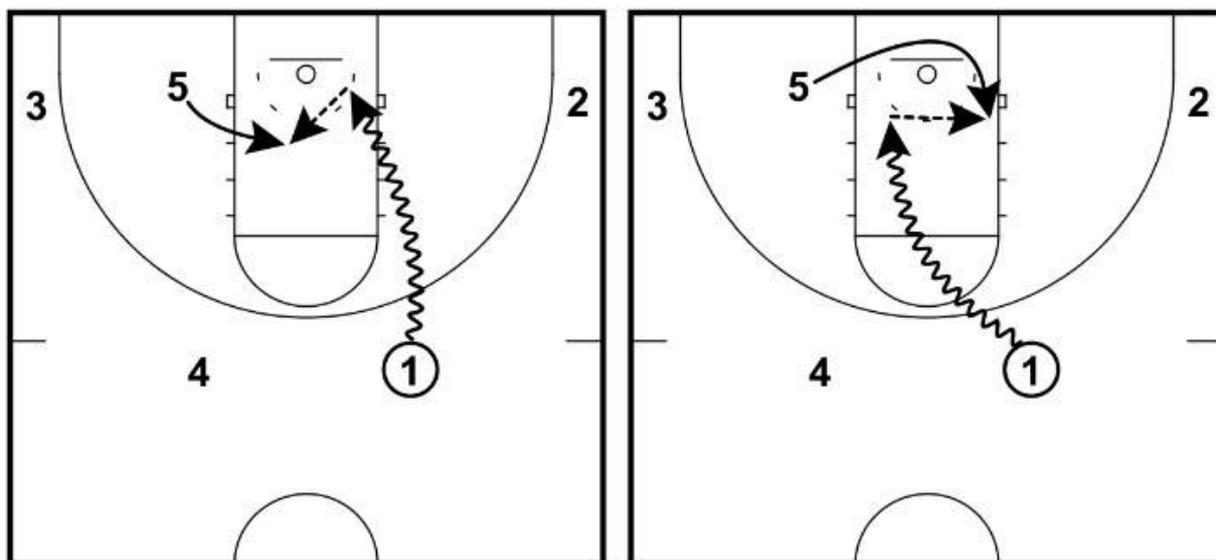
1. Top Penetration

The first thing teams must look for in the dribble drive offense is dribble penetration from either 1 or 4 from the slot positions at the top of the key.

Option A: Point Guard Attacks

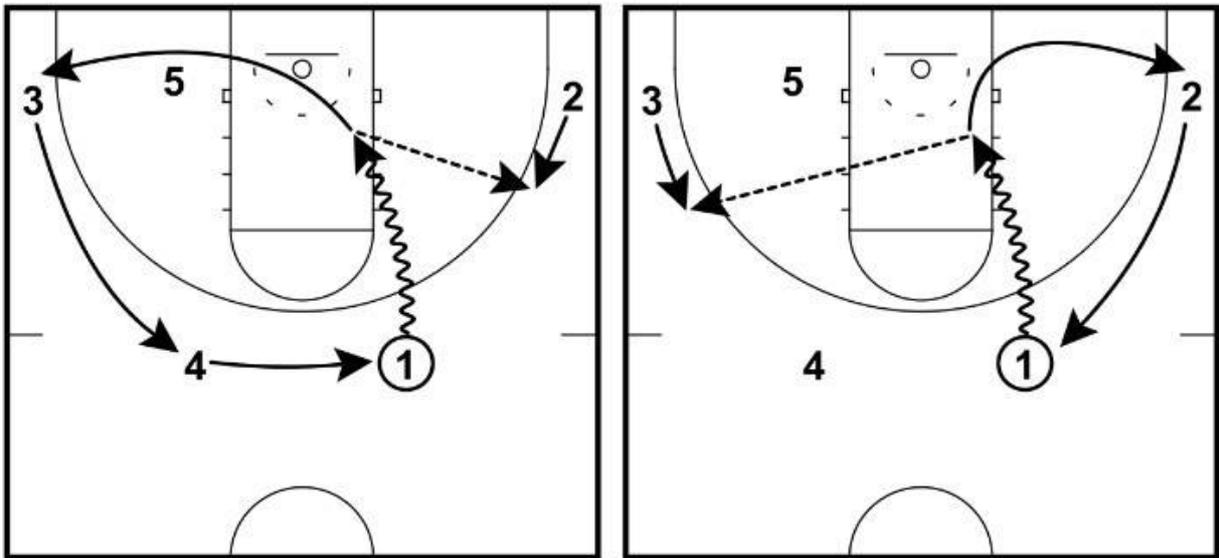
The first option to look for is a rim-attack from the player who advanced the basketball up the court. If they have a mismatch, take advantage of it and get to the hoop.

When this happens, 1 should first be looking to score with a layup or pass to 5 for a layup if their defender rotates to help.



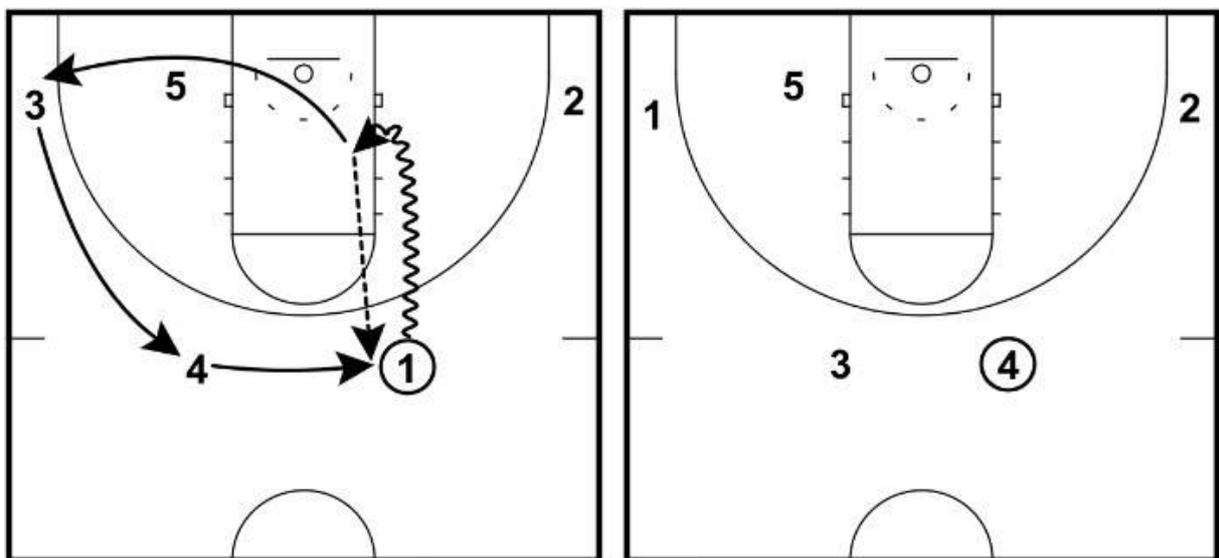
If neither of these options are open, 1 looks to pass out to the perimeter to 2 or 3 as they slide up from the corner.

These players may be open for a three-point shot or can then attack their defender who must close out.



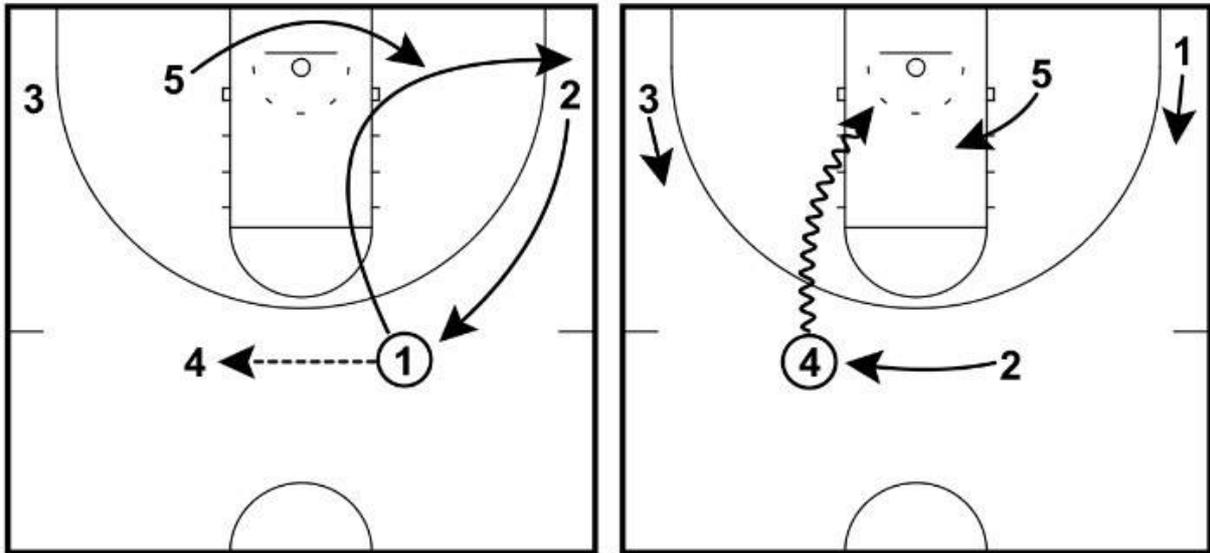
If none of these options are open, 1 can reverse pivot and pass out to 4 who has filled cut across to fill their original slot position as a pressure release.

On this pass, 1 will clear out to the weak-side corner as 3 moves up to the slot position.



Option B: Slot-to-Slot Pass and Cut

If the point guard doesn't believe they have an advantage attacking their on-ball defender, they can choose to make a slot-to-slot pass to 4 and then cut through the key to the strong-side corner.



When this happens, 2 cuts from the corner to the weakside slot position to create space in the corner for 1 to fill.

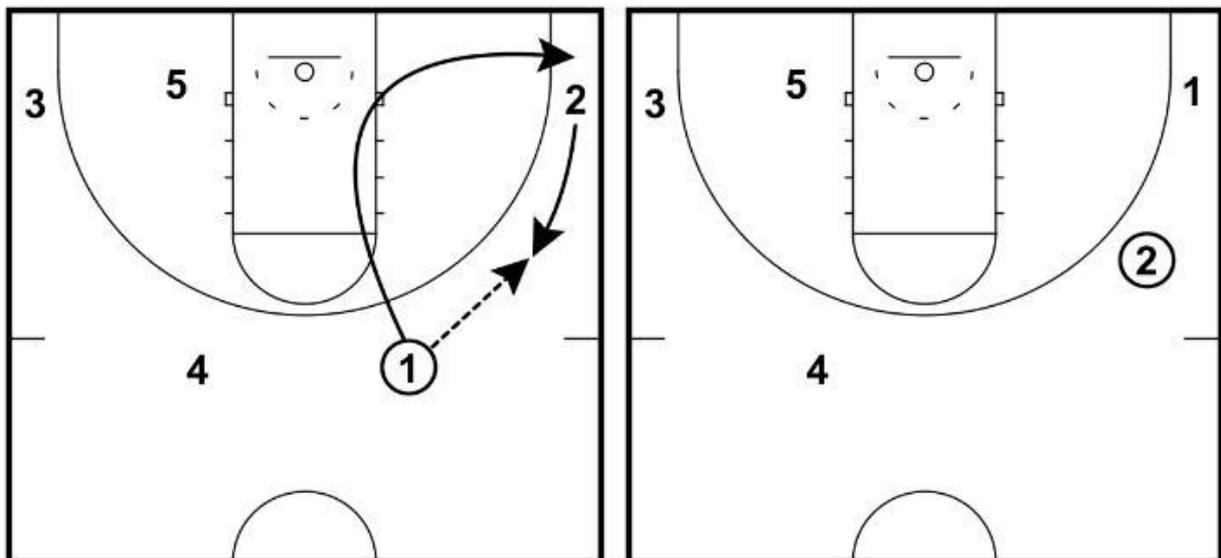
Upon receiving the first pass, 4 must look to immediately attack the rim on the back of the point guard's cut which will catch the defense rotating.

On this dribble penetration, the same rotations apply as in option A.

2. Wing Penetration

If there are no opportunities to attack from the top of the key, the players in the corner cut to the wing to receive the basketball.

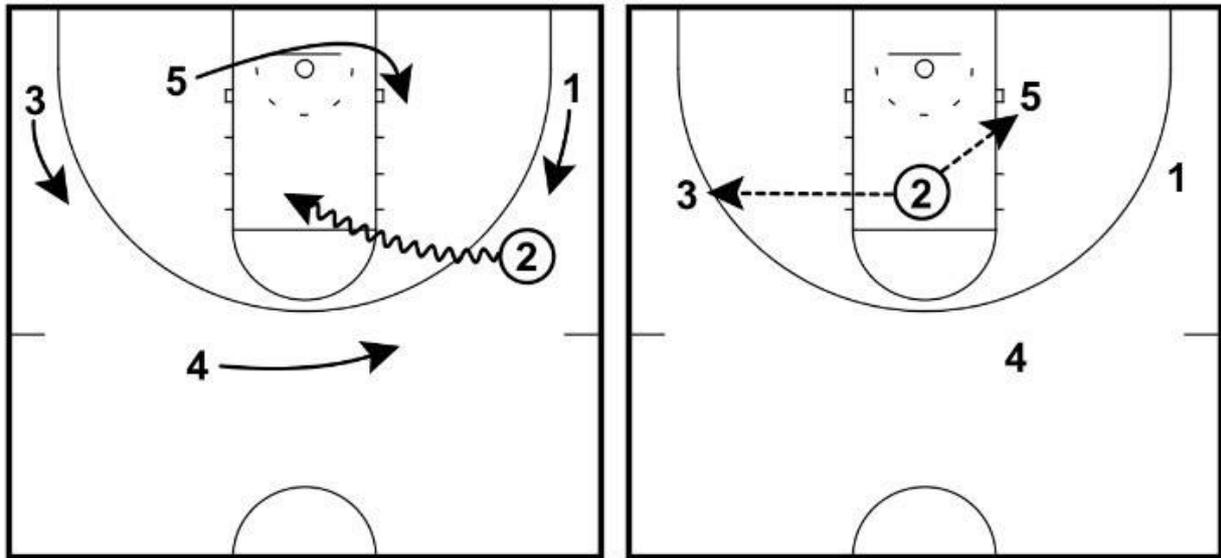
The player in the ball-side slot passes the basketball to the wing and then cuts through to the strongside corner.



(These are also the same rotations that occur if players attack from the wing in transition or receive the ball on the wing off dribble penetration.)

Option A: Middle Drive

If a player on the wing attacks towards the middle of the key, the first thing they should be looking to do is score or pass to 5 for an open layup when their defender helps.

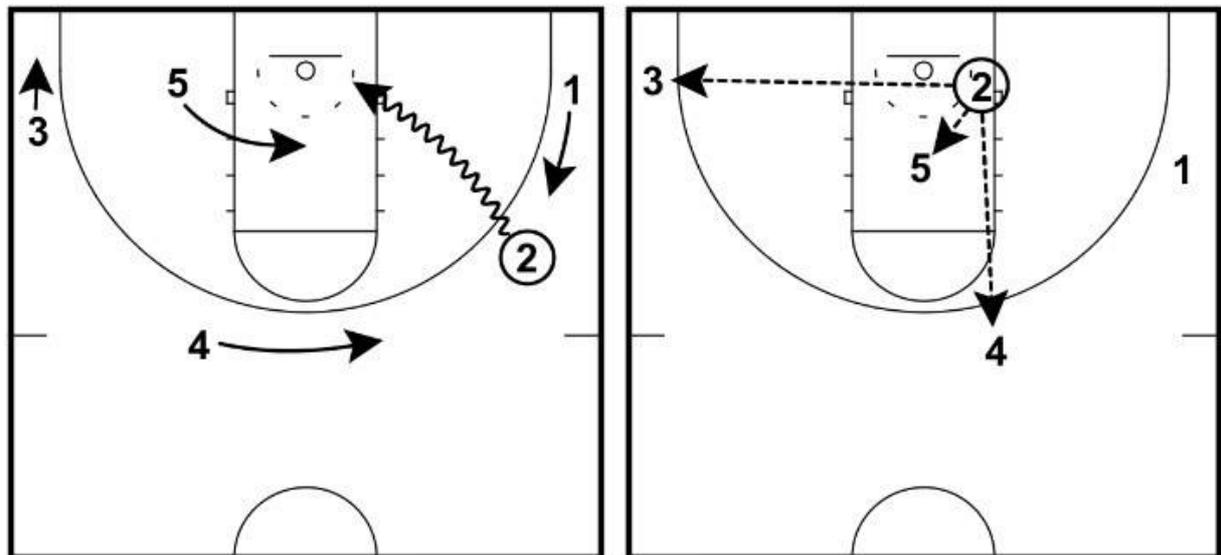


If none of those options are open, the perimeter players must be moving around the three-point line to create passing lanes.

1 will slide in behind the space left of the wing while the players in the 3 and 4 positions look to create space for a kick out.

Option B: Baseline Drive

On a baseline drive, 5 must immediately step to the middle of the key to create a good passing angle if their defender chooses to provide help.



3 slides to the corner while 1 and 4 must move to create a passing angle if the player with the basketball decides to pass out towards the top of the key.

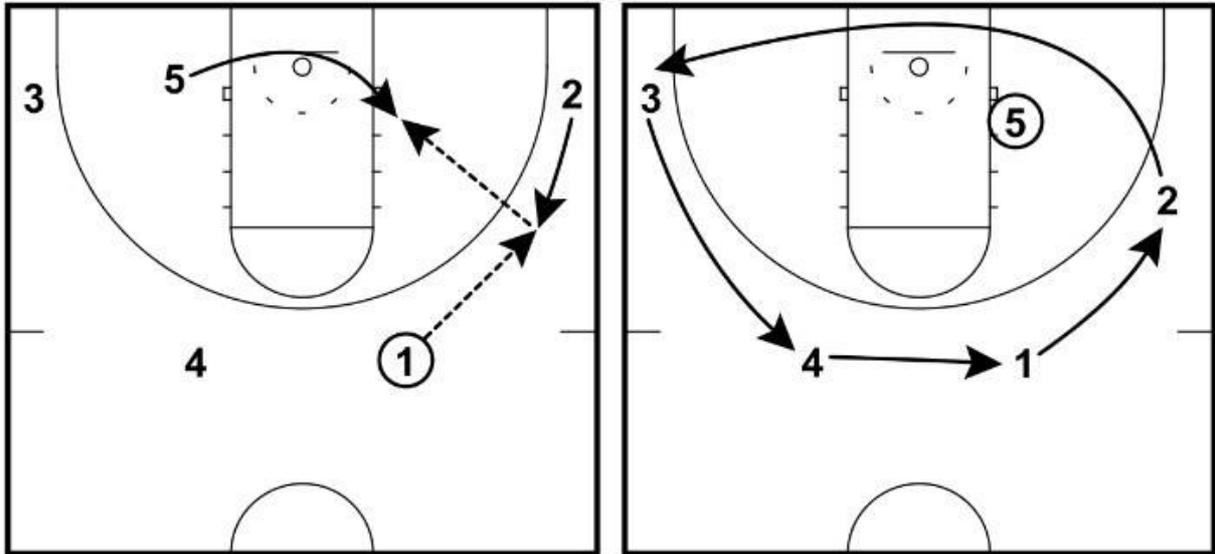
3. Isolation Opportunities

The dribble drive motion offense setup also provides great spacing to take advantage of several isolation opportunities both inside and outside.

My recommendation is to have specific play calls for each of these options as how they are set up varies slightly from the base offense. These are great to call out of timeouts after you've identified a mismatch.

Let's take a look at two of them:

Option A: Post Isolation

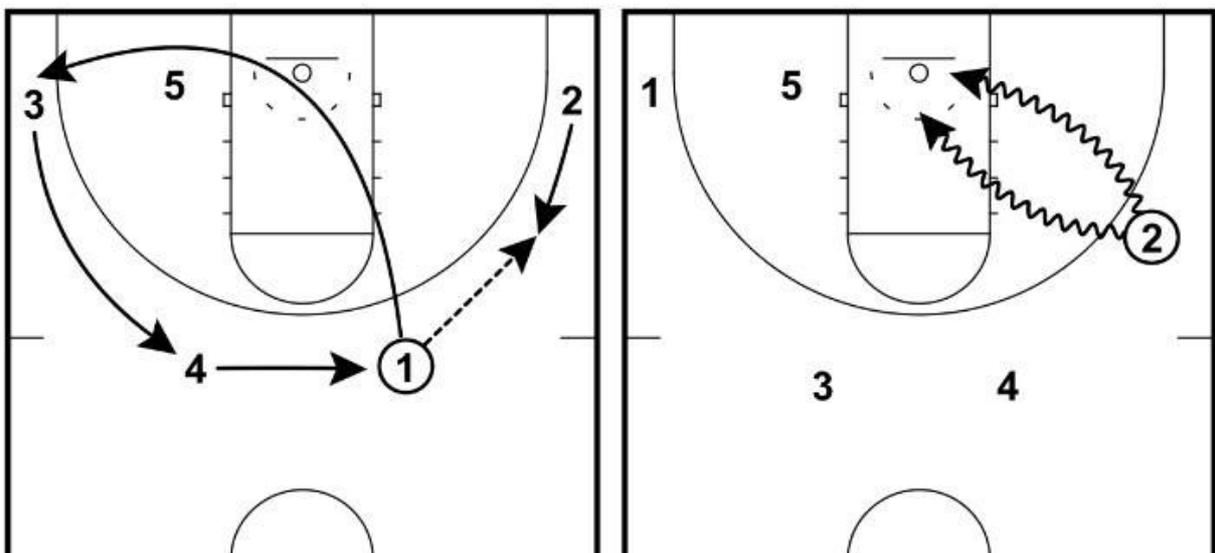


Off this play call, 2 cuts to the wing and receives the pass from 1.

The post player with a mismatch (5 in this scenario) will cut across to the ball-side and battle for front position on the low block.

2 feeds the post and then cuts through to the opposite corner as all the perimeter players fill around to keep their defenders moving. This makes it difficult for the defense to double the low post.

Option B: Perimeter Isolation



The second play is just as simple as the first...

2 cuts to the wing from the corner and receives the pass from the point guard. 1 then cuts through to the weakside corner as all perimeter players fill around.

This leaves 2 in a isolation with a lot of space to work with left and right.

Conclusion

If you're looking for high-quality shots, the dribble drive motion could be perfect for you.

I've watched many dribble drive teams (especially at the youth level) relentlessly attack the rim which has led to success on the scoreboard and putting the opposition in foul trouble.

If you have a dominant big man and would prefer to initiate your offense through the low post (like the 4-out 1-in motion offense), this might not be the offense for you...

But if your goal is take high-percentage shots and you have players who can finish strong inside and shoot from long distance, then this will give your team a high scoring offense.

Flex Offense *Complete Coaching Guide*



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Flex Offense - Complete Coaching Guide



Flex Offense Origin

Before we get into how to run the flex offense, let's have a quick look at its history in the game of basketball.

The flex offense was created as a variation to the shuffle offense in the 1970's by Carroll Williams of Santa Clara University.

There are many coaches that have had success with the flex offense including Gary Williams of Maryland who won the 2002 NCAA championship using the flex offense, Bo Ryan at Wisconsin, Al Skinner at Boston College, Jerry Sloan variations of it during his time with the Utah Jazz, not to mention hundreds of high school coaches across the country.

As you can see, the flex offense has been proven to work at all levels of basketball. It is a staple offense among many high school teams.

What is a Flex Cut

Let's start with the absolute basics.

Since the offense is named after this cut, it's important that every coach reading this has knowledge of the flex cut before we get deeper into breaking down the offense.

A flex cut is when a player in the corner receives a screen from a teammate leading them into the paint where they can receive a pass for a layup or shot close to the hoop.



You can see an example in the diagram. The player cutting can cut either side of the screener depending on the location of their defender.

It's important that this cut is practiced often by your players as it's a massive part of the offense and once the players learn how to read their defender, the flex cut will lead to a lot of scoring opportunities.

Overview of the Flex Offense

The flex offense is a 4-out, 1-in continuity offense that primarily uses down-screens in a screen-the-screener action and the famous 'flex cut' to get open layups or jump shots around the high post. It's primarily a man-to-man offense, but can be used against a zone with some slight adjustments.

It's a slow-down, patient offense that requires good spacing, ball-movement, passing, shooting, cutting, and screening by all players.

It's common to see teams reverse the ball to different sides of the court three or four times before creating an open shot at the basket.

Who Should Use the Flex Offense?

Every team from middle school (about age 11) and up can run the flex offense.

Too often I hear "I can't run the flex offense with my team, my bigs can't dribble or pass to save themselves!". My reply usually is something like "When have they had the opportunity to learn how to dribble and pass?"

If your only concern is winning basketball games, then this offense should only be run by a team of players who ALL excel at passing, dribbling, cutting, screening and shooting, as all positions are interchangeable. It's tough (closer to impossible) to find a team of players that good at the middle and high-school level.

The flex offense doesn't allow you to give the basketball to your best scorer and let them go one-on-one every trip down the floor while the weaker offensive players are hidden in the corners. Every player must be involved.

Coaches looking to use this offense have to remember that we can't expect our players to be perfect at all these skills before we implement the offense.

By implementing the flex offense you'll gradually develop complete players by experience and they'll learn the fundamental skills of all areas and positions on the basketball court.

With that said, while I think the offense can work for any youth team, there is obviously going to be teams that are more suited to this offense.

1. Teams lacking height – If your team doesn't have a great low-post player or much height, this is a good offense because it creates constant movement from all players on the floor.

2. Great shooting teams – This is a great offense for a team in which all players can shoot from the outside. If you have players that can't, it allows the defense to sag into the paint and cut off passing lanes.

3. Teams with a high basketball IQ – All players running the flex offense will develop a higher basketball IQ, but it definitely helps if you've got smart players from the start.

Advantages of the Flex Offense

Easy to Learn

The reason the flex offense is so popular among high school programs is because it's relatively simple to learn.

Everyone Develops and Contributes

The flex really is a TEAM offense. Unlike most youth teams, you can't rely on one player handling the ball for most of the shot clock and the same players shooting each time down the floor. Everyone is involved in the offense.

Positionless Basketball

The flex offense requires all 5 players to be interchangeable. This leads to all players being comfortable playing anywhere on the floor and developing skills and confidence for all positions.

Fatigue the Defense

The Flex offense often takes up a lot of the shot clock in search of an open shot, the defense is forced to guard for long stretches on defense. As they'll be constantly fighting through screens and continually moving, this can really wear down the opposition.

Control Tempo

When you run the flex offense you dictate the speed of the game. You'll slow the game down instead of playing a run-and-gun game against a superior team.

Great Mis-Matches

A common defensive tactic against the flex is to switch on all screens. If used correctly, this is fantastic for the offense as it will often lead to mis-matches in dangerous areas of the floor.

Develops Complete Players

It's all too common in youth basketball to see players limited to their position. The bigs screen, the guards handle the ball, etc. In the flex offense all players must learn and develop all areas of their game. Bigs must learn how to drive, small players must learn how to play in the post, guards must learn how to screen, etc.

Less Dribbling

If there's one basketball skill that's overused in youth games it's dribbling. The flex offense doesn't allow players to over-dribble. If a player dribbles in the flex offense it's with a purpose.

Many Entries

There are many entries into the flex offense which disguises it from the defense until you're already in it.

Disadvantages of the Flex Offense

Predictability

The biggest downside of the flex offense is its predictability. The opposition team will know where you're going to cut, who you're going to screen, and what spots on the court you want to get shots from. Although this doesn't necessarily mean they'll be able to stop the offense as there are many alternate actions to counter with.

Too Many Passes

In youth basketball, the more your team passes, the more chance they have of turning the ball over.

Teams Will Play Zone

One of the easiest ways to defend the flex offense is to simply play a zone defense. If allowed, a lot of teams will switch to this early on in the game and the flex coach must know how to counter.

All Players Must Be Able to Shoot

All of your players must be able to shoot from outside. If they can't, it's easy for the defense to sag into the lane and cut off passes that should be easy scores.

Going Through the Motions

One of the hardest things for players to learn in the flex offense is when to go for the score. Players can get so caught up in where to move and pass next that they forget the main objective of offense is to put the basketball in the hoop.

Setting Up the Flex Offense

The first thing you must learn is the basic flex offense continuity. This is the core of the offense and all entries, counters, corner options, sets, and variations will develop from this.

The basic flex continuity is designed to get open shots from two areas on the court:

1. A layup off the flex cut.
2. A jump shot from around the high post.

During the basic flex offense, there are 6 spots on the court that should always be filled by a player.

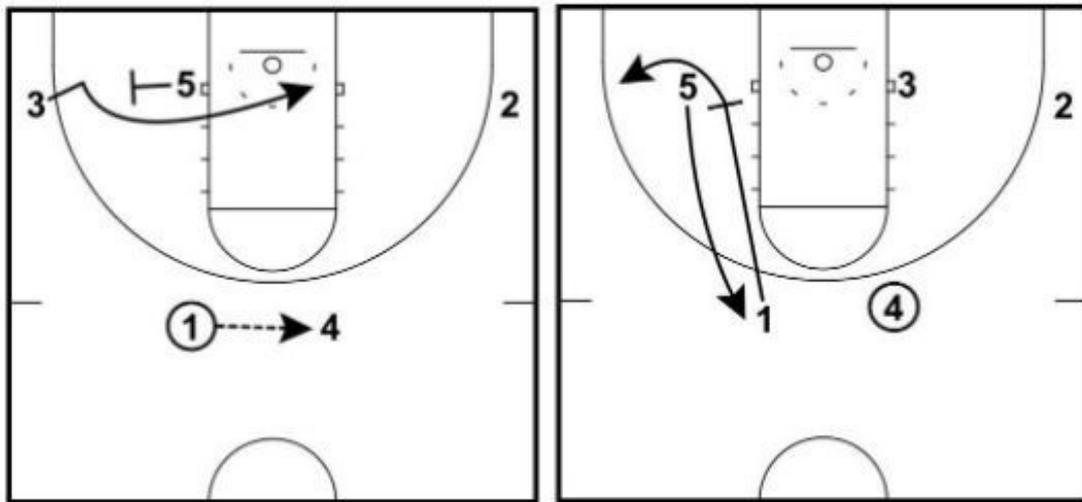
There must always be two players at the top of the key, there must always be two players on the wing, and the last player should be on either low block depending on where the basketball is and which part of the offense the team is up to.

When teaching the offense to a new team, I highly recommend placing 6 flat cones on the court in these 6 different spots.



The Basic Flex Continuity

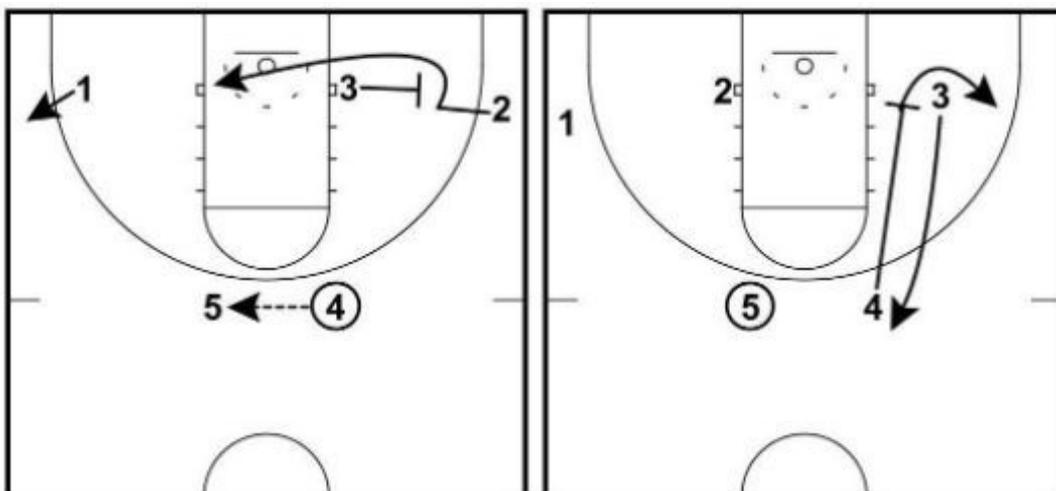
The offense begins with two players at the top of the key, two wing players, and a low-post player on the strong-side of the court.



- The offense starts when the player with the basketball (1) passes across court to (4).
- This pass triggers the flex cut from (3) who is screened by (5).
- After (5) screens for (3), (1) now sets a down-screen for (5) (screen-the-screener action) to pop to the top of the key.
- (1) steps out and (3) becomes the new post player.

Important to remember: The flex cutter (3) can cut either side of the screen set by (5) depending on how the defense is playing them.

This is half a rotation. Let's switch the ball back to the other side of the court so that you make sure you understand it...



- (4) makes the guard-to-guard pass to (5) which triggers the flex cut.

- The new post player (3) screens for (2) to make the flex cut to the ball-side block looking for an easy layup.
- (4) now down-screens for (3) who pops up to the top of the key looking to receive the ball for the open shot.
- We're now back at the very start of the flex offense and have had many great opportunities for an open shot.

Why is this simple action so effective?

The reason this action is so effective is because the defender of the player flex cutting will find it extremely difficult to defend it on their own. Most of the time they will need help from the defender of the player setting the flex screen to stop an easy layup.

While this person is helping stop the flex cutter, they're being screen as the player they're defending is cutting to the top of the key or flashing to the ball. This forces the defense to make a decision... *do I help on the cutter or do I stay with my player?*

These are very tough actions to stop. Especially because these actions can be run 3 or 4 times on a single possession until a breakdown in the defense occurs.



Entries into the Flex Offense

Now that you know the basic flex continuity, let's look at how to get into the flex offense. One of the best things about the flex is there are many ways to disguise it from your opponents.

I recommend your team use one of the entries below after a time-out or out-of-bounds to easily flow into the flex offense.

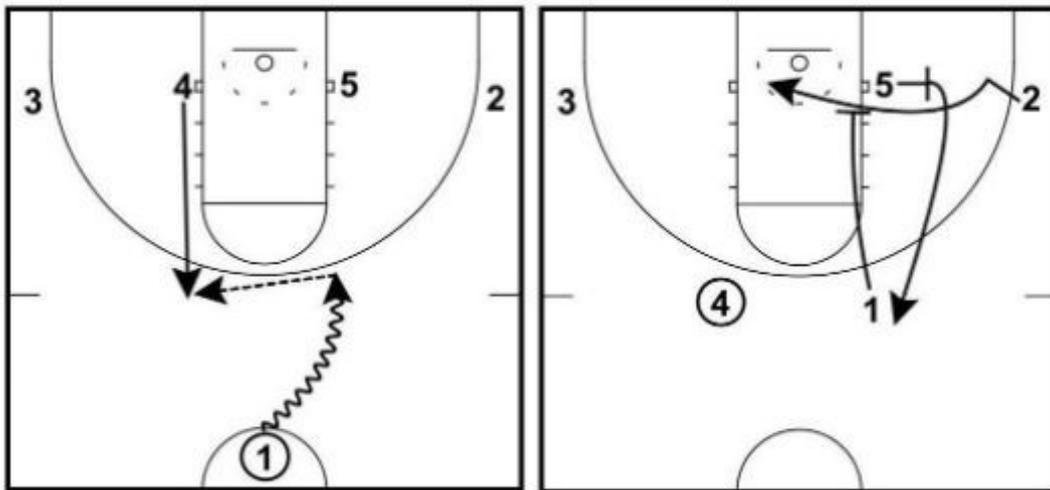
Throughout the game it's easy enough to run straight to the flex positions. Players must communicate and be aware as they're sprinting down the court so they set up quickly.

Entry 1: 1-4 Low

There's two ways of entering flex through the low 1-4 entry. By passing to the post player or passing to the wing. Let's take a look at both...

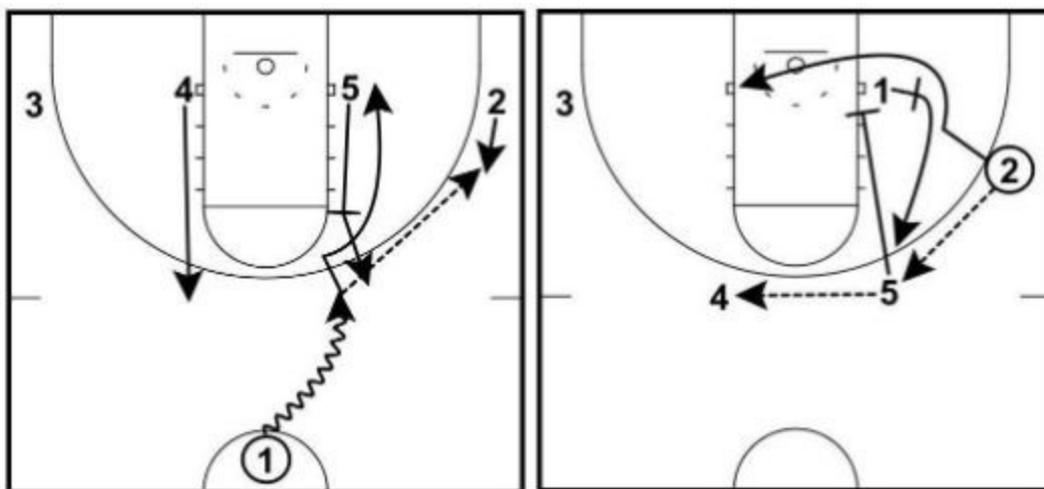
Low 1-4 – Post Option

This entry starts with both bigs on the block and two wing players. The point guard brings the ball down the middle of the floor and picks a side to dribble to. When the point guard dribbles to a specific side, the opposite post player cuts hard to the top of the key and receives the ball from the point guard. Now we're in flex.



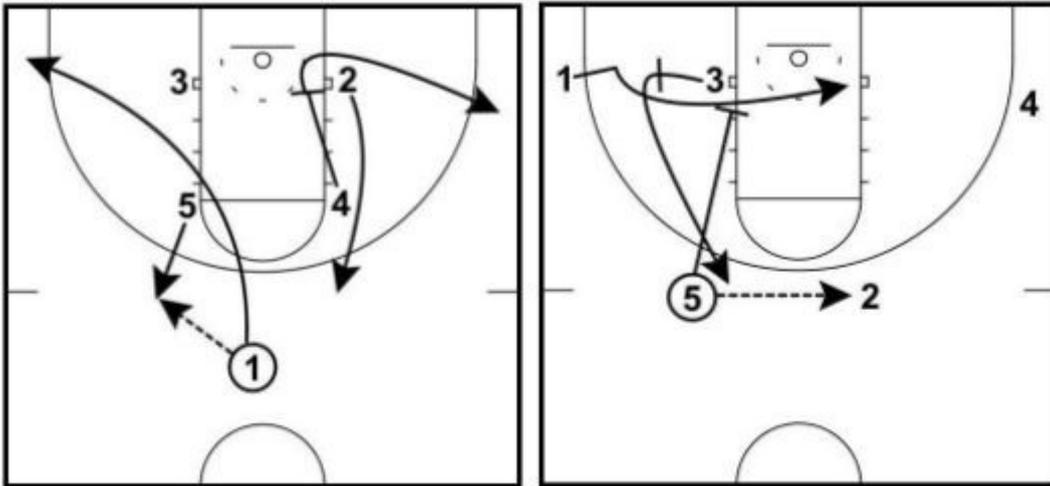
Low 1-4 – Wing Option

The entry starts in the same way. The point guard brings the ball down the court and picks a side of the floor. The opposite post player flashes high but is covered so instead the point guard passes to the wing. When this happens, the ball-side post player comes up and sets screen so the point guard can UCLA cut to the block. If the pass isn't on to the point guard the wing players passes to the top of the key and we're in flex.



Entry 2: Box Entry

Using this entry the four off-ball players start in a box format. As the point guard is dribbling down the floor the two players beginning on the high post step out and the point guard passes to one of them. After passing the point guard immediately cuts through to the ball-side corner. As the point guard is cutting, the weak-side high post sets a down-screen for the player on the weak-side low post to pop out and receive the basketball. Now we're in flex.



Entry 3: High 1-4

There's two ways of entering flex through the high 1-4 entry. By passing to the post player or passing to the wing. Let's take a look at both...

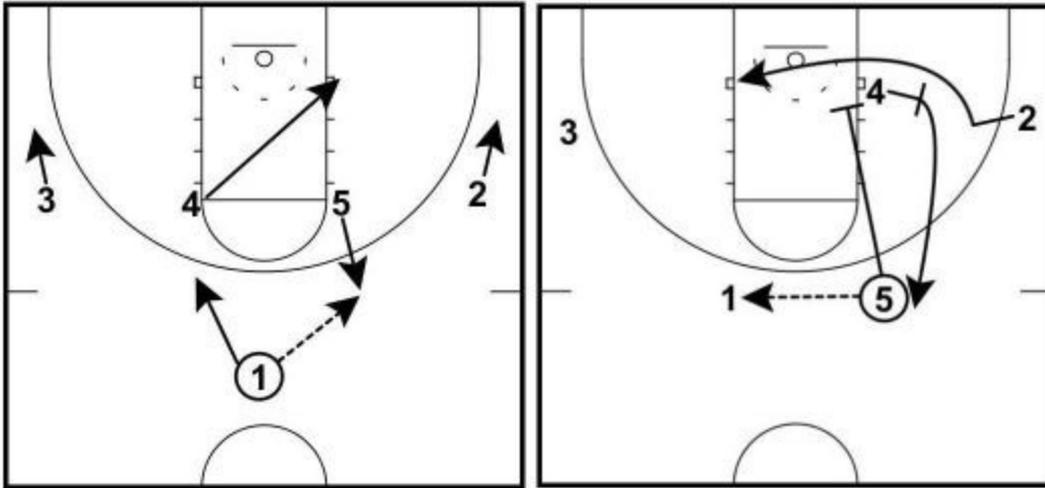
High 1-4 – Wing Option

We start this entry in a high 1-4. The point guard passes to either wing player and then makes a UCLA cut off the ball-side post player to the block. If the pass is on, make it. If not, the basketball is rotated and we're now in flex.



High 1-4 – Post Option

Instead of passing to a wing player one of the post players step out off the high post and receives the pass. This triggers the other post player to cut to the ball-side low block and the point guard steps into their position. The pass is immediately made back to the point guard and we're in flex.

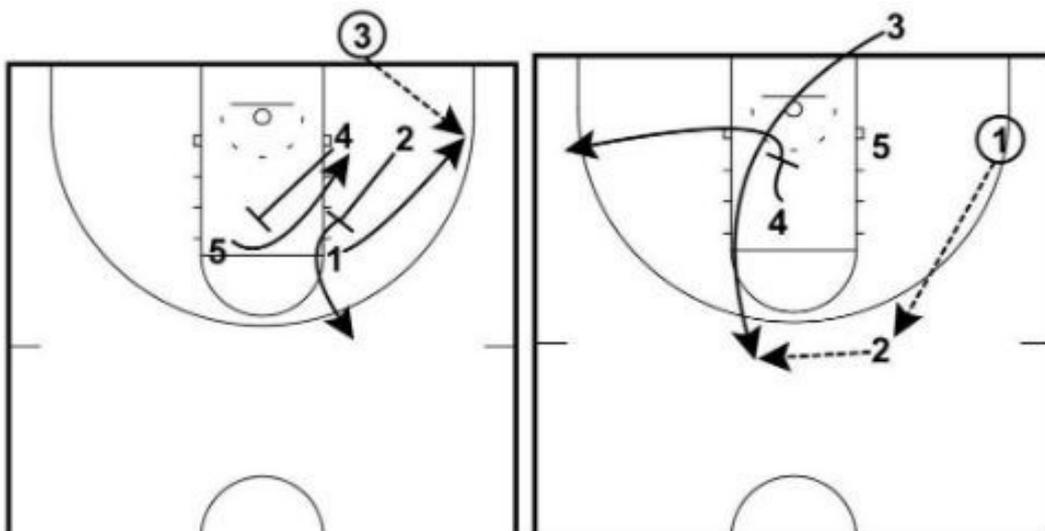


Entry 4: From BLOB

Here are a couple of plays if you want to get into the flex offense straight away from the baseline out of bounds.

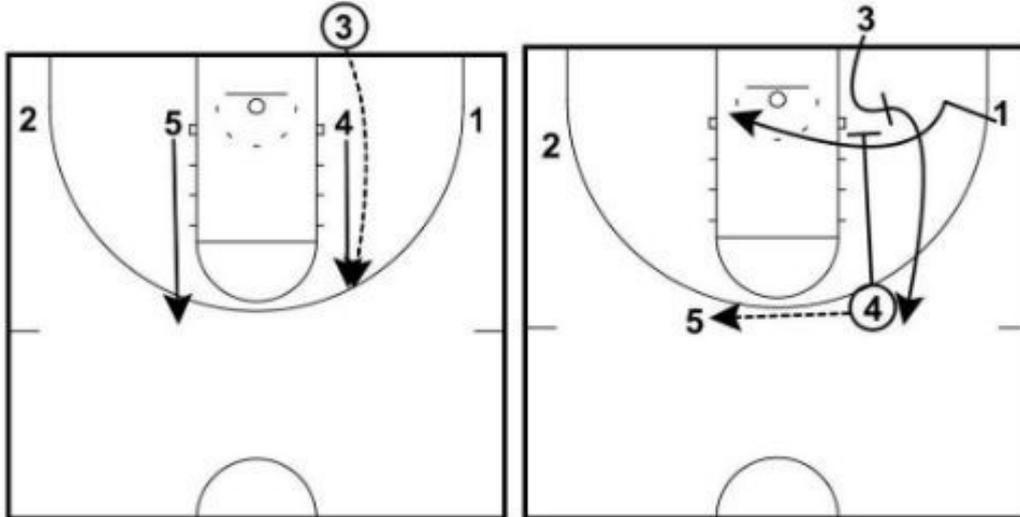
BLOB Play 1

In the first BLOB play, players line up as shown in the diagram. Both low players set diagonal screens and the post player cuts to the block while the guard cuts to the wing to receive the basketball. After making the pass the in-bounder cuts off the post player screen to the top of the key. The guard steps out and the basketball is rotated. We're now in flex.



BLOB Play 2

Players begin in a low 1-4 set. When the in-bounder slaps the ball the closest post player uses his body to shield the defense and receive the lob pass over the top. When this is made the other post player cuts to the top of the key as well. We're now set up for flex as the guard-to-guard pass is made at the top and the in-bounder steps in the court to set the flex screen. Now we're in flex.

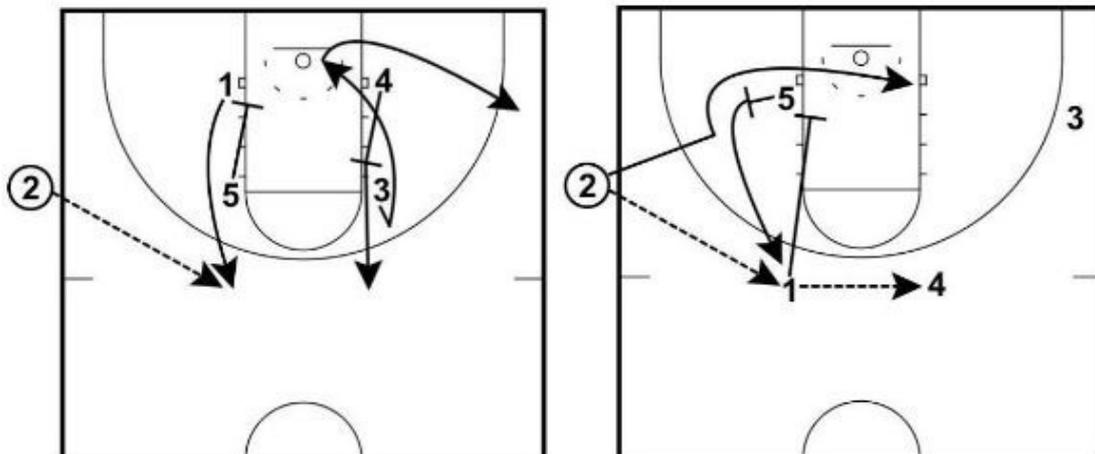


Entry 5: From SLOB

Here is my favorite play if you want to get into the flex offense straight away from the sideline out of bounds.

SLOB Play

Players start in a box set. When the in-bounder slaps the ball the closest high player down-screens for a guard to pop to the top and receive the pass. When this pass is made the other high post player fakes to receive the pass and receives a back-screen from the low weak-side player. If the lob to the ring isn't on, then the screener steps out to receive the ball and the cutter goes to the wing. We're now in flex.



Corner Options of the Flex Offense

The basic continuity involves the top two players passing back and forth in search of open players to pass to for the shot.

We must give the players the option to pass to the corner if they need to.

As the constant guard-to-guard pass is predictable, a common method of opposition coaches to stop the flex offense is to completely deny this pass. If you don't have corner options, then as soon as this pass is denied your flex offense will come to an immediate stop!

There are many variations you can run off the pass to the corner. I'm going to share with you 5 options. My advice is to pick 2 or 3 of them to use for your team and have a code word for each that is called out on every pass to the corner.

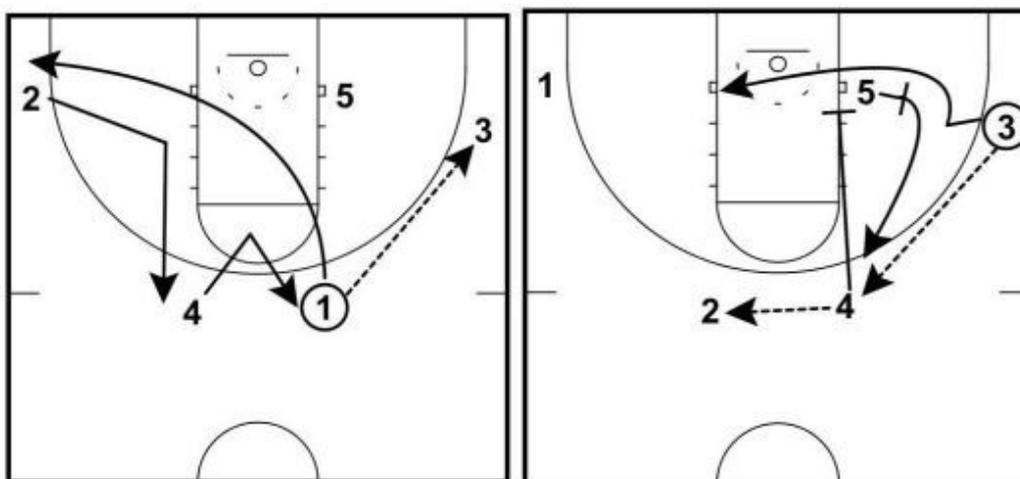
Don't try to implement all 5 options or your players will never learn. It would be more beneficial for your team to master 2 or 3 options.

Quick Note: On the corner pass the post player should always post up for 1-2 seconds to see if the entry pass into the post is open. Perimeter players must hold their position for these 1-2 seconds.

Option 1: Give and Go

This is the easiest action to learn and an action I've seen young teams run but doesn't produce a great scoring opportunity. Rather, it's just to release pressure and then get back into the basic flex offense.

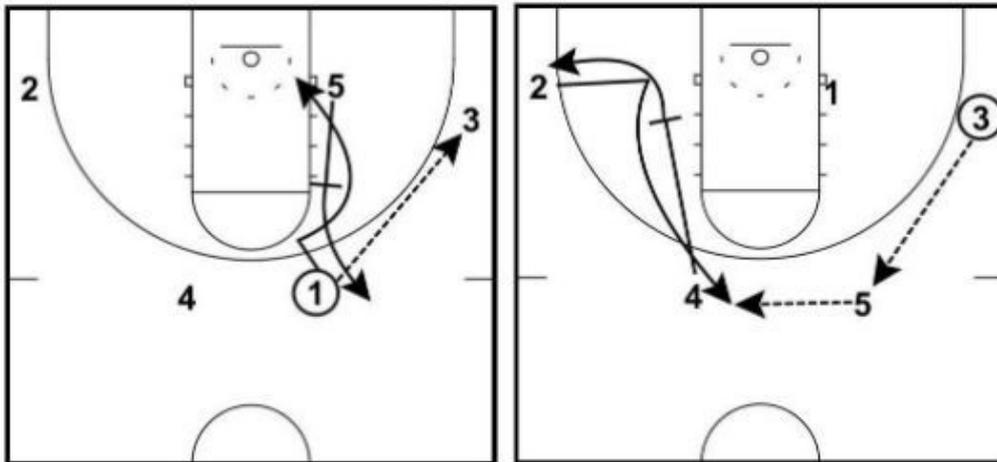
After passing the ball to (3) in the corner, (1) cuts through the key to the opposite baseline as the other two perimeter players rotate towards the basketball before getting back into flex.



The problem with this option is that there's no opportunity to pass to the cutting players since (5) is already on the post and there will be too many defenders. But it is an option to use for young teams.

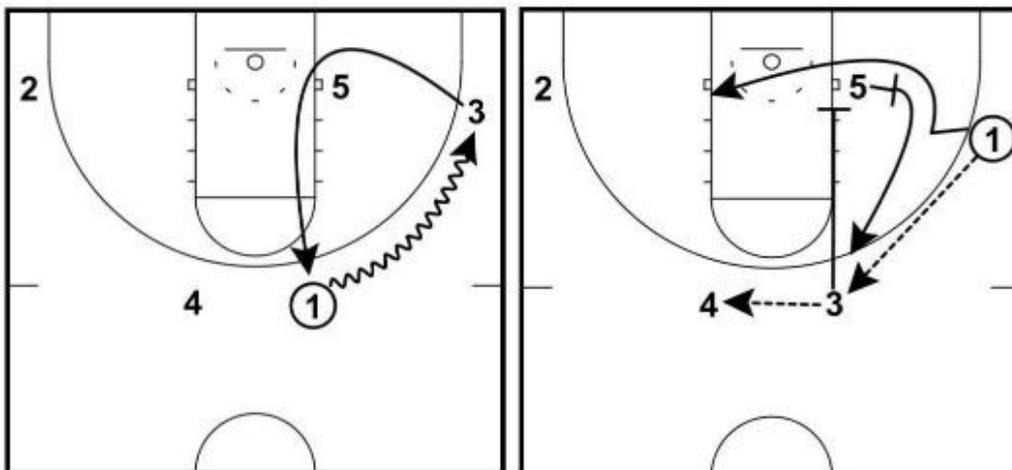
Option 2: UCLA Cut

Another easy option is as soon as the ball is passed to the corner by (1), (5) steps up and sets a screen for (1) to UCLA cut to the block. If the corner player doesn't pass to (1) on the UCLA cut then (3) can pass to (5) as they pop out and we're back in flex. On the opposite side of the court (4) sets a down-screen for (2) who cuts to the top of the key.



Option 3: Dribble Entry

Instead of passing to the corner the player with the basketball can dribble to the corner to get out of trouble. As the player is doing this they call out a key word like 'dribble!' and the corner player curls around the low post and pops out to the top of the key for the pass. Now we're back in flex.



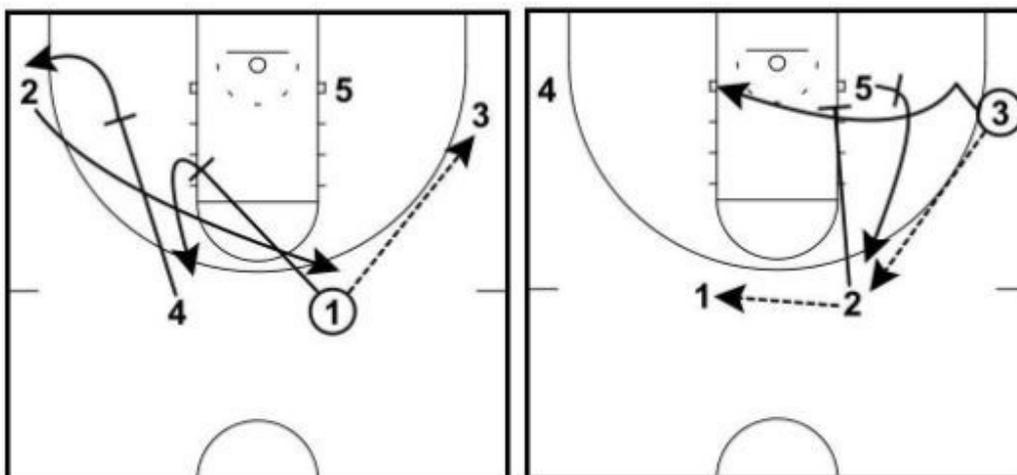
Option 4: Single Screener

The player that passes the basketball to the corner becomes the screener on the play. First, (1) sets a cross-screen for (4) who replaces (1)'s spot, and after (4)'s defender has made it around the screen, (1) immediately sets a down-screen for (2) to cut and replace (4)'s position. After both screens (1) ends up in the opposite corner. Now we're back in flex.



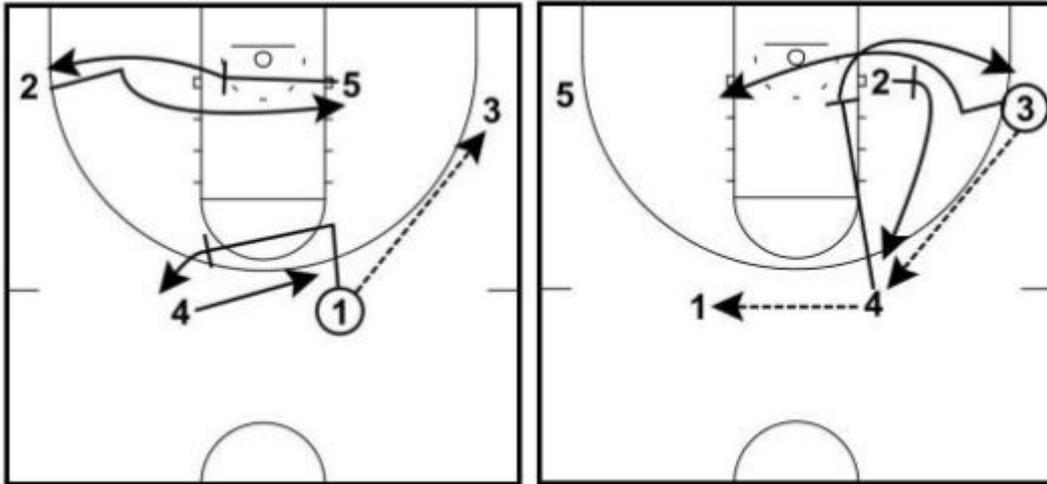
Option 5: Staggered Screen Option

In this option both high players (1) and (4) set a staggered screen for the weak-side corner player (2). (2) uses this staggered screen and cuts all the way to the ball-side looking for a shot. (1) steps back and becomes a high player while (4) becomes the corner player. Now we're back in flex.



Option 6: Horizontal Screens

As the ball is passed into the corner, both ball-side players cross-screen for both weak-side players. Both screeners must hunt the defender and set a solid screen. If the cutter through the lane isn't open the ball is passed back to the top and we're now in flex.



Getting the Ball into the Post

Due to the 4-out, 1-in setup of the flex offense and all the screening and switches that take place, it's a great offense to get the basketball into the post and let your players go to work.

When your team is already in the offense, I encourage players to keep an eye on the inside match-up and if it's to our advantage then toss the ball inside and let the player go to work.

The best time to pass into the post is after a pass to the corner as we don't like passing the ball into the post player from the top of the key.

To stop the defense collapsing on the post player and trapping the post, I'll share with you a few options that will force the perimeter defenders to stick to their players and will allow your post player to go one-on-one.

As you'll see in the next two options, nothing needs to be called out after a feed into the post. It's the passer that dictates which option will be used so the perimeter players must read what they do and adjust.

Option 1: Cut Through and Rotate

On the feed into the post from the wing player, unless the post player makes an immediate move, the passer cuts through to the opposite wing and all perimeter player rotate one spot around.

The passer can cut either side of the post player and the post player should look for the short pass/hand-off if it's open.

Cutting around the perimeter forces all defenders to stay with the offensive player they're guarding.

If they don't, this is a great opportunity for a back-door cut and easy pass to score.



Option 2: Screen Ball-Side Guard

On the feed into the post the passer chooses to screen the ball-side guard at the top of the key. This keeps the closest defenders to the post occupied playing off-ball defense at the risk of allowing an open outside shot.

The ball-side guard should come off the screen looking for a catch-and-shoot from the post player and the screener can open up to the ball looking for the shot or back-cut to the ring depending on how the defense plays the screen.

If the screener does opt to take the back-cut option, the two weak-side players rotate around as the cutter fills the weak-side corner.



How to Counter the Defensive Tactics

There are a few common tactics coaches use to attempt to stop the flex offense. We're going to go through the two most common tactics and give you ways to work around them.

1. Deny the Guard-to-Guard Pass

This is the main tactic coaches use to stop the flex offense in it's tracks. If the offensive team can't make the guard-to-guard pass (which triggers the flex cut and down-screen), then the offense stops. Luckily for us, there are a few alternatives.

1. Backdoor Cut

If the guard-to-guard pass is being overplayed then the player can execute a back-door cut.

The back-door cutter must explode towards the ring and not hesitate. Players should never fake the back-door cut.

When this happens the player in the corner rotates up and receives the basketball while the cutter takes their place in the corner.



2. Dribble Exchange

If the guard-to-guard pass can't be made, another option is to simply exchange spots by the player with the basketball dribbling up and around while the player being denied banana cuts underneath.

This exchange triggers the flex action.

Some coaches like to screen across but I'd rather stay away from the congestion and have found it just as easy to simply exchange positions.



2. The Defense Switches All Screens

One of the best ways to defend the flex offense is by switching screens. This allows the post player to stay close to the basket and the guards to play defense on the perimeter.

Here's a few ideas on how you can counter the switching defense...

1. Duck in on flex screen

On the flex cut, O5 will screen X3 and X5 will be forced to help out on O3 to prevent the open layup.

When this happens, O5 should seal off on X3 and duck in with high hands to receive the pass.

This forces X5 to deny O3 and O5 at the same time or the offense will get a layup in the paint.

This tactic leads to a lot of fouls and free-throws.



2. Isolate on mis-matches

This is important to remember... When the opposition is switching on all screens the offensive team gets to pick who guards who.

Depending on who their weaker players are, take the time to work out how you can get your best players in positions they're comfortable in being guarded by the oppositions weaker players.

This requires pre-match planning and knowledge of the other teams' players.

3. Down-screen own player

When running the down-screen action of the flex, have the player setting the down-screen screen their own player instead.

Depending on how low they follow the perimeter player down, you can set a down-screen or a flare screen for the shot. When the player fights through, quickly flash to the ball.



4. Be patient

A simple tip but very important. After a couple of ball-reversals you can be sure the defense is going to make a mistake. Two defenders will get confused and accidentally end up on one offensive player. It happens all the time!

Your players must be patient and wait for this to occur and then be ready to make the most of it when it does happen!

5. Start with point guard in the post

As teams will usually begin in their match-up before they start switching, consider starting with your point guard in the post instead of the post-player. That way when players switch you'll end up with one of your post players posting up the oppositions point guard.

As you can see in the image, we've immediately ended up with the defending point guard trying to stop our post player in the paint.



Conclusion

Ask anyone that's played against the flex offense, you might know where the screens are coming from, but they're still very difficult to guard. If the defense cheats, there are many options for the offensive player to counter that we've talked about in the article.

In my opinion all players that run the flex offense will come out better players with a much higher basketball IQ.

The only trap you must be aware of is that your players don't become robots in the offense. Screening where they're meant to screen and passing where they're meant to pass without ever looking at the basket or even considering attacking.

If you can keep them in attack mode and seeking potential scoring opportunities, this can be a fantastic offense for all levels of basketball beyond middle school.

How to be a Good Role Model for Your Players

 basketballforcoaches.com/being-a-role-model/

Having good, positive role models is very important for children and teenagers. Kids look up to certain people in their lives. They look to their role models as an example when they have decisions and choices to make.

Children and teenagers strive to emulate their role models, trying to be like someone they look up to and respect. They look to their role models for inspiration, and for a kid, having a role model is almost like having an instruction manual on how to become the person they want to be.



Coaches are one of these role models that they look up to. This is a big responsibility, and shouldn't be taken lightly. You're in a position where you can help change many young lives for the better.

As a coach, you're not just a basketball coach, you're a life coach.

Who are the Role Models in a Child's Life?

First and foremost, a child's parents should be their primary role models. Parents should do everything they can to set a good example for their children. Some parents follow the 'do as I say, not as I do' philosophy, telling their children the right things to do, but not necessarily demonstrating the right things to do with their own actions. To be a good role model, parents need to be the people that they would like their kids to grow up to be. They need to lead by example, **actions speak louder than words**.

Next in line are the child's teachers and coaches. Many parents today have very busy lives and a child's teachers and coaches may actually spend more time with them than the child's own parents. Teachers and coaches also need to do everything they can to be a good example for the kids in their care.

The 2 Essential Characteristics of a Good Role Model

There are many things you can do to be a fantastic role model for your players. The most important thing was mentioned earlier, and that is to be the person you would like your players to grow up to be.

Lead by example and show them what a good person is. You want your players to learn from you by following your actions.

Remember this one very important piece of advice: **You teach by your actions.**

Following are the two essential characteristics you must possess in order to be a good role model;

1. Respect

'Treat others how you want to be treated'.

Teach your players how to treat others with the utmost respect. Never belittle another person just to make yourself feel more superior.

Don't allow your players to trash talk an opposing team or badmouth the officials, teach them by your actions to treat everyone with respect.

2. Commitment

Your players have made a commitment to be a part of the team and they need to be held accountable when they do not follow the rules.

Let your players know that you expect them to show up on time for practice and to work hard during practice and during the games.

To hold your players accountable to their commitment on the team, you must be willing to bench your best players in order to make a point if need be. You can't allow your better players to get away with breaking the rules just because they're one of your star players. All players need to be held equally accountable.

This is by no means a definitive list of what makes a good role model. There are many more than two characteristics, but I believe these two to be the most important of all.

The biggest thing to take away from this article is that as a coach, you're a role model. Whether you like it or not your players will look up to you and learn from you.

You need to show your players that you possess these qualities, and that you expect the same from them.

– Coach Mac

How to be a Great Player... While Sitting on the Bench

 basketballforcoaches.com/great-bench-player/

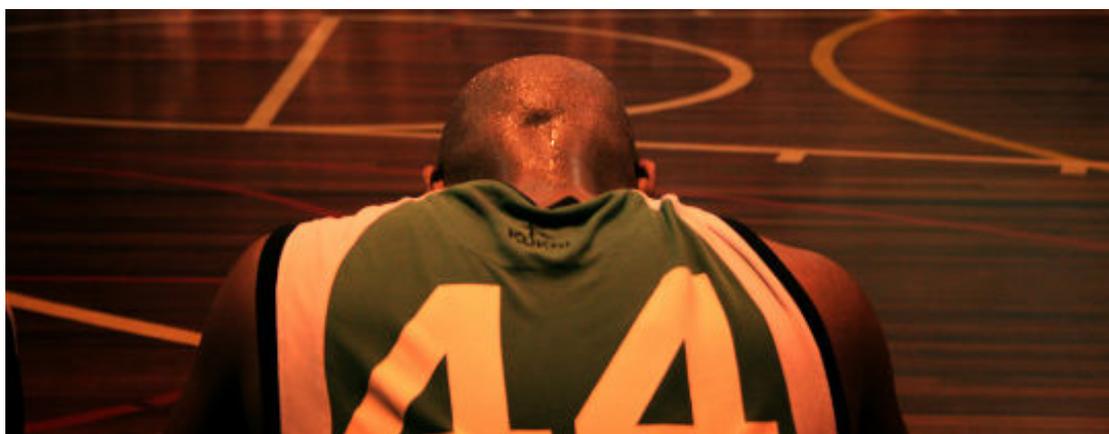


Photo Credit: [@mrhappy](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

Sitting on the bench sucks.

No one wants to do it. Every player would prefer to be out on the court showcasing their talents to everyone inside the gym.

But the fact is that all players will spend a lot of time on the bench at some point. As a player progresses further in their career and makes the step up to the next level they may find themselves going from 35 minutes per game to 5 minutes per game.

If you're only getting 5 minutes of playing time per game what are you going to do with the other 35 minutes you spend on the bench to help your team be successful?

What most people don't understand is bench players do influence the outcome of the game greatly.

Most coaches I know don't talk about what it takes to be a great bench player. Most players I know don't think there's such thing as a great bench player. But there is. There really is.

“The secret is to have eight great players and four others who will cheer like crazy” – Jerry Tarkanian

Here are 5 tips you must remember to be a great bench player.

1. Bring Lots of Energy

Energy is the most important thing for all bench players to bring to every single game, especially when your team is on the road. Show your passion for the game.

Be loud. Shout out words of encouragement to your teammates. Stand up and cheer each time your team scores or makes a great basketball play.

When a time-out is called a great teammate will be the first one off the bench to go out and high-five the players that were on the court. When the time-out is over be energetic. “Yeah, Brad. Keep dominating in the post!”.

All of these little acts lift the energy and moral of the team.

Your teammates and coach will appreciate it.

2. Take Note of Your Body Language

Here on BFC we talk all the time about the importance of body language for basketball players. Body language is just as important on the bench as it is on the court.

Are your players leaning back, slouching, and looking disinterested? Or are they on the edge of their seat engaged in the game?

Poor body language on the bench tells a coach you care more about yourself than the team. Prove that you’re a team-first player by having great body language on the bench.

Great teammates all sit forward, don’t slouch, and are engaged in the game.

3. Don’t Ruin Your Teammates Focus

Want to know what’s worse than a player not engaged in the game while on the bench? A player not engaged in the game that ruins the focus of their teammates.

If a player can’t stay engaged in a game this does not give them the right to ruin the focus of anyone else.

Don’t talk to them about things that aren’t related to the game, during the game. Let them focus. Save non-game related topics for after the game. No one cares what you’re planning on doing that night while the scores are tied mid-way through the fourth quarter.

4. Watch What the Opposition is Doing

While most players hate starting on the bench it does give you a BIG advantage over your starting opponents. By starting on the bench you have the opportunity to quickly scout your opponents.

Here are a few things you can look at if you’re a player on the bench:

1. Look for weaknesses in the defense.

If you’re a rim-attacking guard, which players on the other team have slow feet? Which players do you think you can easily beat off the dribble?

If you’re a three point shooter look for holes in their defense. What defense are they running? How can you take advantage of it?

2. What plays are they running?

Learn the names of the plays and the basic premise. Where will the ball end up? What can you do to stop it?

3. Scout your probable opponent.

Many coaches have patterns of substituting. If you know you usually get subbed on for a certain player, look at that player's defender. What are they doing that you can exploit? Are you bigger than them and will be able to post them up? Are you quicker and will be able to take them off the dribble? Will you be able to get rebounds? How can you help your team?

Don't wait until you're out there to figure it out. You've got the advantage of watching the game from the start. A huge advantage.

5. Stay Ready

Be a great teammate on the bench by staying ready for when your number is called to go on and help your team.

When your number is called your team expects you to go on and play your part for the team. Don't let your teammates down by not staying engaged and ready to do that.

Conclusion

Being a great bench player really comes down to being a great teammate. Being able to put team success before personal glory.

We must all remember that the players on the bench do play a big role in the outcome of the game. The intensity and moral of the players on the bench have a huge influence on the players on the court.

Put the team before yourself by following these 5 simple tips.

1. Bring lots of energy.
2. Take note of your body language.
3. Don't ruin your teammates mental state.
4. Watch what your opponent is doing.
5. Stay ready.

And if you want more minutes on the court, becoming a great bench player will get you a step in the right direction.

When a coach looks down the bench who do you think the coach is going to substitute in; the player that's sitting forward and looking eager to play? Or the player leaning back looking disinterested?

How to Beat a 2-3 Zone – 17 Strategies

 basketballforcoaches.com/how-to-beat-a-2-3-zone/



I want to preface this article with this statement: The 2-3 zone defense should not be allowed in youth basketball.

Instead of listing the reasons why in this article, I encourage you to check out [Tyler Coston's article](#) on the subject which has most of them covered in my opinion.

The 2-3 zone is the most common zone used in the half-court. For better or worse, it's used by teams of all ages at all levels. So it's imperative that all coaches are prepared for when their team will face it.

Since most youth teams don't have the extra time to practice and memorize an entire zone offense, here are 17 strategies you can implement mid-game to help your team beat the 2-3 zone.

1. Set Up in a 1-3-1

The 1-3-1 is the best formation to set up in offensively against a 2-3 zone.

Traditionally, this will mean your point guard at the top, your shooting guard and small forward on the wings, one big on the free-throw line, and one big on the baseline.

This formation is effective because it places your team in the gaps of the zone and forces the defense out of their ideal positions.

When a player receives the basketball on the perimeter, there will often be a clear lane to the basket in front of them that they can attack.

Being in the gaps of the defense can also confuse them as to who should guard the basketball which can lead to open players all over the floor.



2. Beat Them Down the Floor

The easiest way to defeat a 2-3 zone is to avoid playing against it on as many possessions as possible.

Your team can do this by utilizing quick transition basketball to beat the opposition team down the floor.

If your players all run hard down the floor and the basketball is moved quickly, there will often be open lanes for your players to attack the basket before the defense is able to set up their zone.

3. Attack the Gaps

If a player receives the basketball and finds themselves with an open lane to the basket in front of them, they should immediately attack the gap.

One of two things will happen in this situation...

- 1. The attacking player will split the defense and have a high-percentage shot at the rim.**
- 2. The defense will collapse and take away the shot.**

The first option for the attacking player is to finish at the rim. Your players must always be aggressive and looking to score.

If the defense collapses and takes away the drive, this will often mean there are open players on the perimeter for open shots or that when the basketball is pitched out there will be more open gaps in the defense.

A great drill for teaching this action is the 'Drive and Kick Drill'.

Players will find that, with good spacing, the quicker the basketball is passed around the more gaps will present themselves in the defense.

4. Utilize Pass Fakes

Pass fakes are super effective against a zone because the defense is always anticipating the next move they need to make.

Often a single defender will have the difficult task of guarding two offensive players in their area.

When a pass fake is made, the defender will usually anticipate where they need to rotate to next and start leaning towards their next assignment. This slight movement can lead to open lanes and the defenders taking valuable time to get back into the correct position.

Make sure your players have been taught how to correctly fake a pass without coming off-balance so that they can explode to the ring if the defense goes for it.

5. Put Your Best Passer in the Middle of the Zone

One of the weakest areas of a zone is the free-throw line. When the ball is at this position, the player with the basketball has many options to attack the defense.

Nearly every time I watch a team play against a zone they put their center at the free-throw line in this position without even considering other options.

It's a mistake to automatically assume your center is the best option for this role.



The most effective player to position in the middle of the zone is often the team's best player and/or passer... regardless of their height.

This player must be a threat to score and should also be one of your team's best passers. Get them the basketball at the free throw line and let them create!

6. Move the Basketball (Quickly)

The worst thing you can do against a zone is hold the basketball and allow the defense to fully recover and establish their ideal positions.

In order to beat a zone, you must keep the defenders moving and scrambling to recover. This is achieved by quick passing of the basketball, good spacing between players, and constantly looking for gaps in the defense that can be exploited.

Explain to your players that when they have possession they have a maximum of one second to decide whether to pass, shoot, or dribble.

Keep in mind that the highest percentage shots you will get against a zone occur after one or two ball reversals when the defense is starting to break down and the defenders are fatigued.

7. Attack From the Short Corners

Another great strategy is to attack from behind the zone along the baseline.

If you're setting up in the 1-3-1, have the baseline player float between the short corners along the baseline depending on which side the basketball is on. Their feet should be nearly out of bounds in an effort to stay as low as possible.

This either forces the defenders to play close to the baseline in order to watch the baseline player, or it allows baseline offensive player to hide behind the sight of the defense.

If the basketball is caught in the short corner, the offensive player has many options to attack the zone...

1. Pass to the offensive player at the free-throw line who will be open diving to the basket.
2. Shoot from the short corner.
3. Pass to a perimeter player since the defense will collapse.
4. Shot fake and attack the rim for an easy basket or a foul.

The player will also be a great scoring option after dribble penetration. When the low zone defenders step up to help on dribble penetration, a simple drop-down pass to the baseline player will often result in an easy score.



8. Create and Take Advantage of Mismatches

One benefit of the opposing team running a zone is that the offense has the ability to decide the matchups on the court.

When coaching against a 2-3 zone, identify the weak links and target these defenders by forcing them to match up against your best offensive players.

For example: If the team your facing has one strong guard and one weak guard, you can send your best guard to the side of the floor that their weak guard is defending each time down the court.

As this matchup favors the offense, your guard can blow past them every time and get into the paint where they can score or create a shot their teammates.

This is also a great strategy when overloading. Overload towards what you consider to be the weaker side of the floor defensively.

9. Screen the Zone

The best thing about screening a zone is that there's no defender hedging or there to help on the dribbler when they use the screen.

By screening the zone you'll either get an open jump shot, or the defense will have to rotate to close out which will create open shots and driving lanes on other areas of the court.

Either way, by setting screens on the zone it forces the defenders to help out of their zones.

This will often lead to one of the guards getting in the lane where they can finish with a floater, dump down pass to the baseline, or pass out to a shooter when the defense collapses.

I've included some plays that use screening in the report you can download for free below.

10. Overload the Zone

A great way to consistently get high-percentage shots against a zone is to overload one side of the court.

This strategy exploits the fact that in a zone defense each defender has a specific area of the court to guard. The offense should take advantage of this by placing three offensive players on one side of the court guarded by only two defenders.

As long as the three players have spaced themselves out along the three-point line, the two defenders will struggle to challenge the shooters while also preventing dribble penetration.

11. Second Chance Points (Rebound)

Another big weakness of the 2-3 zone is rebounding the basketball. The reason for this is because the players are defending zones and do not have a specific player matchup.

Instead of being able to simply turn, make contact with their player and box out like in a man-to-man, players in a zone must first find an opposition player and establish rebounding position between them and the basket.

This is a difficult task for the zone defenders so there are frequent offensive rebound opportunities (especially from the weak-side) as long as you send players to the glass and they're relentless in pursuit of the ball.

The biggest benefit of offensive rebounds is that they often lead to high-percentage shots.

12. Don't Allow Them to Play Zone

This is a controversial strategy... but one that definitely works if you're willing to implement it.

If your team gains an early lead in the game, consider holding the basketball near half-court so that the defense is forced to discard their 2-3 zone and come out and play you man-to-man.

If they get back into a zone defense, get your point guard to retreat with the basketball back to near the half-court line until the opponent gets out of their zone.

This strategy will only work if the league you're playing in does not have a shot clock.

Please note: Although effective, this strategy leads to boring, unwatchable basketball (Even ask Dean Smith of North Carolina who's team held the basketball for nearly an entire half against Duke in 1979).

13. Practice Against a Zone

A simple strategy that's often forgotten.

It's a great idea to give your team some experience and confidence when competing against a 2-3 zone prior to coming up against it during a game.

Assign a few 10-15 minute blocks in your practices early in the season to teach your players the strategies in this article that you think will work best for your team.

Since your team will be competing against themselves, it's not important that your players know how to run the 2-3 zone perfectly. Simply put the players in positions and explain to them that they must guard the area and not a specific player. Most of them will have a good idea of how it works.

Your players will enjoy changing things up at practice and it will give them confidence when they face a 2-3 zone during a game.

14. Make Shots...

Fact: You are going to struggle against a 2-3 zone if you don't make shots.

It doesn't matter how well you execute overloading the zone, how often the basketball into the hands of your best passer at the free throw line, or how good your spacing is if your players don't knock down their shots.

Your team must make perimeter shots if you're going to defeat a 2-3 zone. This fact alone is the main reason why it's such a common defense in youth basketball.

If you want to develop great shooters, I highly recommend you check out these shooting drills and also these shooting workouts.

15. Run a Full-Court Press on Defense

Wait... What?

I bet you're asking... "Why does the particular defense we run matter? I just want to beat their 2-3 zone".

By using a full-court press, you change the tempo of the game.

If you're competing against a 2-3 zone, you should aim to increase the tempo of the game since a zone favors a slowed down type of game.

By speeding the game up, the opposition will take quicker shots and there will be a lot more fast-break points where the opposition doesn't have time to set up their zone.

I'd recommend having a look at either the [2-2-1 press](#) or the [1-2-1-1 diamond press](#).

16. Don't Settle for the Outside Shot

Don't be the team that continues firing away from the outside if the shots aren't going in.

Weak-minded teams will settle for the outside shot without being patient and working the basketball around for a high-percentage look.

You must get the basketball into the post.

When the basketball is passed inside, it forces the defense to collapse and will result in wide-open jump shots for your team.

If your team does start firing away at too many three-pointers and aren't working the basketball around enough or getting it into the post, consider calling a time-out and telling the players the basketball must be passed into the post at least once before shooting.

17. Run Set Plays

I never recommend running set plays for the entire game, but if you're looking for a quick basket against a 2-3 zone, a set play or two might be exactly what you need.

Conclusion

If you're serious about being prepared, I encourage you to read my article on the [2-3 zone defense](#) to completely understand its strengths and weaknesses.

By understanding how it works, you'll be taking giant step towards understanding how to exploit the 2-3 zone's weaknesses.

Don't allow your team to fall into the trap of doing what the defense wants you to do. Which is settle for the outside shot and play a slow-tempo game.

By using these strategies, you'll have an arsenal of strategies to defeat the 2-3 zone when you face it during a game.

How to Become the Next Patty Mills (It's Easier Than You Think)

 basketballforcoaches.com/next-patty-mills/

If you follow me on [Twitter](#) (you should be), you would know I'm a big, big fan of Patty Mills. The intense sharp-shooter recently helped the Spurs etch their name in the NBA history books with a 4-1 win over the Miami Heat in the NBA Finals.

Why do I admire him so much? Sure the fact that we're both Aussies has something to do with it, but it's his attitude and work ethic that I admire the most.

Let's face it... kids are out there training to be the next LeBron James. Not an easy task. It's hard to train yourself to become 6 foot 8, 250 lb, while still being possibly the fastest end-to-end player in the NBA. It's not a realistic goal for most.

A much more realistic goal is to become the next Patty Mills. He's average height coming in at 6 foot flat, a modest 185 lb, and while he has lightning quick feet, I believe a lot of his quickness on the basketball court has to do with his work ethic as much as physical gifts.

Much of what Patty has achieved so far in basketball has come down to the preparation and hard work that he's put in. Hard work that anyone can do. I'm going to share with you 5 tips on how to get there.

Don't become the next LeBron James, become the next Patty Mills.

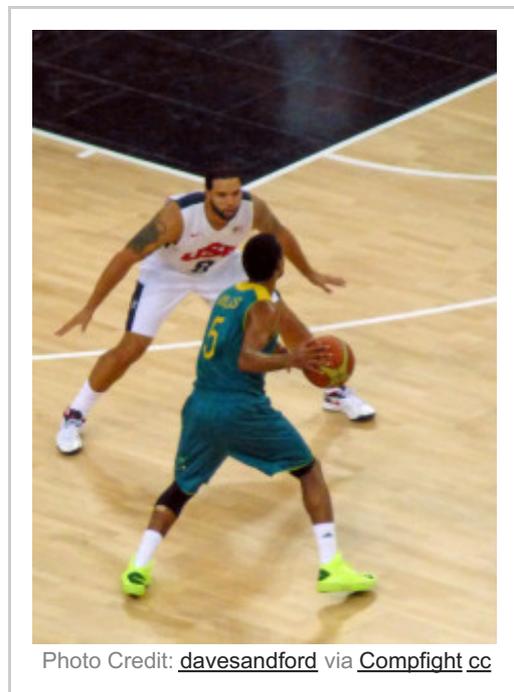
1. Work Your Butt Off on the Court

“You can't control the minutes you play, but you can control how you play the minutes you get.”

Anyone who watched the NBA Finals series knows Patty is a little rocket on the basketball court. Whether he plays 5 minutes or 25 minutes you know exactly what you're going to get from him. Tracked by SportVU, he lead all players in this years NBA playoffs with the incredible average speed on the court of 4.9 miles per hour (7.89km/h).

This is a testament to his work rate. He puts in 100% effort each and every time he's out there.

As I've mentioned on Twitter and FaceBook many, many times; effort is a choice. CHOOSE to work hard. It's up to the players.



2. Sprint Out of the Game on a Sub

This is something that I wasn't sure whether to include or not... but I figured, coaches love when players do this so much, so why not include it?

Not something that will make you a great player necessarily, but you'll be a great teammate. Coaches appreciate when you hustle off the court after a sub and don't sulk about coming out of the game.

Please excuse my memory as I'm writing this a week after the conclusion of the finals, but I vividly remember Patty nailing a big three-pointer, taking a charge on the next play on the defensive end, and then getting subbed out.

What would most players do if they got subbed out after those two plays? Sulk? Whine? Put their head down? Walk to the bench?

Not Patty. As soon as the sub was called he sprinted to the bench hi-fiveing his teammates along the way.

That's a truly selfless player.

3. Stay True to Your Heritage

“Thank you to everyone for their support from the rural parts in the aboriginal areas on the mainland to the Torres Strait Islanders – Mills said after the game 5 victory.”

I love seeing players that remember when they came from.

Being the son of a Torres Strait Islander, Patty proudly wrapped himself in the flag of his father's people while the San Antonio Spurs received their championship trophy.

Not only that, Patty is soon releasing a documentary titled “For My People” to bring awareness to his indigenous heritage. You can check out the documentary trailer [here](#).

4. Get in Shape

During the 2012/2013 season Patty was in and out of the Spurs rotation frequently. Coach Gregg Popovich didn't hold back when explaining the inconsistent and infrequent minutes for the player he commonly referred to as “Fatty Patty”...

“He was a little fat ass. He had too much junk in the trunk. His decision making wasn't great, and he wasn't in great shape.”

So what did he do between the end of the 2013 season and the start of the 2014 season? He transformed his body.

With a much improved diet, Mills drastically improved his body fat percentage bringing it down from 12-13% down to 5.8% making him a much more explosive guard on the court.

5. Be an Incredible Teammate

“His energy has been important all season long. That energy, that team sense he has, has become infectious for everyone” – Spurs coach Gregg Popovich.

If you watched the NBA finals you know what I’m talking about when referring to Patty as a great teammate.

He’s always the first one to sprint over and help up a teammate on the court, always the first one to stand up and cheer after a great play by a teammate, always the first one to sprint out and high-five the players on the court when a time-out is called.

He does all the little things to keep the confidence and team moral high. When you’re not getting many minutes (like he wasn’t last year), those things are important to keep your spot on the roster. Hell, if Patty wasn’t such a good towel waver he might never have had a shot and performing in a final series like he did this year.

6. Become a Great Shooter

I’m a firm believer in today’s game all 1-4’s need to be able to shoot the three. All players being able to spread the floor is near-crucial to success.

Patty has always been a great shooter from the three-point line shooting a career average of .406 from down town.

How do you become such a great shooter throughout your career? Put in a lot of work before you get to the big leagues. A lot of work.

If you need help with that check out my [shooting workouts](#) page.

7. Learn how to wave a Towel (Just for Fun)

“A lot of the time, guys who sit on the bench tend to lose interest or have a bad attitude because they’re not on the court. For me, high-fives and waving towels is a way to stay connected.”

Last but definitely not least, if you’re going to become the next Patty Mills, it’s absolutely essential that you learn how to wave a towel correctly.

But I’m not the expert on that... I’ll leave it to Patty to show you how with this video...

Conclusion

1. Work your butt off on the basketball court.
2. Sprint out when a sub is called.
3. Stay true to your heritage.
4. Get in shape.

5. Be an incredible teammate.
6. Become a great shooter.
7. Master the towel wave.

The most important thing I want people to take away from this article is that Patty relied on hard work to get to the NBA. The traits that make him a great player are things that any player can do if they get the right attitude.

What other traits does Patty Mills possess that make him a great NBA player? Am I missing any?

– Coach Mac

How to Create a Youth Basketball Practice Plan

 basketballforcoaches.com/basketball-practice-plan/



“Players win games. Coaches win practices”.

Practices are the time coaches have the biggest opportunity to impact the basketball skills of a player...

Yet I constantly attend practices that are so inefficiently run and that half of training is simply the coach trying to work out what drill to run next.

All coaches should be spending the majority of their time encouraging and providing feedback to your players. Not working out what the next drill is going to be.

How do coaches fix this and make practices more efficient? **We create a basketball practice plan.**

Here are only a couple of many quotes from great coaches that stress the importance of having a plan to follow at practice...

“I always designed my practice plans the night before and then made tweaks a few hours before practice began” – Bobby Knight

“I would spend almost as much time planning a practice as conducting it. Everything was planned out each day” – John Wooden

Knowing how important it is to have a plan every practice, let me show you the structure you should use to plan each practice.

BFC Practice Structure

At Basketball For Coaches, we break down a typical practice into 5 sections...

1. **Dynamic Warm Up/Body Movement**
2. **Skill Work**
3. **Team Strategies**
4. **Scrimmage/Small Sided Games**
5. **Cool Down**

First, let's discuss each section in more detail and then later on in the article we'll break down how long you should be spending on each of the sections.

Dynamic Warm Up/Body Movement

This section of practice is unfortunately quickly dismissed by many youth basketball coaches. They have their team perform a quick 2 minute dynamic warm up before moving immediately on to other sections of practice.

When I watch youth basketball games, it becomes quickly apparent that the best players have fantastic balance, coordination, and change speeds and directions quickly. The ones that struggle are the players that haven't learnt how to control their body properly yet.

It's extremely important that we help players establish an athletic foundation early on. With this foundation in place, it becomes much easier to learn new basketball skills as they progress.

This section of practice will help your players with much more than their basketball skills. It will help prevent injuries and will help them in all sports and movements of life, because as we all know, players shouldn't be specializing solely in basketball at a young age.

Here are a few examples of body movement and coordination movements you need to incorporate into your dynamic warm up.

- Jogging
- Sprinting
- Back pedalling
- Sliding
- Change of direction
- Change of pace
- Jumping
- Landing
- Lunging
- Skipping

For more information on the best body movement drills you should be using, a great resource is [Alan Stein's YouTube channel](#).

Skill Work

Individual skill work should take up the bulk of practice time at a youth basketball level. The drills should be fun and interesting while still improving the skill of your players.

This includes drills that teach players **how** to perform the skill movement correctly, along with drills that assist them to learn **when** to use the skill.

Drills that allow the player to learn when to use the skill are commonly skipped over.

Referring to shooting, this is a great quote by Jeff Van Gundy...

Shooting percentage is just as much about decision making as it is about technique – Jeff Van Gundy

This rule goes for all skills, not just shooting. **We need to put the players in positions that require them to make decisions and learn from experience.**

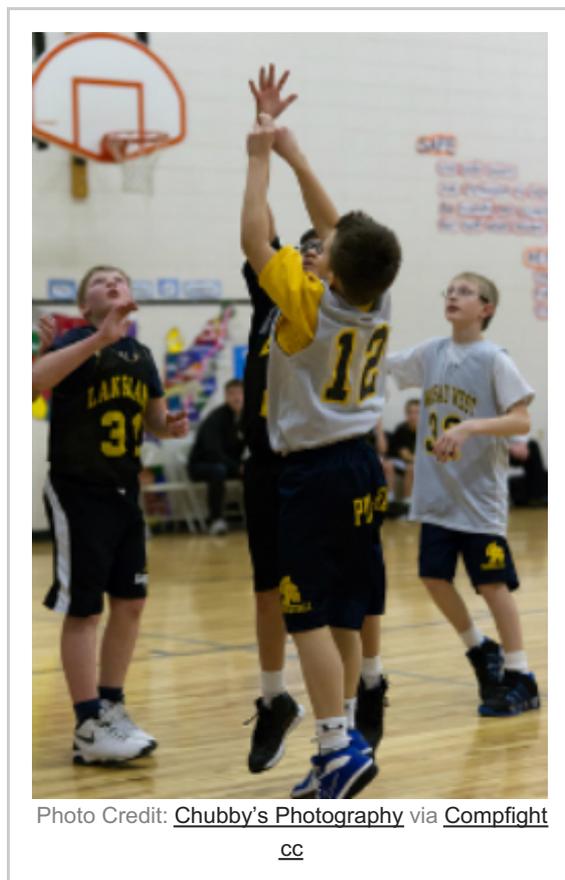
Here's a basic example to explain my view on drills...

A lot of coaches will practice v-cuts to get open on the perimeter. They'll show the players how to cut in, the footwork to close off their defender, and then explode out to receive the ball. They'll even show their players how to rip the ball through and drive and might even go over the 1 or 2 dribble pull-up jump shot.

Then the players will get into a real game and, although they know the footwork quite well, can't seem to get open.

Why is this? **Because they haven't learnt when to use the move in competition.** They haven't had enough experience with a defender to learn when to back-cut, when to explode out and receive the ball, etc.

My point being that **we need to include drills that will teach players the technique side, and drills that will let them gain experience on when to do it in competition.**



I recommend to try and split these two types of drills up 50/50.

Dribbling example: 5 minutes of stationary ball handling and then a game of dribble knockout.

Shooting example: 5 minutes of shooting form and then 1 on 1 partner close-outs with the offensive player deciding whether to shoot the ball or drive.

Passing example: 5 minutes of form passing and then a 10 minute game of 5 vs 4 so that the offensive team has advantage and will always has a player open.

While I list small-sided games at the end of practice, I still do use them in this section to improve individual skills while making decisions.

“Perform drills that force your players to think” – Bobby Knight

BFC TIP: At the youth basketball level drills should be no more than 10 minutes long. The players will start to become disinterested after that time. Keep them short and fun!

Team Strategies

Let me start by saying that ‘team strategies’ is by far the least important component of a youth basketball practice and in my opinion not necessary for players under the age of 10.

The team strategies section of training includes:

- Offense
- Defense
- Set Plays
- Special Situations

If you decide to use this section of practice with your team, dedicate only a small amount of time to it. I see too many coaches steal practice time from skill development and spend half of practice helping athletes memorize where they’re meant to run in a few set plays.

Remember that we want to teach our players how to play basketball, not give them a couple of spots on the floor they have to run to each possession.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m not opposed to teaching team strategies – I do incorporate it into my youth basketball practices – I’m just opposed to spending half of your valuable practice time on it. Keep it to the amount of time recommended in the structure section, subtract time, or even cut it completely.

Scrimmages / Small Sided Games

Scrimmages and small-sided games are very important for every practice.

What’s the point in your players learning how to do a crossover with great technique if they don’t understand when to use it in a game? The technique side is important, but just as important is allowing the kids to practice when to use it.

This doesn’t mean letting them loose in a 5 on 5 game every practice though (even if that does have it’s place). Small sided games can refer to 1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3, etc.

There are many benefits to using the small-sided games approach with your players including:

- More touches of the ball
- More space to practice moves
- More opportunities to score
- and many more.

All of these benefits result in the players developing quicker and having a lot more fun!

So if you have more than one ring and basketball available, use them and play more than one game.

Another thing I love to do in scrimmages or small-sided games is incorporate rules to work on different skills.

For example, one of my favorite rules is the 'no dribble' rule. It forces kids to read the play and make cuts to get open. Without this rule you'll find it's common for a youth player to take 5 or 6 dribbles with their head down before throwing a wild hook shot at the ring while 3 of his teammates stand around wide open.

Cool Down

The cool down section of your training should consist of a couple of minutes of slow jogging and walking up and down the court and then a few minutes of static stretching.

This allows the body to decrease in temperature and the static stretching aids in flushing out the waste products (lactic acid), among other things.

I find the stretching part of the cool down a great time to address the players. We might talk about an upcoming game/tournament or how we felt practice went.

Practice Plan Structure

Now that you understand each section of practice, let's work out how much time during practice should be dedicated to each section.

The first thing you'll need to decide is if you'll be implementing any team concepts like offenses, defenses, or set plays. If so, I still recommend only spending the listed amount of time on it.

If not, I recommend adding the extra minutes to skill work.

The following is how I generally divide up the minutes depending on the length of practice time you have.

60 Minutes

Dynamic Warm Up/Body Movement – 10 minutes

Skill Work – 25 minutes

Team Strategy – 10 minutes

Scrimmage/SSG – 10 minutes

Cool Down – 5 minutes

90 Minutes

Dynamic Warm Up/Body Movement – 15 minutes

Skill Work – 45 minutes

Team Strategy – 10 minutes

Scrimmage/SSG – 15 minutes

Cool Down – 5 minutes

120 Minutes

Dynamic Warm Up/Body Movement – 20 minutes

Skill Work – 60 minutes

Team Strategy – 15 minutes

Scrimmage/SSG – 20 minutes

Cool Down – 5 minutes

By using this structure I believe it combines the technical learning of the skill with the practical application of the skill. The latter being something I believe is overlooked at practices far too often.

A Final Word on Practice Plans

The biggest thing I want you to take away from this article is that you need a practice plan for each and every practice.

By using one your practices will be more efficient, your players will improve quicker, and you'll look like a far better coach.

How to Deal With Slow Starts in Basketball

 basketballforcoaches.com/slow-starts/

I've recently taken on the role of coaching a young youth boys team. The boys are aged 9-10 and I absolutely love coaching them. We're not a great team (yet), but they're all great at paying attention and they all give me their best every practice, but we have one major problem...

We keep getting off to **very** poor starts.

We had a tournament last weekend and I'm sure in four out of the five games we played we were down 10 points within the first 10 minutes. (If anyone's wondering, we won three out of the five games. Great for our group!)



I'm sure we've all been apart of teams that have done the exact same thing. Came out with no energy, the ball just doesn't seem to be going through the ring. It's not a fun experience.

This begs the question, "What do I do when my team starts off the game poorly?"

Since the tournament I've come home and talked to a few great coaches I'm close with, done a lot of research, and also used my own experience to come up with five great tactics you can implement when your team gets off to a poor start.

1. Get to the Ring

You can be a fantastic outside shooting team but sometimes the ball just won't go through the ring. The answer? Take higher percentage shots. For example, get to the basket!

It happens to older youth teams all the time, especially against zones. I see teams playing against a zone and they get great looks from the three-point line, but the ball just won't fall through the ring. They call a time-out, decide to attack the ring, and go back out there and get good looks from the three-point line so they continue to take them. It requires discipline from the players to give up shots they would usually take to attack the ring.

Doing this will also lead to free-throws. A great way to put early points on the board while getting the opposition in early foul trouble.

2. Give Bench Players a Chance

If your starters are having an off-night (everyone does occasionally) why not give someone else a chance?

During one of the games in my tournament on the weekend, all five starters started out with very little energy compared to the other team. I went over to my bench and asked the five players on the bench if they could see how little energy the five players on the court were giving. They all agreed and I asked them if they think they would give more effort. They all said they would. I then subbed all five starters for all five bench players, receiving a few weird looks off some of the parents. Within five minutes two of the players had dived on loose balls and after a few hustle plays had brought the game back to even scores!

Don't be afraid to give your bench players a chance!

3. Call a Time-Out

Momentum is everything in youth sports. Kids see the ball go through the ring and their confidence sky-rockets.

If the opposition gets off to a great start call a time out so the other team settles down and your players get a chance to compose themselves. This also allows you to talk to your players about how they're letting the opposition score and what they can do to fix it.

4. Motivate Your Players With Goals

A great way I've found to get my players motivated and to come out with energy is to set them a challenge. Whether that challenge is to hold the opposition to a certain amount of points each half or quarter, or to score a certain amount of points each half or quarter.

You can even use this tactic on a single player if you need to. On my team, there's a great little player with fantastic rebounding ability, but like all little kids, would rather stand around outside and shoot the ball. If I don't set him a rebounding challenge, he just stands around and goes half-hearted at the boards, but if I set him a challenge to pull down 10 rebounds that game, you can be sure he'll work his butt off to do it!

5. Change Your Defense

If the reason you're off to a poor start is because the opposition seems to be scoring at will, maybe it's time to change up the defense.

My youth teams usually runs a full-court 2-2-1 press which we've had a lot of success with recently. Against one of the teams we played on the weekend they made our zone look like a joke! They had two lightning-quick guards with crazy ball-handling skills. They just breezed through our zone and created 2-on-1 or 3-on-1 opportunities at the other end.

Realizing our full-court press was pointless, we came back to a half-court man-to-man defense and it definitely made the game a lot more even. They weren't getting easy transition scores anymore against us. In-game adjustments are very important.

How to Double the Post – The 4 Best Tactics

 basketballforcoaches.com/how-to-double-the-post/

All coaches have been in this situation: We're in the middle of a game and there's a post player on the other team that's completely dominating us. We've tried numerous players on them but it's no use. They're getting whatever shots they like in the paint.

This situation sometimes leaves us with only one option: sending help.

If we can't stop them with one player, we need to use two. A double-team.

Before we talk about which players we can use to trap the post player, there are a few important things we need to remember about doubling the post effectively...

Double on the flight of the pass

Wherever the double team comes from, it must come on the flight of the pass. If the double team comes late it gives the offense too much time to make a move and score. The help defender should be ready to double nearly immediately after the post player receives the ball.

Look to get deflections, not steals

If your players dig at the ball and try to get steals it will usually lead to fouls. Instead, on the trap your players should be looking to deflect the pass out of the post and not let the post player score. Remember, fouling negates hustle.

Deny the ball-side pass

When we trap the post player our goal is to stop them from scoring and make the pass out of the post difficult. By heavily denying the ball-side pass, it forces the post player to make a difficult pass across the court and through traffic. This is where a lot of our steals will come from. We're forcing the post player to become a passer rather than a scorer.

Don't front the post

While fronting the post can be a smart option in some situations, it's not if you want to trap the post. A smart post player will get angles resulting in quick and easy scores at the basket if we do this.

Instead, half-front the post and play behind. Force the post-player as far away from the basket as possible and then on the flight of the ball get behind them.



Photo Credit: [macropoulos](#) via [Compfight](#)

[CC](#)

Force them to the middle

In all the doubling options described later in the post the help will come to the middle. The post player's immediate defender must angle them towards where the help is coming from.

Exclusive Bonus! Download the full Basketball Tryouts Advice blog post PDF so that you can print it or read it while offline! ([Download Now](#))

Tactic 1 – Double from Weakest Player

This option should be used if the team you're playing against has a weak offensive player that will be consistently on the court.

Have a designated player to play on the weak offensive player and that player double teams the post every time. They must have a high basketball IQ and the better athlete they are the better since they will have to quickly scramble back to their player.

The big-man guarding the post must force the post player towards the middle on the catch because that's where the help will come from. The designated player should always be hedging into the paint getting ready to trap quickly.

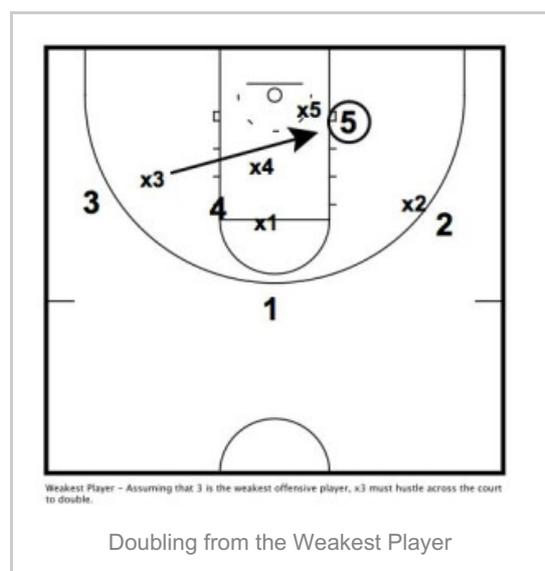
It doesn't matter where they are on the floor at the time, **they must go and double**. And who will be left open? The worst offensive player on the court. This will usually be a big win for the defense getting the ball out of a great post player's hands and into the hands of whoever you choose since they will be wide open. Make sure it's someone that can't consistently shoot the three-point shot.

This tactic is extremely easy for your players to understand since only one person has the responsibility.

Rotations

There aren't any specific rotations when using this tactic. The reason you want to use this is to get the ball into the weakest offensive player's hands so rotating to cover isn't necessary unless they're in the paint, in which split line should be there to help.

The trapping defender on this player should be smart enough to quickly rotate back to their player if it's passed to them. We aren't too concerned about them being open on the pass since we want to force them to shoot or make a decision.



Tactic 2 – Double from the Lowest Defender

Another option a coach has is to send help from the lowest weakside defender. I have mixed views on this option and don't recommend using it.

The good aspects is that it will often be the other big post defender that comes to help so you have two sets of long arms disrupting the post player and looking for deflections. Also the double team is only a couple of steps away so the double can be set quickly.

The problem I have with this option is that if the post player is a decent passer and our rotations down aren't quick enough, it can result in a lot of easy paint catches and layups for the other team.

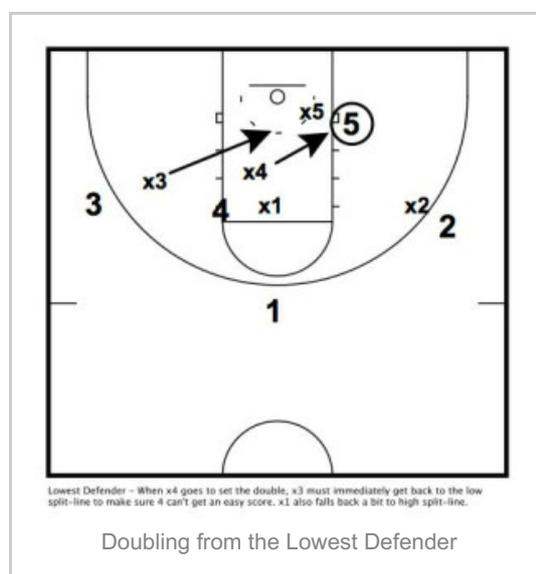
The second lowest defender must immediately drop down to cover both their player and the doubling defenders player. This requires them to turn their head if they want to see both players immediately. Whereas if the double is coming from the top (I'll talk about that in the next option), the defender can already see both players they need to watch.

You can choose to have the help defender double from the baseline or double from the top. I recommend always coming from the top to double.

Rotations

The defender of the second lowest offensive player must IMMEDIATELY drop back to the low split-line to protect the paint and watch the lowest defender. The defender at the top of the key must drop back the the high split-line.

Both players are responsible for the three offensive players on the weak-side of the court and must scramble if a pass is made to any of them. They must look to get steals off bad passes from the post.



Tactic 3 – Double from the Top Defender

This is my favourite tactic to use when playing a level of competition where the players on the opposition can consistently knock down the three-point shot.

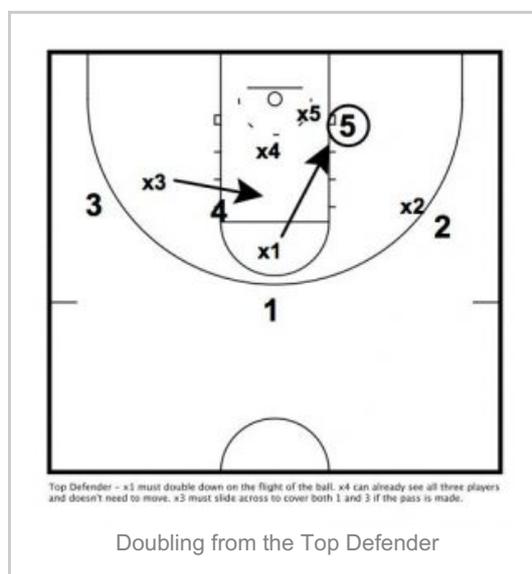
The reason being is that by doubling the post with the top player the lowest defender won't have to change positions, and the wings defender can already see both players he must watch. The less movement the defenders needs to make to rotate the better.

On the flight of the ball into the post the highest defender must turn and sprint to double the post player.

Rotations

The lowest defender should already be playing the split-line under the basket so has the convenience of not having to change spots. The second lowest defender slides across to the high split-line around the free-throw line.

Like the tactic above, both players are now responsible for the three offensive players on the weak side of the court and must scramble once the pass is made. Both are looking to get steals off bad passes from the post player.



Tactic 4 – Double from the Passer

Whether you should use this option depends on what level of basketball you're coaching. If the players on the other team can knock down the three-point shot, don't use this. If your goal is to keep the ball out of the post and you're happy for the team to receive the ball open on the three-point line, you could use this.

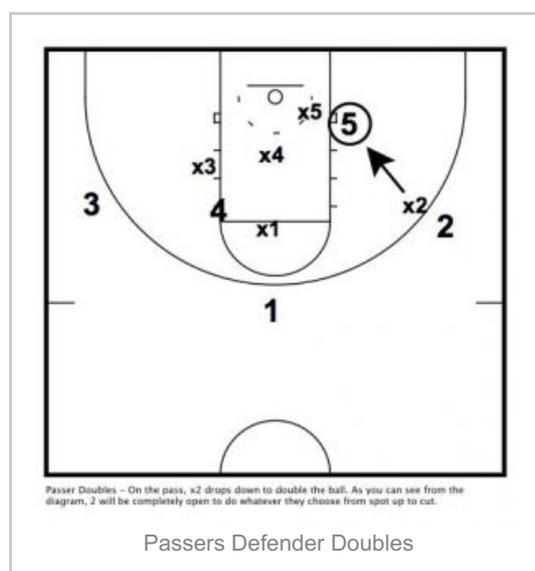
One of the main rules when double-teaming the post is to stop the post player from making a simple pass to the strong side wing player. We want to force the big to make a tough pass which will hopefully result in them turning the ball over. That doesn't work with this double-team. This option allows the big to make the easy pass out of the post.

The players passing the ball to the post player will usually be the strong-side guard. Double-teaming off this pass is a poor option because committing to the trap requires the guard to take his eyes off his player and there are not rotations to cover if they get open for the three or cut to the basket.

Rotations

There aren't really any smart rotations we can make since the pass will usually be entered from the ball-side guard. I've been at clinics where they've talked about rotating the defender from the top across to guard the ball-side guard but I'm not a big fan of that.

This tactic should only be used against teams that can't shoot the three-point shot so the guard doubling should return to their player once the ball's been passed out.



How to Double Your Vertical Jump for Basketball – 12 Week Course

 basketballforcoaches.com/vertical-jump/

A good vertical jump is a valuable asset for all of your players to possess. It will help your team get more rebounds, blocks, and steals. It will also let a few (or many) players on your team dunk the basketball, which can lead to increasing your teams confidence, enthusiasm, and can it make the game a lot more fun!

If you are wondering if it is even possible to increase your vertical jump, you'll be happy to know that with proper training, it is definitely something that can be improved.



I've developed this program over a number of years and have seen great improvements in the leaping ability of those who have followed it. I call it the *Coach Mac Vertical Jump Program*. Not a very creative name, is it? 😊

I designed this program to be completely equipment free and also without the need for a large space. This program can be completed by anyone as long as you have a 2 x 2 meters of free space. Which we all do. So there can be no excuses for not completing the program.

Disclaimer: Obviously, I am not a doctor. If you or your players feel any pain in any of your joints during the program stop immediately and consult a doctor. You don't want to make any previous injuries any worse.

Update for 2016!

Best Vertical Jump Program in the World

I have found what I believe to be the current best vertical jump program in the world, and it's Vert Shock by Adam Folker and Justin 'Jus Fly' Darlington.

While there are a ton of success stories of players using my program and making massive gains (check the comments if you don't believe me), I'm also realistic about the extent of my knowledge on vertical jump training.

Justin is the world's highest dunker and has trained athletes to add 9 – 15 inches to their vertical jump in only a couple of weeks!

If you're interested check out Adam and Justin's product below. I highly recommend it.

Vert Shock by Adam Folker and Justin 'Jus Fly' Darlington.

If you're not interested in it that's fine! You'll still make a ton of gains using my workout. And I'd love you to use it! I made a promise to myself that I'd share the best information and products I know about and I'm keeping that promise.

How to Measure Your Vertical Jump

As the saying goes, *'You can't improve what you can't measure'*.

The first step on your journey to increasing your vertical jump is to get a starting point of where you currently at so that you can track your progress.

Here's how to do it;

Things you'll need: Another friend to help you, a ladder, and either a permanent marker or chalk.

1. Find a wall or pole tall enough that when you jump you cannot touch the top.
2. Stand next to the pole or wall and extend your arm as high as you can above your head. This is your standing reach. Have your friend mark your standing reach with either a piece of chalk or a permanent marker.
3. Now from a standing start, jump and touch as high up the wall or pole as you possibly can. You'll need your friend to watch and see where you touch so that there's no confusion. Get your friend to climb the ladder and mark where you were able to reach on the wall.
4. Measure the distance between your standing reach and your jumping reach. This is your current vertical jump.

Important Information on the Coach Mac Vertical Jump Program

Warming Up

By reading my previous article on stretching, you'll learn that it is important to warm-up your muscles first before stretching or performing any strenuous physical activity. I recommend jumping rope for a couple of minutes to warm-up and increase the blood flow to your muscles.

Phases

The program is broken up into three different phases consisting of four weeks each. This is because as you continue through the program your muscles will adapt to the intensity of the workout, therefore we need to keep increasing the workload in order to continue increasing your vertical jump.

Frequency

Perform the routine every second day to give your body a days rest in-between workouts. This means that on week one you'll be training 4 times a week, week two you'll be training 3 times per week, and on week three you'll be training 4 times per week. That ends up being 11 workouts per phase for a total of 33 workouts in the program. Also, during this program you will be taking one week off between each phase to let your body completely recover. You need to give your muscles time to fully repair in order to grow stronger and more explosive.

Rest Intervals

One minute rest in-between all sets. If you can, try to keep a stop watch with you when you're doing these workouts. If you don't have one my players have found it convenient to use the stop watches located on their mobile phones.

Record Your Progress

Keep track of how much progress you've made at the end of each rest week. It's going to be hard for your players, but stress that if they really want to see results it's best that they wait until the end of the rest week. We know how hard it is for players to be patient!

Exercises:

If you have any trouble understanding my descriptions of the exercises, YouTube them to watch a video of the exercise being performed.

Jumping Rope – A skipping rope is the only piece of equipment involved in the program. If you don't have one a piece of rope will do just fine. If you don't have a piece of rope either jumping up and down on the spot without much bending in the knees will achieve a similar result. Jumping rope involves holding a rope with both hands and swinging it around your body continuously.

4-Corners – Involves you imagining 4 dots in a square shape about 15 – 20 inches apart. To complete 4-corners you hop around the square in a clockwise direction landing on each dot for the required number of repetitions. 4 jumps and completing the square equals one repetition.

Single-Leg 4-Corners – Exactly the same as 4-Corners except performed on one leg.

Slow-Motion Squats – Involves standing with your feet shoulder width apart. From this position slowly lower down until you are in a deep squat making sure your heels are flat on the ground. Hold for 2 seconds before slowly rising back to the starting position. The descent and rise should each take 4 seconds to complete. Throughout the entire exercise make sure to keep your head up and your back straight.

Tuck Jumps – Tuck jumps involve descending into a comfortable squat and then jumping as high as possible and bringing your knees to your chest.

High-Reach Jumps – Are similar to tuck jumps, but instead of bringing your knees to your chest, you just reach as high as you can. This is done best under a basketball ring or near a wall so that you can tell how much lower your reach becomes as you fatigue. Try to reach

the same height through all repetitions. if you don't have anything to measure against, that's fine. Just jump as high as you can each repetition.

Lateral Jumps – Lateral jumps are performed best with over a line or a stick. They involve standing parallel to the line on one side and then quickly jumping sideways back-and-forth over the line. Over and back equals one repetition.

Single-Leg Lateral Jumps – Exactly the same as lateral jumps except performed on one leg.

Alternating Lunge Jumps – From a normal standing position, take one step forward with your right foot and one step backwards with your left foot. This is your starting position. From this position, jump as high as you can in the air and switch leg positions.

Straight Leg Calf Jumps – Without bending your knees, jump up and down in the same spot. You won't get very high off the ground and it will be the ankle doing all the movement which will work the calf muscle.

Toe Raises – Stand regularly, then raise up onto the tips of your toes. Lower back down. Don't rock up and down, do it slowly (not too slowly) but steadily. This is improved by using stairs if you have access to them. Alright, enough talk. Here's the program you've all been waiting for.

Coach Mac Vertical Jump Program

Phase 1 – Weeks 1 – 3

1. Jumping Rope – 2 minutes.
2. Stretching
3. Jumping Rope – 2 minutes.
4. Slow Motion Squats – 3 sets of 10 repetitions.
5. Lateral Jumps – 3 sets of 20 repetitions.
6. Alternating Jump Lunges – 3 sets of 10 repetitions.
7. Tuck Jumps – 3 sets of 8 repetitions.
8. Toe Raises – 3 sets of 20 repetitions.

Week 4 – Rest.

Phase 2 – Weeks 5 – 7

1. Jumping Rope – 2 minutes.
2. Stretching
3. Jumping Rope – 3 minutes.

4. Slow Motion Squats – 3 sets of 10 repetitions.
5. 4-Corners – 3 sets of 12 repetitions.
6. Single-Leg Lateral Jumps – 3 sets of 15 repetitions.
7. Alternating Jump Lunges – 3 sets of 15 repetitions.
8. High Reach Jumps – 3 sets of 8 repetitions.
9. Straight-Leg Calf Jumps – 3 sets of 30 repetitions.

Week 8 – Rest.

Phase 3 – Weeks 9 – 11

1. Jumping Rope – 2 minutes.
2. Stretching
3. Jumping Rope – 4 minutes.
4. Slow Motions Squats – 3 sets of 10 repetitions.
5. Single-Leg 4-Corners – 3 sets of 10 repetitions.
6. Single-Leg Lateral Jumps – 3 sets of 20 repetitions.
7. Alternating Jump Lunges – 3 sets of 20 repetitions.
8. Tuck Jumps – 3 sets of 8 repetitions.
9. Straight-Leg Calf Jumps – 3 sets of 40 repetitions.

Week 12 – Rest.

I have found what I believe to be the current best vertical jump program in the world, and it's [Vert Shock by Adam Folker and Justin 'Jus Fly' Darlington](#).

Important Update! – I have been receiving a few emails/comments on players tracking their jump during the course of their program. Please understand that what you are doing when completing a jump program is breaking down the muscle. You aren't going to see improvements mid-week because the muscle hasn't healed properly. That's why I suggest only checking how much you've improved at the end of each rest week. Rest is just as important as the routine.

That's it! It's as simple as that.

I've seen players make massive gains using this exact program so don't hesitate giving it to your players to help them improve.

They'll love it too. Who doesn't want to dunk a basketball?

Let me know how the program works for your players. I'd love to hear some of the results.

How to Easily Stop Selfishness in Basketball

 basketballforcoaches.com/selfish-basketball/



We've all coached at least one... the player that simply refuses to pass the ball to their teammates. The player that seems to take a shot on every offensive trip down the court. Having this type of player on your team can turn a seemingly happy season into a downright nightmare if it's not addressed early and properly.

Youth basketball should be enjoyable for everyone on the team. Not just the couple of players that are more advanced than their teammates (not that being a good player is a requirement of being a selfish player.)

How much fun are the less developed players going to have if all they do is watch their teammate shoot shot after shot each time they're on offense?

Discussing this topic begs the question...

"What's the best way to teach a selfish player how to be an effective member of a team?"

We'll get to this answer... but first, let's start with the basics...

What Makes Someone a 'Selfish' Player?

The biggest mix-up I see is people automatically labelling a player that scores a large amount of points a selfish player. This is not always true.

A player can easily score a majority of their team's points all while playing unselfishly.

Let me give a quick example...

Earlier this year I coached a player that was far, far better than the kids he was playing against. If he wanted to step onto the court and score 40 points he could. Every single

game.

While a little selfish to begin with, he quickly learned to start making the right basketball play. The only thing is, he would make the right play by passing to a teammate, they would miss the shot, and he would rebound the ball and score. He would end up with 20+ and the majority of our team's points each game.

Is there anything wrong with that? I don't think there is. He's simply a product of hard work and being fortunate enough to be more physically developed than his peers.

Being a player that's worked hard on their game to improve and, therefore, gained the ability and knowledge to score more points does not automatically make a player selfish.

So then what does make a player 'selfish' exactly? Let's break it down...

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'selfish' as *"having or showing concern only for yourself and not for the needs or feelings of other people."*

To translate that to basketball terms, let's say a selfish basketball player is *"a player that is only concerned with their own game and statistics and not the needs or feelings of their teammates and the team as a whole."*

Sound fair?

Having a player like this on your team can quickly lead to many negatives like tension amongst teammates, angry parents, lack of ball movement, and selfishness from other players on the team, just to name a few.

So how do we get rid of selfishness? In order to influence a change to this behaviour, **we first must understand 'why' a player is being selfish.** Because only by understanding the 'why' behind the selfish play can we begin to determine the solution.

Why are Some Players Selfish?

Players can be selfish for many reasons, but there are a few that stick out the most in my mind...

1. Society has conditioned them to be selfish by putting too much focus on winning

Here are 3 different places kids learn the importance of winning from society at an unfortunately young age.

a. Their coach

How often before a game does a coach put the emphasis on winning to a group of 8-year-olds with statements like... "if we box out and secure the rebounds we can win the game!" or "they'll beat us if we don't run hard on defense."

How about when the players listen to the coach go on a rant after a disappointing loss?

b. Their Parents

They've learnt how important winning is to their parents from all the 'this is what you should have done' conversations that unfortunately take place on the car ride home.

Kids witness the importance of winning when parents over-celebrate a basketball win with cheers and clapping and compare it to the depressive attitudes parents exhibit after a close loss.

c. Their Idols

Ask any basketball kid who their idols are and, more often than not, you're going to hear the name of an NBA player. These professionals are out there on the court playing win-at-all-costs basketball.

Players watch them get angry after a loss, ecstatic after a win, and this undeniably rubs off on them. They get the impression that 'this is how I should feel' as well.

Now I'm not saying that we should forbid our players from watching professional sports or that coaches should never talk about winning to their team, but I am saying that it gives youth coaches more reason to make it clear that our games are not solely focused on the outcome but are also focused on development and progress.

2. They don't trust their teammates

A lot of players are selfish on the basketball court simply because they are better players than others on their team and they want to win (this may have something to do with point #1.)

Maybe they've put in more hours of practice working on their game. Maybe they've been fortunate enough to physically develop earlier than their peers.

Whatever the reason is, competitive players will often come across as selfish because they take more of the scoring burden on themselves in order to improve the teams' chances of winning the game.

The player isn't necessarily a 'selfish player' since when they play at a higher level with more skilled teammates they have no problem sharing the basketball.

3. They're searching for approval

How often do you see the youth basketball player immediately spin around after scoring a goal to see the reaction of their parents or coach?

The parents may be seen emphatically clapping with wide smiles on their faces and the coach throwing a fist in the air. Kids love this feeling of approval and there's nothing wrong with a coach or the kid's parents being happy about them scoring.

The only problem with this, however, is that the player doesn't receive the same feedback when they make a great pass or grabs a nice rebound.

Therefore, you can be sure that most youth players are going to take every shot within their range in hopes of eliciting the positive reaction from the parents and coach.



The WRONG Way to Teach Unselfishness

When I ask coaches what's the best way to teach a player to be unselfish, the overwhelming answer usually is some variation of *'bench them'* or *'stick them on the pine until they learn to pass.'*

I like to think that the issue is much more complicated than 'just bench him.' Is doing so really the best way to teach a 10-year-old how to play unselfishly? I doubt it.

Don't get me wrong, the bench can be used as a great teaching tool and we'll discuss how to use it effectively later on in this article. I've used it as one plenty of times in the past, but there are definitely better options to try first.

Just quickly, here are a few of the ways some associations and teams try and develop unselfishness that I'm not a big fan of...

1. Scream at them to pass the basketball– Is yelling at a child ever the best way to teach them something? I hope I don't need to elaborate any more on this.

2. Restrict their points – Some leagues are forced to do this because some coaches will focus on winning at the expense of developing their team. What I don't like about this concept is players being restricted for being too good. Should a player really be penalised for working on their game and developing better skills than their teammates or opponents?

The RIGHT Way to Teach Unselfishness

Here are 4 steps to take to prevent/stop selfishness by your team or individual players.

1. Try and Prevent it From the Start of the Season

Unsurprisingly, the first step to teaching unselfishness is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. We all know the old saying... 'Prevention is better than a cure.'

A coach should do this in two ways which I'll elaborate on...

a. Always encourage your team to 'make the right play'

The 'right play' meaning the best basketball decision based on the situation. If someone is open, pass them the basketball. If you're open and within shooting range, shoot the basketball. Try to keep it simple.

I should mention that at youth basketball level, I teach that making the right play doesn't take into account each players' individual abilities. Because let's face it... if it did, a star youth player can often have a better chance of scoring going 1 on 4 than their teammate who's new to basketball has of scoring an open layup.

A coach must emphasise 'making the right play' from day one. You can't bring it up at random intervals throughout the season and assume the players will adhere to it. It must be constantly talked about. It must be one of your core team values.

This philosophy will ensure that it's not only your star players controlling the basketball and taking all the shots.

b. Don't make winning a big deal

Another step for preventing selfishness is resist talking about winning too much with your team.

When a star player listens to a coach speak about how badly they want to win they know that the best way to make that happen is for them to hog the basketball and take the game on themselves.

2. Have a Quick Word with the Player During the Game

If the prevention methods don't work it's time to directly tell the player to share the basketball more with their teammates.

This isn't an 'official meeting' or anything like that. It's simply a quick word during or after the game letting the player know that you want them to pass more often and play more of a team basketball game.

You can have this conversation by calling the player over during another players' free-throws, while they're on the bench, during a timeout, after the game etc.

When having these quick conversation coaches must give the feedback in a positive way. I recommend using the 'criticism sandwich' model. This is simply putting the negative (that you want them to pass more) in between two positives.

You can check out this [video of the criticism sandwich](#).

The feedback you give might be something like... *“Hey Johnny, you’re doing an awesome job of getting past your defender but you have to keep a look out for open players on the three-point line when the defense helps. But keep attacking the ring. You’re doing a great!”*

3. Talk to the Player in Private Before or After a Game

If the player doesn’t take much notice of your quick word with them (they often won’t during the pressure of the game) then it’s time you make the conversation a little more serious by talking to them in private.

This conversation should be had before or after a game or practice.

Take them to the side before or after practice or a game. Simply say *“Hey Johnny, can I have a quick word with you please?”*

You must again use the criticism sandwich, but the player will know it’s a bit more official now since you’re having the meeting with them in private.

The conversation could go something like this... *“You’re a really good player but this is a team sport and you need to share the ball more with your teammates. I love coaching you and having you on this team but if you don’t start becoming more of a team player then I’m going to have to bring you off the court more often.”*

It’s imperative that you don’t have this conversation with them in front of their teammates. Doing so will only embarrass them and make them resent you.

4. They’ve Left You No Choice... Bench Them

If you’ve talked privately with the player and you’ve been consistently emphasizing making the right play and they still aren’t passing the basketball then you have no choice but to bench them.

Making sure you’ve completed the first 4 steps is important and a far better option than immediately sitting a player on the bench and hoping they learn their lesson like so many coaches do.

One of the hardest problems is that if the selfish player is one of the best players on your team (they often are) then after your quick word they’re going to think *“The coach won’t actually put me on the bench. Then we’ll lose!”** This is where you must prove that you’re a coach who puts a higher importance on development and player enjoyment than winning by sitting them regardless of how it affects the scoreboard.

To put it simply: You must be willing to sit a selfish player.

Too many coaches say they’ll bench them but when it comes time to do it they refuse because they’re more concerned about winning the basketball game.

Gregg Popovich has a great quote in regards to selfish players...

“A selfish player sits... No matter what the level of talent. And it works. You’ve got to be willing to sit a guy, and he’s got to know you’re willing to do it. Or your held hostage, and it doesn’t work” – Gregg Popovich

I also love these quotes from Dean Smith and Bill Russell...

“You should always sub a player out when you see them not going full speed or they’re playing selfish basketball.” – Dean Smith

“Create unselfishness as the most important team attribute.” – Bill Russell

5. Meet With Their Parents

Now that you’ve begun benching the player you can be sure the parents of the child are going to notice the difference in playing time.

Instead of sitting back and waiting for them to bring it up, I advise coaches to be proactive and ask the parents if they wouldn’t mind sitting down and having a chat with you about their son or daughter.

This shows them that you’re not trying to avoid the problem but are instead willing to work with them and their child to help work out the solution.

Explain to them why their child has been receiving less playing time and that it will continue until they learn to share the basketball with their teammates. You’re a coach that puts the development and enjoyment of the entire team above all else.

If communicated properly (which isn’t always easy), this conversation will hopefully encourage the parents to talk to their child about the situation and will let them know the reasons behind the drop in playing time.

6. Praise Players that Do ‘Make the Right Play’

It’s incredibly important that you reinforce the unselfishness you’re teaching your players by praising those that make the right play regardless of the outcome.

The most important 4 words of the above sentence are ‘regardless of the outcome.’

You must focus on the process instead of results. If a player makes an unselfish pass that leads to a missed shot, don’t get upset about the missed shot, congratulate and encourage the players for making the right basketball play.

Praising unselfishness play will breed more unselfish play. Remember that.

Conclusion

As you can see, teaching unselfishness to a player or an entire team is not some super complicated formula.

Here are the steps again to ingrain them in your memory...

- 1. Prevent it from the start of the season**
- 2. Quick word with the player during the game**
- 3. Talk to the player privately**
- 4. Use the bench**
- 5. Meet with their parents**
- 6. Praise players that 'make the right play'**

A once selfish player can definitely make the transition to an unselfish player with the right guidance and direction.

Most importantly it relies on the coach putting the development of the team over winning a game of youth basketball. Coaches must be willing to sit a selfish player on the bench. If they aren't, none of the other steps will ever work.

Encouraging unselfishness on your team will result in a much more fun game for everyone involved.

How to Improve Youth Basketball – 36 Experts Explain

 basketballforcoaches.com/improve-youth-basketball/



Different ways to improve youth basketball is a topic I often find myself having with coaches from all over the world.

While the opinions are often similar, what I love hearing are the different reasons *why* each coach or trainer wants the specific changes to be made. It's enlightening to see the different perspectives and view-points each coach has.

So for this month's question, I decided to focus on exactly that... ways to improve youth basketball.

I asked 36 experts this question...

“What are 1 – 3 things you would change to improve youth basketball?”

Since we've created this type of post a couple of times now and coaches are starting to get an idea who they relate to and who provides the best answers, here's a handy list you can use to skip to your favorite expert!

[Adam Filippi](#), [Augie Johnston](#)

[Bob Bigelow](#), [Brian McCormick](#), [Bryan Burrell](#)

[Casey Dudek](#),

[Damin Altizer](#), [David Nurse](#), [Drew Hanlen](#), [Duane Jourdeans](#)

[Galen Harkness](#), [Gary Maitland](#), [Gary Petrin](#), [Greg White](#)

[Hal Wilson](#),

[Janis Meredith](#), [Jeremy Russotti](#), [Joe Haefner](#), [Jordan Delp](#)

[Kevin Mitchell](#), [Koran Godwin](#), [Kyle Ohman](#)

[Mark Adams](#), [Matt Monroe](#), [Mike Costello](#)

[Paige White](#),

Randy Brown, Ryan Razooky, Ryan Walker
Scott Fields, Sundance Wicks
Tamir Goodman, Tommy Hulihan, Trafford Hannon, Tyler Relph
Wesley Kosel

Ways to Improve Youth Basketball

Adam Filippi – Pro Basketball Training

- 1. Too many games, not enough teaching:** Fundamentals are paramount.
- 2. Too much dribbling:** Need to see more passing and moving, basic spacing principles
- 3. Parenting:** Let the coach teach, let the kids play. Respect the coach, but make sure he is an educator.



Augie Johnston – Baller Boot Camp

No zone defense allowed. I know some leagues enforce this already, but it's not everywhere. Young players need to be held accountable on defense and learn how to guard out of a man to man situation.

Another thing I think would benefit youth basketball would be a bigger focus on skill development. Kids play. They play at recess, they play after school, they play AAU, they play year round. But you'll notice that many of them don't work on their skill sets and then when their school seasons start they lack the basic fundamentals to make plays in a more structured 5 on 5 environment.



Bob Bigelow – BobBigelow.com

Since you're Australian, and I know your website appeals to basketball folks around the world; let's define 'youth basketball' before I answer...

Technically, worldwide, 'youth' basketball refers to ages 16 and under, boy and girls... because the regional, international and intergalactic basketball championships between national teams usually starts at age 17. Therefore, everything younger falls under the definition of 'youth'.

For this post, I'll define youth basketball using the public school 'grade' system here in the US. Classic high school grades and ages – grades 9-12, and ages 14-18 – will be left out of this discussion. Elementary (grammar) school ages (grades Kindergarten through 5th, typically ages 5-11); and 'middle' (junior high in my youth 100 years ago!) school, 6th to 8th grades, and ages 11-14 will encompass the changes cited here.



To be honest, although there are (way too) many 'formal' basketball programs for 5-8 years old here in the US, and elsewhere in the world; I'll concentrate on the 3rd to 8th grade(ages 8-14) segment here. Anyone who is running a program for players 7 and under better make FUN priorities #1-100! Lots of dribbling, shooting and passing contests, plenty of 'play group' activities (with or without a ball); and lots of smiling, and red from exertion, faces to boot. For 25 years, I have called this programming, "*trying to organize the unorganizable*". Trying to 'organize' 5 on 5 games is ridiculous and fruitless. The square peg in the round hole of little tykes basketball. At older ages (10! Real veterans!), a friend of mine refers to this as "rugby, disguised as basketball". At ages 5 to 7 or 8, just call it complete and utter chaos...

Change #1 – Height of the Rim

To my non-American friends; apologies up front, I'll deal in feet and inches; although I've been a big fan of the metric system for 40+years... my height is 2 meters and my weight is 100 kilograms...

Grades Kindergarten to 2nd (ages 5-8) basket height – 6 feet

Grades 3rd and 4th (ages 8-10) basket height – 8 feet

Grade 5 (ages 10-11) basket height – 9 feet

Grade 6 and up (ages 11/12 and beyond) basket height -10 feet

These are the same recommendations made by the American Sport Education Program (ASEP) 25-30 years ago; and I wholeheartedly agree. ASEP was established by the venerable and esteemed Rainer Martens and other brilliant colleagues about 50 years ago in Champaign, (Univ of) Illinois. They have spent millions of man hours and dollars studying how best to develop sports programs that meet the age-appropriate needs of children of all ages.

Here in America, having been speaking on the subjects of youth sports and basketball for 25 years; and having seen thousands of youth basketball programs (and a gazillion players and games), my educated hypothesis is that well over 95% of 3rd/4th grade (ages 8-10) basketball programs are played at 10 foot rims. The average sized, 10 year old(4th/5th grade) girl or boy is 4 feet, 8 inches and 78 pounds (big kids are 5-0 and 92 pounds!). They are shooting at the same height basket as LeBron James (6-7, 250 pounds) and Dwight Howard (6-11, and 270 pounds). *Why are our elementary school players shooting at the same basket height as NBA professionals?*

Lower the baskets, and you can begin to teach the 'rudiments' of shooting form. If your baskets are too tall, and your players too young; shooting 'form' will consist of heaves thrown in the general direction of the basket...

And now, as of 20-30-40 years ago, we 'add' the 3 point shot (!?!?!?) to this equation... I'll use the old quote from a friend of mine nearby in the state of Connecticut... these young players are "anvil-tossing jockeys" (great line; wish I had thought of it!). For those who aren't into horse racing; "jockeys" are the ones who ride the horse...

One other quick thought... smaller balls for smaller hands... I hope I don't have to explain that...

Change #2 – Man to Man Half Court Defense until 15 – 16 years old.

Thankfully, because my fingers are getting tired, the reader will not have to digest the 4,567 words of dialog I usually give on this subject.

I've asked the following question of over 1000 high school college and professional coaches the past 25 years... including Chuck Daly (my college coach), Red Auerbach (no explanation needed, I hope!), and Stan Van Gundy (current Detroit Pistons coach/GM) and former college coach here in the Boston area 25 years ago when I first met him...

The question... *"at what basketball grade level should we start teaching/coaching defenses that are NOT man to man; in other words zones, presses, traps, boxes and ones, triangles and two's and any other variations our future Hall of Fame youth coaches can devise?"* The answer has been consistently (99%) – High school Junior Varsity... which is approximately 15-16 years old for readers who don't have kids in the American school system.

The sad thing is there are far more coaches at the 8 – 14 year old level playing zone and pressing in this country, than those who play man to man. The simple answer: the lower the ages on the offensive skill development spectrum, the easier it is to win games with defenses other than man to man. I have seen 12 year old games here in the States during the last 20 years where the ball was not even shot at the basket for 5 minutes, because the two teams playing couldn't advance the ball close enough to the basket to even get a shot. Can you imagine games where there were 3 times as many turnovers as shots taken? Regrettably, I've seen them... and I'll never get that time back!

The two most important concepts in learning basic defense are: (1) guarding on the ball and (2) guarding away from the ball. The latter is more important because any defender spends more time away from the ball than they do on the ball... it's simple math... one ball and five defenders. Every youth coach should be teaching these two concepts... with zones and presses, players guard areas, not offensive players.

Younger offensive players being zoned or pressed rarely get a chance to play offense with only one defender in front of him or her (many times those defenders are on the side, and/or coming up from behind). The offensive players' sight lines are obscured even more by double teams... and the passes needed to 'break' presses or 'beat' zones are oftentimes beyond the physical and cognitive abilities of the young offensive players. I have seen games, with two teams pressing, where there are more than 40 turnovers in 15 minutes of stopped time. Anyone want to tell me what is being learned, and how those players are getting better?

Change #3 – Small Sided Games. 2 on 2, 3 on 3...

The youth soccer folks around the globe figured this out 30 (US) to 50+(Europe and South America) years ago. Kids left to their own basketball pick up play on playgrounds will constantly play small-sided games; because there aren't 10 kids there to play...

In American, organized (by adults, of course!) youth basketball levels, and (a little) less so in other countries, 5 on 5 full court dominates. Three on three half court means twelve kids can play two, three on three games on the same court where two, five on five teams play

with one ball. The 12 players get far more touches than the kids in 5 on 5 (two balls 12 kids; one ball 10 kids).

Small sided soccer – on fields much smaller than 60 X 110 yards – has become almost 100% common here in America up through 12 years old... Small sided ice hockey has also been very popular here for 10-15 years... Youth basketball; we have a long ways to go!

Brian McCormick – 180 Shooter

1. Use age-appropriate balls. Boys should not use 29.5/7s until at least junior-high school, if not high school.

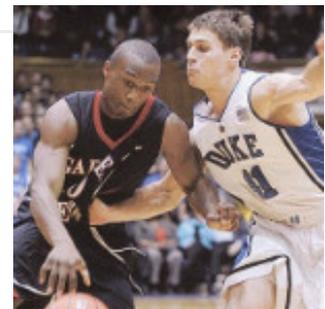
2. Use age-appropriate basket heights. My club in Denmark did not move to 10-foot baskets until u14's.

3. The youngest children (3-8) should skip organized basketball teams and participate in martial arts, wrestling, gymnastics, and/or other similar sports that develop kinesthetic awareness, balance, and coordination. Start basketball later (9+), but with a better athletic foundation. I have never seen a basketball player where I said, "If only he or she had started when he or she was 8 instead of 9", but I see players all the way through the NBA who lack balance, coordination, and rhythm and consequently have suboptimal sport-specific skills.



Bryan Burrell – New Age Elite Sports

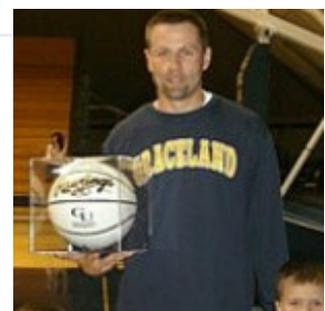
One of the changes I'd make to improve youth basketball, is eliminating basketball rankings up until players have entered high school. Though it's great to acknowledge young players for their abilities, it's more important that these players are getting a chance to focus on their development without outside distractions.



Youth players should only be focused on playing because they love it and getting better each day. If they focus on that, they will have success in their career.

Casey Dudek – CITK Hoops

1. Make practices more about skill development and not plays
2. Make sure games are just as much about learning as it is winning. Competition is important but learning how to play is too!
3. Keep the 'game' FUN!



Damin Altizer – DRIVEN Training

1. Build the Foundation – As simple as it sounds, the basic fundamentals should be stressed and mastered before progressing. I see a lot of young players today working on euro-steps, spin moves, combo moves who don't yet have the body mechanics to run, catch and finish an off-hand layup. A house is only as strong as the foundation, the simplest of fundamentals are player's foundations; they must be strong before building more.



2. Progressive Basket Heights – Shooting seems to be one of the biggest issues with grassroots players, yet a lot of leagues have 7 year olds shooting on 10' baskets and allowing threes. Standardizing basket heights to correspond with ages, where players work their way up both with basketball size and rim height would allow fundamental development so, by the time players get to middle school, they're ready and able to properly shoot a regulation ball on a 10' basket.

3. More Stringent Coaching Requirements – The fact that anyone can pick up a ball, a whistle and head out to the local youth rec league and coach without any training isn't a good thing. Having youth coaches be required to go through some type of training would ensure that only dedicated parents/individuals have a chance to impact the kids. Parents, relatives, etc. should be able to coach their child if they'd like, but there should be some baseline and background understanding of coaching ethics, practice structure, game management, and conflict resolution to do so.

David Nurse – Perfect Shots Basketball

I travel all over the world and have worked with youth basketball players and coaches in over 25 countries. The biggest disfunction that I see at this level is the lack of focus on the fundamental skill development. A lot of youth programs are more concerned on only playing games instead of developing players.



At the youth level, it should be more about developing fundamental ball handling, shooting, decision making skill sets. And also not making a player play one position just because of his size. All youth player should know how to play all positions, you never know how they will grow and develop.

And plus, it just raises their overall basketball IQ developing a high level feel for the game. And at the end of the day, it's got to be fun for the kids. Positive reinforcement!

Drew Hanlen – Pure Sweat Basketball

1. Introduce Mini Ball: Mini Ball would have lower hoops, a smaller court size & game play would be 3v3 so players get more touches and more decision making reads.

2. Introduce a Coaching Curriculum: Coaches need to be tested and approved to ensure they are equipped with enough knowledge to help guide players in the right direction, especially during the youth ages where development is key.



Duane Jourdeans – Rule of 5

1. Required common certification for coaches (like USA basketball certification). Coaches would have a baseline of knowledge of the game but also an understanding of HOW to coach kids.

2. More practices/skill work and less games. For example, in order to participate in a tournament, there would be a minimum requirement of practice hours. Having a better skill set would make competition more enjoyable and would advance the game.

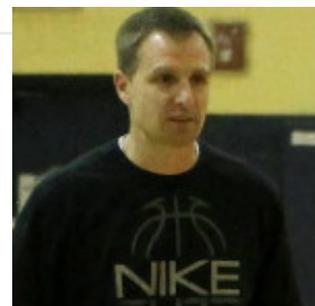
3. More opportunities for free-play. Experiences for players to play without adults structuring things. This would increase love of the game and leadership development.



Galen Harkness – EYG Basketball

1. Required to play Man-2-Man Defense in Games. Limit the amount or no zone defense.

2. Youth teams should dedicate 1 practice per week to skill work.



Gary Maitland – Coach Maitland

This is a very difficult question to answer. No doubt all towns, cities and countries will have specific things they would want to change, but ‘youth basketball’ as a whole, I’ve managed to narrow it down to 1 thing that I would change to improve youth basketball.

I would like to see all clubs/schools to have schemes of work that show detailed planning with purposeful focus on player development at each stage that is broadly in line with age group expectations.

While this doesn’t guarantee high quality delivery from coaches in youth basketball, it does promote a healthy approach to skill development which would ideally see a reduction of coaches prematurely teaching young teams advanced techniques (with the intent for short



term wins over long term development) before mastering more simple actions. A classic example of this is abuse of the ball screen in youth basketball.

Gary Petrin – AVCSS Basketball

1. Make it mandatory that all coaches make the game fun while implementing fundamentals. Players need encouragement at the younger ages, and don't need to be yelled at for not having skills or a high basketball IQ.

2. Teach man to man defense basics at the younger ages so that when these players get to middle school and high school they are ready to go.



Greg White – Twitter Profile

1. Number of Games Played

Games of 5 on 5 for 8 year olds are ridiculous. 5 on 5 should wait until age 12. Have a skill session, then a 3 on 3 league. It doesn't make you John Wooden to play a 2-3 zone and press 8 year olds.

2. Lack of Coach Training

Coaching youth sports should require more than (1) time to do it and (2) a shirt with 'Coach' on it. Teach how to teach. Can't rely on the drills you did in high school AND good grief, they are kids. Ending practices running is awful. I want players in my youth program to learn to play. Young players associate (1) practice with running and (2) coaching with yelling.

3. Emphasis

Youth sports should be about 3 things: (1) Teaching kids to love the sport (2) Teaching kids how to play the sport. (3) Teaching kids about life through sports. Competition isn't craved by a 9 year old. Leagues that crown champions cause kids and parents to get away from what's important. I'm not for everyone getting a trophy – I'm for everyone learning to play so when it's time to play for trophies they are ready.



Hal Wilson – Coaching Basketball Wisely

Don't put an adult model on kids! Let kids develop a deep, passionate love for the game, not a love for the next level, not a love for the scholarship, not a love for the gear, not a love for the better tournament, not a love for pool play, not a love for rankings of 8th graders, and not a love of any extrinsic motivation. If you love the game, you can use the game to better yourself. If you try to use the game, it will use you!



Janis Meredith – JBM Thinks

As a sports parent, my view of basketball has always been from the stands. There's not a lot I can do about what goes on during the game – on the court, from the bench or in the team huddles – but there is several ways I can help improve youth basketball as a parent.



- 1. I can keep my sense of humor.** I can find the fun in my child's game instead of worrying about how many minutes they play or how many points they make.
 - 2. I can turn a deaf ear.** To enjoy the game, I must ignore trash talk, and if I can't, I should choose my seat carefully!
 - 3. I can develop a thick skin.** If I cannot turn a deaf ear to the ignorant and senseless remarks I hear, I better develop a thick skin, one that is not overly sensitive to the rudeness of others.
 - 4. I can learn to tame my tongue.** I must not coach my child from the bleachers. It's distracting to them, undermines the coach, and puts pressure on my child to perform up to my standards.
 - 5. I can zip my lips.** If you can't say anything nice about a player, don't say anything at all. Someone is always listening.
- If you can follow these five guidelines, you'll make youth basketball a better game!

Jeremy Russotti – 1 Percent Club

Make them use age appropriate basketball sizes and hoop heights.



For some reason we have kids training and playing with basketballs that are too large and basketball hoops that are too high. I see kids using full size basketballs and playing on 10-foot rims at the 3rd grade. I think that isn't age appropriate since the kids cannot shoot with proper form on a 10-foot rim. I believe that kids in the 5th grade would be better off shooting at a lowered basket. In this way, they can learn proper one arm shooting, while learning muscle memory to create a fluid motion where all the joints align.

The way we have it now, most kids turn sideways when they shoot, or shoot with two hand in order to get the ball to the basket. They then go through years of bad habits that are very difficult to fix when they are older. Also, with appropriate size basketball, players will learn to dribble properly, or learn to control the basketball with their appropriate footwork.

Most importantly, kids will have MORE SUCCESS while training with appropriate size basketball and hoop. With success, comes intrinsic motivation and players will then want to train and play more. Right now, kids learn at an early age if they are a star, or if they are a role player. This leads to players losing interest in the sport and moving to other sports.

Joe Haefner – Breakthrough Basketball

I would change the mentality towards the purpose of coaching youth sports.

I believe we have drifted too far towards the “win-at-all-costs” mentality. This mentality stunts athletic development. And more importantly, it has a detrimental impact on society.



Originally, youth sports was a tool to encourage physical fitness which led to healthy adults from a physical and mental standpoint.

Additionally, and just as important, it was used as a teaching tool to develop character and life habits in children to help them succeed as adults and be contributors to a better society.

Youth sports should be used as a tool to teach life lessons. Things like...

- Instilling and rewarding critical intangibles such as attitude and effort.
- How to handle adversity. It's okay to let little Johnny fail.
- How to be process-focused rather than outcome-focused.
- How to communicate with others.
- How to lead and how to follow.
- How to look people in the eyes when engaging in conversation or listening to someone.
- How to critically think and solve problems.
- The importance of working as a team to achieve a bigger goal.

Us adults need to demand the change via our pocketbooks and whom we choose to lead our children.

Jordan Delp – Pure Sweat Basketball

1. Lower Goals, Smaller Basketballs, No 3's

It is my belief that players are asked to play at regulation hoops, with regulation basketballs, long before they are prepared to do so. We need to develop a standardized progression that naturally leads to regulation play. As is, mechanics (especially finishing at the rim and shooting form) suffer because players are not strong enough to perform them correctly. A lack of physical maturity leads to the forming of bad habits that prove difficult to break and that set kids back in the long term. 3-point shots have the same effect; as such, I would make all shots worth two points through 6th grade, regardless of their distance from the hoop. My proposal for said progression:



K-3rd Grade: 27.5" basketballs, 8 foot rims

4th Grade: 27.5" basketballs, 9 foot rims

5th Grade: 28.5" basketballs, 9 foot rims

6th Grade: 28.5" basketballs, 10 foot rims

7th Grade+: regulation standards, per gender

Are there players that will be ahead of that progression? Of course; there are exceptions to every rule. However, I do not think that applying these rules would set them back in the long-term in any way. Going along with that, we need to have a standardized rule book across the nation, so that kids in Alaska are playing by the same set of rules as those in Florida. If we can get everyone on the same page, growth at the youth level will flourish!

2: Fewer Tournaments, More Practice and Small Games

The proliferation of weekend tournaments, whether they be affiliated with AAU basketball, showcase leagues, or anything else, has become a huge detriment to youth basketball. The ratio of practices to games in a given week is grossly out of whack, with kids practicing once or twice a week and then playing multiple games in a given day, sometimes upwards of 10 in a weekend. Look, live play is a necessity and must be a part of all player's development, but generally-speaking the practice to game ratio should be reversed. We need to be spending more time teaching the game in a practice setting where kids can learn how to play the right way. That should include building up to 3-on-3 and 4-on-4 games in practice, a vital way to help kids continue to progress while simultaneously building their competitive spirits and getting a ball in their hands more often.

3: Coaching Education

Initiatives like the USA Basketball Coach Licensing Program are phenomenal ways for all of us to continue learning about our game and improving as coaches. It is incumbent upon all of us to seek out avenues for personal growth as much as possible, as it relates to teaching the game itself and to motivating today's youth. Falling into the trap of doing things "because we've always done them this way" is among the worst things we can do to our players. There are staples of the game and tried and true methods that will always be effective teachers, however we can never stop our quest for becoming better coaches, mentors, and people that our youth can look up to and learn from. Taking pride in educating yourself in order to more ably teach our youth players is a must as an individual. Collaborating as a group and opening up new avenues for education, through the internet, social media and the like, is a must as a coaching fraternity.

Kevin Mitchell – Pure Sweat Basketball

1. Require youth players to participate in more skills training than basketball games.

Youth players do not spend enough time improving their basketball skills during the off-season. If a youth player does not improve his or her basketball skills from the previous season then that youth player has not utilized the opportunity to grow during the off-season. There is a synergy between improving basketball skill to augment player development. Every dribble, pass, shot, rebound, ball move, etc. is a building block for each youth player's foundation.

2. Limit the number of games a youth player may participate in over the course of the year in comparison to the basketball season.

Too many youth coaches and parents are driving youth basketball players to play as many



games as possible. Playing a large volume of games does not equate to basketball improvement. If a youth player has deficiencies with his or her basketball skills, those deficiencies are magnified through live game play without the opportunity for correction through an effective skills training curriculum.

3. Eliminate the player ranking system and the ability to hold youth players back.

Player rankings are not an indication of a youth player's ability vs. another youth player's ability when weighed against the population of youth basketball players across the nation. Most coaches do not have a true indication of what a youth player will be from year to year. Sure, you can look at the genetics of a youth player, but genetics do not translate to basketball skill without hard work and dedication from year to year. It can be a guessing game and ultimately if the support system of the youth player believes he or she is a prospect, those coaches, parents and supporters need to have a strategic plan for any basketball opportunities which may present themselves.

I do not believe a youth player should be held back for any other reason than academic deficiencies. Holding a youth player back to pursue basketball is a disservice to the youth player because of a particular coach's advice or parents living vicariously through the youth player. In my opinion, holding a youth player back is a way of masking the youth player's deficiencies and presenting a false perception of his or her basketball skill against lesser competition. Those youth players are going to have to compete against players of various age groups and if the basketball skill is there, he or she will be able to compete until the natural course of physical maturation takes place. Teach youth players how to work hard vs. cheating the system to try to gain an advantage over the youth player who may not be as physically mature.

Koran Godwin – Jump Start Hoops

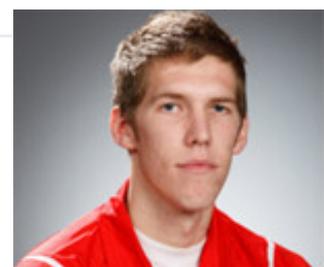
The major issue with youth basketball today is the emphasis on playing (5 on 5) without teaching the fundamentals of the game. I would focus on skill development first and playing 5 on 5 second.

Most kids these days are handed a jersey and put on a team without a foundation. If the youth basketball league had a fundamental skill development program before they played the game I think it would help tremendously.



Kyle Ohman – Basketball HQ

Youth basketball is a critical time in a player's potentially long career. It can either set them up with a great foundation and love for the game that they have for the rest of their life, or it can give them a bad experience that drives them away from the sport of basketball.



If there were one thing that most youth basketball teams could improve on, it would be a better balance between player development and fun.

Most of the time it is either all fun and games where no one is getting better, or it is all skill development that eventually leads to burnout with most of the athletes over time. Coaches, need to make sure that they are creating an environment that is fun, but is also teaching the players fundamentals that they will need as they get older.

Mark Adams – Mark Adams Basketball

1. We need less coaching and more teaching. 10 year olds don't need 10 set plays and 5 zone traps. They need to be taught the fundamentals of the game and how to play. Young players need to be taught and spend time learning and developing basic skills.



2. The emphasis in youth basketball should be on development. Unfortunately there is too much of an emphasis on winning.

3. Lastly but most importantly, youth basketball should be FUN for kids. Too often coaches and parents take the fun away and make it stressful. Let the kids enjoy the game.

Matt Monroe – Hoops Roundtable

There are so many great things going on with youth basketball today. However, just like in any area, there are improvements that can be made. Here are a few that I think would help aid in the development of our youth basketball players:



1. De-emphasize winning. Learning how to win and lose is an important part of a young person's development. However, oftentimes there is too much of an emphasis on winning. The main goal of a youth coach should be development, and a player's development should not be sacrificed for the sake of winning games.

2. Positionless basketball. Youth coaches should look to implement systems that support the idea of positionless basketball. This is important at all levels, but especially at the youth level. Youth athletes need to work on a variety of skills to get the most out of their development. At such a young age, it's hard to tell what 'position' they might play when they get older.

For example, there might be a player that is bigger when he/she is younger and might play exclusively in the post at a young age. That player may not grow much and when they are older they might be better suited as a guard. However, since they played primarily in the post at a young age they may lack the skills necessary to make the transition successfully. It's important to work with youth athletes to develop them into complete basketball players to ensure that they're set up for future success.

3. Coaching certification and training. To ensure that youth players are getting the instruction they deserve and coaches have all of the resources that they need, coaching training and certification should be a requirement at all levels. U.S.A. Basketball is

spearheading a campaign in this area. Please check out <http://www.usab.com/youth/development.aspx> for more information.

Mike Costello – Pure Sweat Basketball

1. More focus on fundamentals
2. No more 5 on 5! Play 3 on 3 or 4 on 4, more spacing and more touches for every kid!
3. No rankings!



Paige White – Twitter Profile

1. Proper warm up before practice and games and teaching youth about importance of dynamic warm up to reduce injuries and cool down and stretching at the end to ensure muscle recovery.
2. Less Games played.
3. More emphasis on fundamentals.



Randy Brown – CoachRB.com

My number one recommendation is to put kids first by requiring certification for all coaches at the youth level. Most parents have the right motivation when coaching but lack the knowledge and philosophy it takes to properly coach. These skills can be learned in a certification program among dozens more.



The right certification approach can emphasize the foundational principles of teaching the game. For example, balance, vision, ball skills, playing away from the ball, spacing, passing, and defending are all needed skills for any player. Designing offense, defense, presses, and fancy plays don't fit with learning how to teach the game the right way. They are important pieces of the game but come only after the foundation has been laid. You don't need a half court offense if your kids have been properly been taught the skills needed to play.

Secondly, kids play too many games. You hear that a lot but people rarely tell you why that's a true statement. The truth is that skill development and practice time are sacrificed by the time spent playing games. Ultimately, this makes for average to below average games.

A ratio needs to be established to give kids a chance to master the basics before playing games. Currently the average is approximately 3 to 1, games to practices. I recommend the ratio be 1.5 to 1, practices to games. That gives the coach 90 minutes to teach and put together the pieces that will allow them an opportunity for success in their one-hour game.

Anything less than this ratio robs kids of needed skill time, and in many cases, enjoyment of the game. Remember, if it's truly about the kids, everything we do should help their understanding of the skills, how to play properly, and to have fun playing.

Lastly, I'd like players to learn the 90% rule of playing basketball. In order for this to happen, the coaches will have to buy in to this idea and learn how to teach it. Did you know that over 90% of the game is played when players do not have the ball? It's a truth that is not often addressed by coaches and skill development trainers. Yet, almost every training session, camp, and clinic focuses on skills 'with the ball'. I believe in teaching players 'how' to play, not just give them opportunities to play. A majority of our time needs to be spent teaching 40 skills essential for all players. My 40 skills checklist is the base for teaching players, from Youth to NBA. My goal is to help players become better at 90% of the game, therefore helping them become the best player possible.

I would personally do anything to start an effort to make these three things possible in our game today. If others feel the same way I would be open to talking about how to start!

Ryan Razooky – Ryan Razooky Basketball

The 1st thing I would change to improve youth basketball is the coaching. I continue to see a lot of old school practices without a true purpose behind each practice. Gym time is valuable and each day in the gym should be a great learning experience for the the players. Often coaches talk or condition for a large portion of practices when those things can be incorporated efficiently into drills.



Drills should be more innovative, competitive, and challenging in a basketball aspect. Coaches should emphasize more reads, situations, moves and counters and be more open minded to a new way of teaching instead of incorporating a ton of set plays and offensive sets. Players should learn to play a universal brand basketball that can be translated to every team and not be handcuffed or treated like puppets.

Lastly, players should have the opportunity to figure things out on their own aside from being coached everything. Experience is a great teacher and it is alright to make mistakes. It's part of the growing process. If a kid gets taken out for every mistake they make they might end up quitting due to a lack of confidence.

Secondly, players need to take more initiative to get better. No player should ever have a problem dribbling/passing/finishing with either hand and if they do its due to a lack of effort. Players should attempt to rid all limitations they might have to be the best they can and that way coaches don't have to waste practice time teaching basic skills and they can focus on IQ development.

Thirdly, screens should count as assists or its own category of assists. Good screens create multiple offensive advantages and opportunities to score. Good on and especially off ball screens are very under appreciated.

Ryan Walker – Ryan Walker Basketball

1. Keep the height of the basket and size of the ball age appropriate. The goal should be that the majority of kids have the strength to successfully reach the rim with the correct size ball, not the minority.
2. Do not keep score. Encourage effort, praise enthusiasm and the development of fundamental basketball skills.



Scott Fields – CoachScottFields.com

1. First and foremost I would hold a parent meeting. I would educate the parents on their roll as a supportive parent. They are there to fuel their childs emotional tank. They are not the coach. They are not the expert. Are the expectations realistic ? They need to be positive, they need to encourage there kids to have fun and learn and instill life lessons. Hard Work. Dedication. The proper work ethic required to be successful in any endeavor.



2. Explain to the athletes, they will be pushed, they will be challenged, they will be given age appropriate skill development drills, it will not be all fun and games. They will come to work.

3. Provide the skill development for the athlete for where they are here and now. Mentally and Physically. Proper fundamentals and mechanics. They must master passing, dribbling and shooting drills before they play in games. Drills should be taught in progression for proper skill development.

I see to many youth coaches doing drills that have nothing to do with the game...

Parents need to research who they are hiring to coach and lead their kids...

Blind leading the blind is just a poor investment.

Sundance Wicks – AZ Power Basketball

We need to bring credibility back to the youth levels of sports in general.

1. In this day and age you cannot trust everyone to coach your kid. I think a viable solution to this is to establish a youth coaching credential or take a teaching youth sports curriculum course to show vested interest in the process of their development.



2. The fun needs to be put back into the game. Jerry Krause always says there are two types of fun that young players need to have: Learning fun and laughing fun. You can have fun with the fundamentals at an early age and not skips steps in the process of youth basketball development.

Too many times there is pressure for young players to play up levels and they skip steps in the development of their game for higher levels of 'exposure' that is unnecessary. I know this seems like a far fetched idea, but developing a national youth basketball fundamental teaching curriculum could coincide with the first suggestion I had of getting coaches at the youth level who have put the time in to earn their credentials.

Tamir Goodman – Zone 190

1. Bring the fun back to the game. We should focus on teaching kids to play the game for the love of the game and should emphasize the values and life skills learned through the game. Commercializing young athletes, 12 and 13 year old, is not usually beneficial to the kids' long term healthy development.



2. More emphasis on making the right play instead of showing up defenders. We should congratulate kids on making the right play; for example, we should encourage kids to make the right pass and should take note of a great stop on defense. Showing up a defender is exciting and fun to watch but oftentimes it takes away from the essence of the game while also hindering the flow of the offense.

3. Less set plays and learn how to read the defense. Players should not be taught to play like robots constantly running set plays regardless of what the defense is doing. Rather, we should teach the players how to read and react to what the defense is giving them. By becoming students of the game and understanding timing, how to read the defense and how to come off of screens, the players will be in a position to be successful at every level and in every situation.

Tommy Hulihan – Tommy Hulihan Basketball

1. Young players need to be allowed to play in “un-structured” and “un-coached” games for their development as a player (the old school pick up game). Nowadays, the emphasis seems to be on more games/tourneys etc... thus the players have no time to just play pick-up. With the emphasis on winning these tournaments, the coaches have players do only what they are good at and also have the best players do most of the ball handling, shooting etc...



I am by no means saying that players should not have roles or that the better shooters need to take more shots. They should! I am just saying that young players will develop more when playing in “un-coached”, “un-structured” games.

2. There has to be an emphasis on skill development over winning games AAU, USSSA, Travel etc.. Most of these type teams only practice a few times a week if that and just put in offenses, defenses and out of bounds plays. There is no skill development taking place at MOST of these practices. I know it does take place at at some of them, but it is definitely not the norm!

3. There needs to be some type of organization that certifies/determines competency of youth basketball coaches. (Similar to what they do in soccer and other sports).

Trafford Hannon – Pure Sweat Basketball

– **A youth coaching certificate is required.** Coaches at all levels MUST continue to better themselves, which in return will better our youth and the game.

– **Less 5 on 5 scrimmages and more small sided games**(1V1, 2V2, 1V2, etc) to properly develop the fundamentals of the game in a game speed setting.

– **FUN!** No one will remember how good you or the team was in 3rd grade! We must get out youth to fall in love with the game first and everything else will follow.

Our youth hold the key to conserving the game we all love, we must not take it lightly!



Tyler Relph – Tyler Relph Basketball

1. Development of young players being able to make shots consistently: There are too many players that can dribble and do all types of drill tricks but when they are open they can't make shots.

2. Understanding of the game: Coaches and Trainers alike need to do more game IQ skills: Baseline Drive Baseline Drift, Double Drive and movements off the ball: Ball screen situations and correct spacing: being innovative is coming up with drills that incorporate game like things also.

3. Make sure you know who you are working with at a young age: Do your research of each trainer, where they played, who were they coached by, what their career was like and do they have a true knowledge of the game. This goes along with creating bad habits, there are simple things that players can't do nowadays because they aren't being taught by true coaches they are being taught by YouTube coaches who think something is cool so they do it.



Wesley Kosel – HoopsChalkTalk.com

1. Create a system for certifying coaches for all levels of youth basketball. There are tons of good coaches out there, but there are also coaches that do not know the game. Certification should include both tactical and team management material.

2. Let the kids play multiple sports. Especially at the young levels, I don't think it is best for kids to play basketball all year round. It benefits the youth to play several sports and to take a break from basketball. Let's take away the pressure from parents and kids that feel like they have to be involved with basketball 12 months of the year.



Conclusion

Wow! Another awesome compilation of ideas and opinions from the best minds in the game. Thanks again to everyone that participated.

Did you notice a lot of coaches had similar ideas on improving youth basketball? If we all agree on the same changes, why aren't they being made?

Why are kids still using basketballs that are too big and shooting on rings that are too high? Why do so many coaches still see winning as more important than development in youth basketball?

The above ideas are changes that we at Basketball For Coaches are going to constantly support and advocate. We hope you will too.

Let's keep improving the game.

How to Manipulate the Referees to Make Every Call in Your Team's Favor

 basketballforcoaches.com/how-to-manipulate-referees/



Photo Credit: [jDevaun](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

Want to know exactly how to get the referees to give you every call? Simple. Bribe them with money.

Woah, relax. I'm kidding, I'm kidding. We would never do that at BFC 😊

While bribing referees might not be the best option to get some extra calls, there are a number of ways to increase the chances of the whistle being blown in your favour...

Now I understand that there are going to be some people that have a problem with this article. It's a little bit controversial. 'Manipulating referees', 'referees deciding the outcome of games', it's an intense and highly debated topic. But an important one that must be talked about.

There are some people out there that believe the referees have no influence whatsoever on the outcome of the basketball game.

That is a lie. A huge lie.

A couple of referee decisions can decide a basketball game. Referees have decided many games before and will decide many, many games in the future.

Here are nine strategies that will help your team get a few extra calls every game if used correctly.

1. Build Trust Before The Game

The very first thing you need to do is build trust between you and the referees working the game. This needs to start before the game begins.

If you have the same referee a few times a season or during a tournament, building a rapport with them can go a long way to getting a few extra calls in games. Not because

they'll favor your team, but, for example, once you develop a rapport with a referee, there's a far better chance they'll listen to what you have to say during a game instead of shrugging you off.

How can you build trust? Here are a few of the things I do...

1. Be sure to introduce yourself to both referees before the game.
2. Ask them a question: "How's the tournament going?", "How's your day going?", etc.
3. Smile.

2. Learn Their Names

Taking the couple of extra seconds before the game to remember the referee's name's is important. There's a big difference between...

"Ref! Come on, where was the foul?" and "Michael! Come on, where was the foul?".

Referee's will be more inclined to talk to you if you address them by their name.

3. Compliment Them on Correct Calls

You want to let the referee know that you know the difference between a good call and a bad call. Regardless of which team it's called on.

Usually for beginner coaches the only time they attempt to communicate with the referee is when they have a problem with a call. They're only communicating with them about the negatives.

Experienced coaches don't only interact on the negatives. They compliment them on good calls, whether they go in favour of their team or not.

I don't recommend doing this on every call. I save this for when it's a 50/50 call and the referee might be receiving a few negative words from players or parents. Regardless of what team it benefits, if it's a 50/50 call and I believe the referee got it correct, if they're close to me I'll compliment them on the call.

4. Ask Them to Watch Specific Parts of the Game

Sometimes all it takes to receive a few calls is to make the referee's aware of what you think they should be calling.

Countless times I've asked a referee to "please keep an eye on ____" and we've suddenly received the next couple of calls on the exact thing I've asked them to watch.

Here are a few examples...

"Hey Michael, can you keep an eye on how long number 41 is staying in the paint?"

"Hey Larry, can you watch number 24? He's holding my guy every time he cuts".

When you bring a potential call to the referee's attention they WILL start looking for it each time down the court.

5. Teach Your Players How to Respond

Just as players don't make every shot and coaches don't make all the right substitutions, referee's don't get every call right 100% of the time.

If you're trying to receive some calls in your favor, the last thing you want is for your players to complain on every missed call and the referee becomes annoyed with your team.

Teach your players to get on with the game. You'll handle the referee's.

If anyone breaks this rule and complains then substitute them straight off. Don't let the players get the referee's to disadvantage your team.

6. Don't Be a Sarcastic Jerk

The same rules apply to you as it does to the players... just don't be a rude coach. It sets a bad example for the players and the referees will hate you.

Every coach, players, and referee knows what I'm talking about... sarcastic comments, laughing at calls, etc. All the things that you know as a coach you can get away with without the referee calling you for a technical foul.

Most of these will only hurt your teams chances at getting calls and they're simply not necessary.

7. You Must Adjust to The Referees

Here's the truth: All referees are different. What they call will depend on how the referee has been taught, what they've been taught to look for, where they've been taught to stand, what they've been taught warrants a foul and what doesn't, etc.

This is especially evident in youth basketball where the referees are mostly young and are still learning. You're not going to have college/NBA officials on your games that know the rule book like the back of their hand.

You have to adjust.

If something is called twice that I disagree with, assuming after the second one that the call wasn't just a once off, the first thing I'll do is attempt to get the referee's point of view of the rule by asking "What should my player be doing differently?"

Get clarification from the referee on exactly what your player is doing wrong in the referees eyes so that you can tell the player to adjust.

This also proves to the referee that you're trying your best to play by the rules.

8. Always Shake Hands After the Game

When the games over, whether you've won or lost, always shake hands with there referees. You do this for a few reasons...

- a. You always want to display good sportsmanship. Don't forget, you're always setting an example for your players. As a coach you're a role model.
- b. You don't know when you're going to have the same referee on your game next. You don't want the referee walking into your next match with a grudge against you. Leave on good terms and it will start the next game on good terms.

9. Make a Statement With a Technical Foul

A technical foul is a big statement that you're very unhappy with how the game is being handled by the referees.

While this isn't something I've done myself, I've heard many coaches talk of intentionally getting a technical foul to really get their point across to the referee's. After they've received the technical and let them know exactly what they're doing wrong, the game's flipped and they start receiving calls in their favor.

After all, the opposition only receives two free throws. This might be a big deal at the end of a close game, but when put into the context of a full game with all the missed shots and 50/50 calls, two free throws isn't much.

I do caution coaches to remember the age of the players they're coaching before using this technique. By shouting at referee's you're telling your players it's OK to have an outburst when things aren't going your way.

I personally wouldn't use this technique while coaching any players under the age of 16 at minimum. And if they're above that age, it better be a very, very important game.

Conclusion

There you have it. Nine different strategies to manipulate the referees into giving your team extra calls during games.

We must all understand refereeing is an incredibly tough job. When a game is within 5 points, the calls they make are a huge factor to the outcome.

All coaches must get used to that, understand that they will sometimes be on the positive side and sometimes on the negative side of the referee's calls, and know the different strategies we can use to be on the positive side as much as we can.

Do you have any other strategies you use to influence the referees?

I'd love to hear them. Share them below in the comments.

– Coach Mac

How to Shoot a Basketball Perfectly (10-Step Guide)

 basketballforcoaches.com/how-to-shoot-a-basketball/



Every young basketball player grows up wanting to learn how to shoot a basketball at a world-class level.

This is obvious to anyone who steps foot into a gym.

The first thing you'll look around and see are players as young as 5-years-old throwing up shots from behind the three-point line.

With the rise of players like Steph Curry and Damian Lillard, as well as the game of basketball developing to take more advantage of the three-point shot, learning how to shoot a basketball at a high level has never been more important.

There's only one issue with this...

Becoming a great shooter isn't an easy thing to do!

When I was a lot younger, I remember spending hundreds of hours in the backyard of our family home trying to perfect my shooting form.

I would sit in front of the TV and memorize the shooting techniques of my favorite player and then sprint outside and try to recreate it.

I would watch instructional shooting videos trying to diagnose the problems with my jump shot and then fix them.

Over time, I was able to improve a lot.

But as I started getting older and playing for different coaches, I kept running into obstacles in regards to my shooting form...

Every coach wanted me to shoot the basketball a different way!

- Some coaches wanted me to dip the basketball. Some didn't.
- Some coaches wanted me to focus on the front of the rim. Some didn't.
- Some coaches wanted me to completely face the rim. Some didn't.

As soon as I'd become comfortable with one variation, another coach would step in and demand I change it.

It's nearly impossible to become a consistently good shooter when you're constantly making these changes.

And that's why I created this 10-step guide...

My goal with this article is to clear up all confusion when it comes to learning how to shoot a basketball at a high level.

I'm going to give you detailed, step-by-step instructions on exactly how players should be shooting the basketball.

This article will be broken up into 9 sections...

Quick Navigation

3 Important Shooting Facts

Before we get into the details on exactly how to shoot a basketball, there are three important things I want you to always keep in mind...

Fact #1 - Shooting is the Most Important Skill in Basketball

Let's not kid ourselves...

There is no skill more important in the game of basketball than shooting.

- Rebounding isn't more important.
- Footwork isn't more important.
- Passing isn't more important.

All those skills are still important, sure... but they're not as important as being able to shoot the basketball at a high level.

The sooner we can all admit this, the sooner we'll start creating better shooters at all levels of basketball.

Being a great shooter will result in not only more points for yourself, but more points for your teammates, too (we'll talk more about this later).

Fact #2 - Shooters are NOT born. They ARE developed

Not a single person on Earth was born with the ability to shoot a basketball at a high level.

- Not Steph Curry.
- Not Ray Allen.
- Not Reggie Miller.
- Not Kevin Durant.

All of these players began their lives with the same shooting ability as you, me, and all others players did...None.

"So, what separates them from the rest of us?"

They became some of the greatest shooters to ever step foot on a basketball court through hours and hours and hours of smart shooting repetitions in the gym.

Any basketball player who wants to become a great shooter one day must be willing to put in years of hard work to develop a great shot.



Fact #3 - There Are Very Few Players Willing to Put in the Work Required to Become a Great Shooter

I've been around the game of basketball for many years...

During all that time, I've seen very few truly great shooters.

"Why is that?"

Because 99.999% of players aren't willing to put in the work to become great.

But don't worry...

This is a good thing for you!

If you are one of the select few who is willing to put in the work (and I hope you are), then with a lot of hard work and dedication you can become one of the very few great shooters we have in the game today.

Now, let's get started!

The BEEF Method (and who shouldn't use it)

When kids first start learning how to shoot, one of the first acronyms a coach will teach them is the BEEF shooting method.

This is a super simple teaching tool created to help kids focus on four important aspects of shooting a basketball.

Here's what the acronym stands for...

- (B) - Balance
- (E) - Elbow
- (E) - Eyes
- (F) - Follow-Through

Simple, right?

To be clear, I do believe all of these points are important...

The problem with the BEEF method is that it's too simple.

Can it be used to teach absolute beginners or young athletes learning how to shoot a basketball for the first time?

Sure.

But once a player has learned the basics, it's time to move on to something more advanced.

I still see way too many coaches using the simple BEEF method with older and more experienced players.

We're letting the players down if our shooting advice doesn't get more advanced as they improve.

Let's go through the more advanced method I recommend...

How to Shoot a Basketball Perfectly in 10 Steps

Step #1 - Shot Preparation

Being a great shooter starts before you receive the basketball.

This step is often overlooked by most players and coaches but can be the difference between having enough time to take a good shot or getting your shot

blocked by a defender closing out.

"You don't shoot fast. You get ready to shoot fast" - Don Meyer

Here are the three rules to make sure you're prepared to shoot when you catch the basketball...

a. Start with your knees and hips slightly bent

If you catch the basketball with straight legs, it will take extra time to bend your legs before raising up for your shot.

This is too slow.

b. Show target hands

Showing target hands to the player with the basketball shows them exactly where to pass to your shot pocket (we'll talk about this later).

c. Be mentally prepared to shoot

You'll never be more open than when you first catch the basketball.

As long as you're within your comfortable shooting range, you must be mentally prepared to shoot on the catch.

Step #2 - Hand Placement on the Ball

Upon catching the basketball or raising up into a shot, players must be able to quickly adjust their hands to the correct positions on the basketball.

The shooting hand must be under/behind the basketball and the balance hand should be on the side of the basketball.

The thumb of your shooting hand and the base of the thumb on your balance hand should form a 'T' (as pictured).

All finger pads and hand pads should be touching the basketball.

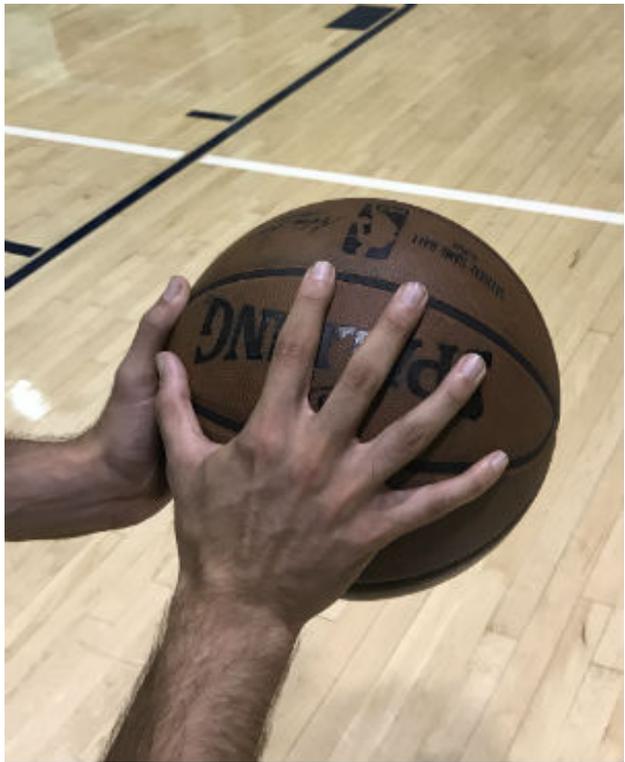
The only area of your shooting hand not



touching the basketball is the small gap in the middle of your hand.

Another important but overlooked detail is that the fingers should be spread comfortably wide on the basketball.

These adjustments must happen immediately upon receiving the basketball.



Step #3 - Balanced Base

"The key to being a good shooter is balance. Everything follows balance" - Larry Bird

Most players and coaches believe that shooting success is mostly to do with the movements of the upper body...

This is far from the truth. Great shooting always starts with the base.

If a player can't get the base of their shot correct, then it's very hard to become a consistent shooter.

A balanced base involves three important factors...

a. Feet slightly narrower than shoulder-width apart

If your feet are too narrow, it's very difficult to stay on balance when raising up for the shot.

If your feet are too wide, you won't get enough lift in your shot.

(Have a photo showing too close, perfect, too wide.)



b. Dominant foot slightly in front

When combined with the next step (the turn), this will improve the balance of your shot and release tension in your shoulder.

For right-handed shooters, this means sliding the right foot forward slightly. The opposite for left-handed shooters.

c. Weight equally distributed on each foot

For obvious reasons, a player should not be leaning to either side when taking a shot.

Your weight should be equally distributed on both feet.

Step #4 - Feet Direction (The Turn)

I could have included this in the 'balanced base' section above, but I feel that this is so important it deserved its own step.

When shooting the basketball, a player's feet should be turned slightly.

For right-handed shooters, their feet should be turned slightly to the left (11 o'clock).

For left-handed shooters, their feet should be turned slightly to the right (1 o'clock).

To understand why this is important, stand at the free-throw line with all 10 toes pointing towards the rim.

If you attempt to keep your elbow lined up with the rim while shooting with this base, you'll notice that tension is required in the chest.

To relieve the body of this tension, players should turn their feet slightly which will allow their elbow and shoulder to line up with the rim more comfortably.



Step #5 - Consistent Shot Pocket

The 'shot pocket' is the area a player is most comfortable starting the basketball from when beginning their shot.

This will usually be around the lower chest or stomach area of a player and will either be usually be in the middle of

their body or slightly to the shooting hand side.

All players must find what feels comfortable for them.

Each time a player catches the basketball to shoot, they should be bringing the basketball back to their shot pocket before raising up into their shot.

There are two main reasons for this...

1. Keeping a consistent shot pocket ensures players are shooting the basketball the same way every time they shoot.
2. Since the shot pocket is often low, this will give player much better rhythm as they go up for their shot.



Will there be time when players don't have time to return the basketball to their shot pocket? Sure...

But they'll shoot better when they do.

Step #6 - Eyes on the Target

A while ago I asked 15 shooting coaches which part of the rim they encouraged players to focus on when shooting.

The answers were surprising...

Many of the shooting coaches were teaching their players to aim for different targets on the rim... Yet all of them were able to develop great shooters.

"What does this tell us?"

There isn't one 'correct' target to focus on when shooting.

Players have a number of options...

- The center of the front of the rim.
- The center of the back of the rim.
- The first loop in the net.
- The entire hoop.
- etc.

Whichever target you decide to use, this is the most important thing you must keep in mind at all times...

Once you find a target you're comfortable with, be consistent.

'Front-rim shooters' and 'back-rim shooters' are focusing on targets which are 17 inches (45cm) apart aiming to achieve the same goal.

If you're constantly changing the target you're aiming at, it's nearly impossible for you to become a consistent shooter.

You have to pick one and then allow your shot to develop using that target.

Step #7 - Wrinkle the Wrist

Shooting with a straight wrist is another one of the most common problems for youth players.

Players who do this will often push the basketball towards the rim (flat shot) instead of shooting the basketball up and through the rim.

Fortunately, it's a simple fix with a visual cue.

The aim of this step is to get the wrist of the shooting hand bent back as far as possible (usually a little before 90 degrees).

This will give extra power to the shot and will also create the necessary backspin required to be a good shooter.

When bent back correctly, there will be small wrinkles in the skin on the back of the shooting wrist.

This provides a convenient visual cue for players to know if they're bending their wrist back correctly before shooting.

Step #8 - Elbow Under the Basketball

When you're raising up for the shot, the elbow of your shooting arm should be directly under the basketball.

This requires players to have their upper and lower arm forming an 'L' shape and also have their wrist bent back to 90 degrees (step 7).



Doing this will ensure that the basketball will be shot in a straight line to the rim and also have good backspin.

Players who flare their elbow out while shooting will often miss to the left or right because they're not shooting the basketball straight.

A player will often flare out their elbow when they don't turn their feet correctly (step 4).

This is because the chest requires uncomfortable tension to pull in the elbow when 10 toes are pointing towards the rim.



Step #9 - Balance Hand

The 'balance hand' is what we call the non-shooting hand.

As the name implies, its only role during the shooting motion is helping to balance the basketball on the shooting hand up until the release point.

For right-handed shooters, this is the left hand.

For left-handed shooters, this is the right hand.

If you've been around basketball long enough, you'll often hear this hand referred to as the 'guide hand'.

I don't like this terminology as this hand should never 'guide' the basketball anywhere during the shooting motion.



There should be no force from the balance hand when a shot is taken.

As the elbow starts to extend in the shooting motion, the balance hand releases flat off the side of the basketball.

If the balance hand isn't flat on release, this means that a player has pushed the basketball with their balance hand (most often with their thumb) while in the shooting motion and the

shot will usually end up missing left or right.

Step #10 - Rhythm Shot + Follow Through

The final step is where it all comes together...

Shooting with rhythm involves many parts occurring simultaneously:

- The basketball is lifted up from the shot pocket.
- The knees and hips straighten out as the player raises themselves into the air for power.
- The elbow of the shooting arm straightens up in the air once the basketball has been lifted past shoulder height. (To check if you're shooting the basketball up into the air at the correct angle, make sure that the elbow of your shooting arm finishes next to your eyebrow on the follow through).
- Near the peak of the shot, the wrist is snapped in the direction of the rim so that they fingers are pointing towards the ground. This will ensure the basketball has good backspin resulting in a 'soft' shot.
- Also at the peak of the shot, the balance hand will release from the basketball keeping perfectly flat. This ensures the balance hand isn't pushing the basketball.
- The final two fingers to touch the basketball should be the index and middle fingers at the same time.
- When you return to the ground, the rhythm of your jump shot will have guided your body forward slightly of where you took off from. When practicing, I encourage players to hold this form until the basketball has hit the rim so that they can look up and evaluate their technique.

Video:

Why Becoming a Great Shooter is Important

Hesitant about whether you want to spend the hours it takes to become a great shooter?

Here's why it's important that you do...

1. Increases Your Scoring Opportunities

Being a great shooter will increase your scoring from all areas of the court.

Not only will you make more shots from the perimeter, you'll also be able to drive to the basket and score much easier than before.

"Why is this?"

When you're a great shooter, the defense is forced to defend close to you on-ball and off-ball in order to prevent you shooting an outside shot.

This gives the defender a lot less time to react to a cut to the rim or a drive to the basket if you have the basketball.

2. Increases Your Teammate's Scoring Opportunities

Great shooters don't need to touch the basketball to help their team score.

By simply being a scoring threat from the perimeter, you will help your team's offense by creating space on the floor.

Since a shooter's defender is forced to play close to them to prevent the quick shot, it's difficult for them to play help defense on the other offensive players.

This means that there will be more space inside to finish at the rim, more open cutters, more open driving lanes, etc.

3. More Points on the Scoreboard

At the end of the day, to win more basketball games, you need to put points on the scoreboard.

And improved shooting does that!

If a player is able to make 35% of their three-point shots, they'll be more efficient than a player who makes 50% of their two-point shots.

This is the reason why we're seeing more and more teams at all levels attempt more three-point shots as players become better shooters.

4. Proves You Work on Your Game

There's one rule that will always be true when it comes to shooting...

Shooters aren't born. They're developed.

It's impossible to become a great shooter without a championship-level work ethic and dedication to improve your game.

All coaches and recruiters know this.

Being a great shooter immediately proves to all watching that you have great attention to detail, you work hard, and that you're disciplined.

These are all traits that recruiters are on the lookout for.

5 Shooting Form Mistakes (and how to fix them)

Here are the 5 main shooting technique mistakes that I commonly see in players at all levels.

Once you understand what to look for, many of them are simple to fix.

1. Not Shooting With Enough Arc

It's incredibly difficult to become a great shooter if you have a flat shot.

The flatter your shot, the less area of the hoop the basketball has to go through the rim.

In 99% of cases, this occurs because a player pushes the basketball out towards the rim from their chest instead of shooting the basketball up into the air.

To make sure this doesn't happen, ensure players are wrinkling their wrist, have their elbow under the basketball, and their elbow finishes next to their eyebrow on the shot release.

2. Pushing With the Balance Hand Thumb

The traditional basketball shooting motion is a one-handed shot.

The balance hand stabilises the basketball until near the point of release, and then the dominant hand should be doing 100% of the shooting.

But that's not always what happens...

A lot of players fall into a bad habit of using their balance hand thumb to provide extra power on the shot.

This is necessary when a player is young and doesn't have the strength to shoot with the traditional one-handed method. Instead, they compensate for this lack of strength by shooting with two hands.



As players grow older and develop more strength, they must transition away from the two-handed shot and learn to shoot without using the thumb of their balance hand.

3. Not Dipping the Basketball

Nearly every great shooter in basketball history dips the basketball.

- Steph Curry dips.
- Ray Allen dips.
- Dirk Nowitzki dips.
- Steve Nash dips.
- Kevin Durant dips.
- You get the point...

So, why do we have so many coaches pushing players not to dip after they catch the basketball? (yes, I had this happen to me).

I have no idea.

There are three main reasons why it's important to dip the basketball...

1. To ensure a consistent starting point (shot pocket).
2. For rhythm on the shot.
3. To prevent the upper body from being too tense.

Players: Dip the basketball.

4. Encouraging Players to Follow Their Shot

'Follow your shot' is one of the worst pieces of advice a coach can give to one of their players.

Doing so will negatively affect a player's shot in two ways...

a. It will ruin their shooting technique

Due to the rhythm of a jump shot, the motion will naturally take the shooter's upper body back and their lower body forward slightly.

This moves them away from the rim.

Players will be forced to shoot with bad technique to ensure they can sprint in and challenge for the rebound.

b. It will put them in the wrong mindset

When you tell a player to follow their shot, you're telling them that they're probably going to miss.

I think we can all agree that this is a terrible mindset to have before taking a shot.

Unless you know for certain a shot is off (players can always feel the bad ones), then you should never follow your shot.

Players should be putting 100% focus into completing the full shot routine with the best form possible each time they shoot.

5. Fingers Not Spread Wide Enough

Another important teaching point is making sure that players are shooting with their fingers spread comfortably wide on the basketball.

Many young athletes will catch and shoot with their fingers too close together.

The closer the fingers are, the less control players will have when they put up a shot.

The best time to address this point is when you're practicing form shooting with your team.

Get each player to hold the basketball in their shooting pocket and check to make sure each player is spreading their fingers wide enough.

3 Basketball Shooting Drills For Perfect Form

1. Perfects

'Perfects' involve a player beginning in a stationary position with the basketball in their shot pocket and focusing solely on shooting each shot with perfect form.

The goal is to make a specific number of perfect swishes from 4 different positions in front of the rim.

For example:

- 3-feet - 10 perfect swishes.
- 5-feet - 7 perfect swishes.
- 7-feet - 5 perfect swishes.
- 10-feet (free-throws) - 5 perfect swishes.

This is a great drill to begin individual [shooting workouts](#) with.

2. Spin Outs

The 'Spin Outs' drill works on catch-and-shoot situations.

This is a great drill for practicing shooting off the 'hop' or shooting off a '1-2 step'. As I said in a previous section, I always encourage players to practice both.

The drill involves players spinning the basketball out in front of themselves, catching the basketball with a hop or 1-2 step, and then rising up into the shot with perfect form.

These can be performed from midrange or from beyond the three-point line depending on the age and skill level of the player.

3. Off-Dribble Form Shooting

The final drill allows players to practice shooting with correct form off the dribble.

This is often the most difficult shot for young players.

To perform this drill, players start several metres behind where they plan to shoot the basketball from.

From there, the player takes 2 - 3 hard dribbles and then practices pulling up for the jump shot on balance.

After each shot, the player collects their own rebound (if they don't have a rebounder), and then returns to the starting position.

The biggest focus of this drill is to stay on balance throughout the entire shot.

6 Common Shooting Technique Questions

Here are the answers to 6 of the most common basketball shooting questions I receive...

1. "Should I shoot using a hop or the 1-2?"

Players must learn how to shoot off both.

I'm 100% against any coach demanding that their players use either the hop or the 1-2 step exclusively.

There are times throughout a game where the hop is better to use and there are times throughout a game where the 1-2 step is better to use.

Eventually, players will develop a preference and I recommend allowing them to make that choice on their own.

But players must be able to shoot off both.

2. "How many shots should I make every week?"

This is how many shots I recommend you make each week depending on the level of shooter you want to become...

- Elite Shooter = 1,500 made shots per week
- Great Shooter = 1,000 made shots per week
- Poor Shooter = 500 made shots per week

This might seem like a low number to some, but I promise you if you're taking all shots from game spots at game speed it won't be easy.

With the amount of distractions we have today, it's crucial all players are scheduling time to get in the gym and work on their shot.

3. "What part of the rim should I look at when I shoot?"

There isn't a 'correct' target every player should be looking at.

Read 'Step 6' and check out [this article where 18 shooting experts give their advice](#).

4. "Should the index or middle finger be last to touch the basketball?"

This is another one of those questions there isn't a 'correct' answer to.

I've always taught the fork (index and middle release at the same time), but there are many great shooting coaches with differing opinions.

I ran a poll on Twitter (follow me!) which received 1,115 votes and 49% of people believe the middle finger should be last to touch the basketball.

Which finger should be the last to touch the basketball when shooting...

— Coach Mac (@BballCoachMac) [July 3, 2017](#)

I know of very few shooting coaches who recommend this, but it shows that all finger releases should be tested by players.

I believe any of the three can work.

5. "Why is backspin so important?"

Backspin is important while shooting because it creates a 'soft' shot.

When a shot is soft (or has touch), the basketball has more chance of bouncing on the rim and then falling through the hoop.

If a shot is taken without backspin, the ball is going to hit the rim and bounce away with very little chance of a score.

6. "Which direction should my feet be pointing?"

Read 'Step 4'.

Brief answer: Feet should have a slight turn. This allows players to open up their shoulder and get their elbow under the basketball without putting tension on the chest.



11 Basketball Shooting Tips

1. Repetition, Repetition, Repetition

The great shooters separate themselves from the rest of the pack by spending thousands of hours shooting **focused** repetitions in the gym.

If you want to learn how to shoot a basketball at a high level, you must be prepared to put in the work to achieve it.

This might seem easy to commit to at first, but I promise you that there will be days when the last thing you feel like doing is going to the gym.

- Cold mornings (and even colder in the gym).
- You didn't sleep well the night before.
- You feel like having a 'lazy day' at home.

The players who can cut through the excuses and get in the gym even when they're not feeling motivated to do so are the ones who separate themselves from the competition.

It's not about the number of hours you practice, it's about the number of hours your mind is present during the practice.

Kobe Bryant

2. Schedule Time for Shooting Practice

If all you do is stumble through each week and fit in shooting practice when it's convenient, I promise you that you'll never become a great shooter.

You must schedule your shooting workouts ahead of time.

Decide how many shots you want to make each week, work out roughly how long it will take, and then schedule your shooting workouts.

Once they're schedule, treat these blocks of time as non-negotiable.

- A friend calls you and wants to hang out? Sorry, you're busy.
- Feel like sleeping in late one day? Sorry, you're busy.

You must make shooting a priority.

3. Always Start Close to The Rim

It's never a good sign to see young players arrive at the gym and immediately start throwing up three-point shots.

Never underestimate the importance of starting close to the rim and making a lot of easy form shots to begin your shooting practice.

This allows you to get into a good rhythm, focus on your shooting technique, and build confidence by making shots.

Don't let your ego get in the way.

If you want to be a great shooter from 25 feet, you better be a great shooter from 4 feet first.

Steve Kerr

4. You Can't Rely on Team Practices for Shooting

Here's a little fact you probably didn't realize...

On average, a player will only shoot 25 - 30 shots in a team practice.

Doesn't sound like much, does it?

Of course, this will depend on the coach's priorities...

But with all the other skills, offenses, and defenses that need to be worked on, coaches simply don't have the time to schedule long blocks of shooting.

What does this mean?

90% of becoming a great shooter occurs outside of team practices.

You must be prepared to put in thousands of repetitions in the gym by yourself or with a teammate.

5. Always Have a Plan

If you simply go to the gym and throw up random shots while laughing with your friends, the rate at which you improve is going to be incredibly slow.

You must have a plan if you want to see quick results.

Ask yourself questions like...

- Where do most of my shots come from during games?
- At the next level where will most of my shots come from?
- What shot do I need to make consistently to become a better player?
- Which areas of the court do I struggle to make shots from?
- etc.

Once you know the answer to these, create a workout.

This will ensure you're taking game shots, from game spots, at game speed.

Then when you get in the gym, you'll know exactly what you need to do.

I hate casual shooting. Every shot is preceded by working to get open and catch and shoot under game-like conditions.

Bobby Knight

6. Track your shooting workouts

I first started advising players to start tracking their made shots after reading a terrific article on shooting coach Dave Hopla.

Dave tracks every single shot he takes... and regularly shoots 98%.

Incredible, right?

In fact, you'll find it hard to find any great shooter that doesn't meticulously track their makes and misses when working on their shooting.

So, why don't more youth and high school players do it?

I have absolutely no idea!

It's an absolute must if a player plans on improving their shot.

Here are 5 quick reasons why tracking shots will make you a great shooter:

1. You cannot improve what you don't measure.
2. It makes every single shot important.
3. Players can set shooting goals and commitments.
4. Players will see improvements.
5. Players will find out their weak shooting areas.

200 Made Shots Workout

Drill	Must Make	Date:						
Mikan Drill	20	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /
Form Shooting: One Hand 3 Feet Out	10	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /
Form Shooting: One Hand 5 Feet Out	10	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /
Form Shooting: One Hand 7 Feet Out	10	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /
Free Throws	10	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /
Elbow to Elbow	20	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /
5 Spot Midrange	25	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /
5 Spot Three-Pointers	25	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /	25 /
Free Throws	10	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /
1-Dribble Pull-Up Four At Each Spot	20	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /
Free Throws	10	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /
2-Dribble Pull-Up Four At Each Spot	20	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /	20 /
Free Throws	10	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /	10 /
TOTAL:	200	200 /						

Shooting Workout by Coach Mac
Find more great workouts at www.basketballforcoaches.com

7. Analyze Your Missed Shots

You're going to miss a lot of shots...

Hell, even the best shooters on the planet make less than half of their shots during competitive play.

If you're going to become a great shooter, you must be able to analyze your missed shots and learn from them.

Here's something I want you to keep in mind...

Great shooters miss front and back. Poor shooters miss left and right.

"Why is this?"

In most cases, when a shot is missed due to hitting the front or back of the rim, it's because the players didn't judge the distance correctly or due to fatigue in the arms and legs.

When a player misses left or right, it's often due to a shooting technique issue.

While practicing, form the habit of looking up after each shot and evaluating the placement of both of your hands.

8. Incorporate Conditioning into Your Shooting Workouts

You're going to be fatigued while you're taking shots during games.

If you want to be a great in-game shooter, it's incredibly important that you replicate this feeling during your shooting workouts.

For players wondering why they can always shoot great while chucking up shots before practice but never in games...

This is likely reason why.

Being able to shoot the ball when you've expended so much energy at the defensive end of the floor is an amazing skill.

Steve Kerr

Here are a few ways you can add conditioning to your shooting practices:

1. Run the floor

After a specific amount of made shots, sprint a full length of the floor before continuing.

Once you've completed a few up-and-backs, you'll definitely feel yourself needing to put more focus into every shot.

2. Rebound for yourself

Rebound your own shots instead of getting a parent or teammate to rebound for you.

This will add a quick sprint after every missed or made shot.

9. Work on Your Inside Game, Too!

Want to know what's better than a player who can consistently knock down an outside shot?

A player who can consistently knock down and outside shot AND finish strong at the rim.

Understand this...

When you do become a great shooter, the opposition is going to start defending you differently than your teammates.

The opposition will be forced to player closer to you, they'll jump at more of your shot fakes, and they'll fight over screens instead of slipping under them.

All of this will lead to many more drive opportunities that wouldn't usually be there for a player who struggles shooting from outside.

Make sure you're able to take advantage of these opportunities by having a great shot fake and being able to finish strong around the rim!

10. Know the Shots You Should be Taking During Games

As you move from practices to games, it's important for all players to understand which areas of the floor are good shots for them.

The unwritten rule is that a players should be able to make 6-7/10 from a spot unguarded during practice before they start taking a shot from that spot during games (HS level).

Unfortunately for some, shooting the basketball is not an equal opportunity decision.

If you can't shoot well from certain areas of the court, you don't get to take those shots.

The players who spend thousands of hours in the gym are rewarded during games by shooting more than some of their teammates.

If you want to shoot more, practice more.

Shooting percentage is just as much about decision making as it is about technique.

Jeff Van Gundy

11. Don't Expect Instant Results

There is one thing I can promise you...

You're not going to become a great shooter overnight.

- You'll feel like you're not making progress at all...
- You'll feel like it's pointless to continue...
- You'll feel like you want to give up...

But if you're consistent, the results will come.

This means being consistent with multiple weeks and months of working hard on your shot, not multiple days of practice.

I've had many players come to me upset because they've been making 200 shots a day for five days in a row and they haven't seen any progress.

It doesn't happen that quickly!

The process takes time.

A Special Note for Basketball Coaches...

If a youth player is shooting with bad technique, it's our fault.

Yep, you read that correctly...

Not any one coach specifically, but all of us as a whole.

Players fall into certain shooting habits early and we can't expect 5 - 12 year old kids to know the correct way to shoot a basketball.

It's our responsibility as coaches to ensure that our players are shooting with great technique by teaching them correct form and using shooting technique drills in practice.

I once wrote an article explaining that there are only two steps to becoming a great

shooter...

1. Master the Mechanics (Coach's responsibility)

The first step to becoming a great shooter is mastering shooting technique.

It's the coach's responsibility to learn what great shooting technique is and teach it to their players.

It's one of our most important roles in assisting players to develop their shot.

2. Lots of Smart Repetitions (Player's responsibility)

The responsibility of the second step rests solely on the shoulders of each individual player...

Putting in the time to shoot the amount of shots it takes to be a great shooter (I recommend 1,500 makes a week).

There simply isn't enough time during practice for players to get many shots up during team practice.

The bulk of these makes must come during the player's own time.

Photo and Video Credit:

A big thank you to Ryan Razooky for providing this blog post with images and videos of the different steps on how to shoot a basketball.

Check him out on on his [website](#) or on [Twitter](#).

Conclusion

Even after 6,000+ words on how to shoot a basketball, it's important to understand that there is not one 'correct' way to shoot.

- Steph Curry
- Dirk Nowitzki
- Reggie Miller
- Ray Allen
- Klay Thompson
- Peja Stojakovic

All of these players are world-class shooters with very different shooting techniques.

Use the 10-steps I've outlined above as a guide to develop your own shot and then make subtle changes to find what works best for you.

How to Teach a Basketball Skill (The Right Way)

 basketballforcoaches.com/how-to-teach-a-basketball-skill/



I want to tell you a story. Don't worry, I'll keep it short...

A couple of days ago I went to the gym to get up a few shots like I do most days. On this particular day there was a team of somewhere between 8 – 12 year olds on the court directly next to mine. Between drills I was sitting down to rest and have a drink when I overheard their coach explaining the retreat dribble to his team.

He explained that when performing a retreat dribble you must turn your body to face the sideline, take a couple of steps back, and then push off and explode past your defender. Now there's nothing much wrong with that explanation except for one thing...

He explained it all while sitting on the bench with his players surrounding him. There was no demonstration.

I'm sure you can imagine the chaos that followed. Every player was doing something different. Dribbling with the wrong hand, walking backwards instead of sliding; and all the while the coach never once got off the bench. He sat there yelling out to the players doing it wrong. Every kid.

I have a high level of respect for anyone who volunteers their time to help out our youth, but this can't happen. It's not helping the players at all and that's our main goal.

But the story got me thinking... what is the right way to teach players a skill? I put that question to a couple of coaches that I'm close to, combined it with my thoughts on the topic, and the following is what I came up with.

Here's what I consider to be the 'right way' to teach players a skill.

1. Introduce the Skill

This is the quickest step. The first thing you'll want to do is introduce the skill to them by name. Let them know what they're going to be learning.

If you're coaching players older than the youth level, this step will take you 5 seconds to tell them what they're going to learn.

For youth players, I like to spend a bit more time on this step asking questions and engaging their mind.

For example:

"Today we're going to be learning how to do a crossover. Does anyone know what a crossover is?"

"Has anyone ever used a crossover in a game before?"

"Does anyone know WHY we would want to use a crossover?"

2. Demonstrate and Explain

It's very important that the skill is demonstrated correctly. If you can't do it, get an older player to do demonstrate while you explain.

Demonstrate the skill slowly, step-by-step, and without defense. Make sure you emphasise the key teaching points while you're doing it. Always demonstrate the skill a few times.

For the crossover the key points would be...

1. Push off hard on the outside foot.
2. Change of speed.
3. Keep the ball below the knee.

After you've finished demonstrating the skill, there are two things you should always do...

1. Ask them to repeat back what the key points are.
2. Ask them if they have any questions about the skill.

3. Initial Practice

Now allow the players to start practicing the skill themselves. Do we expect them to be perfect at it in the first five minutes? Absolutely not. Let them make mistakes. Let them lose the ball a few times.

Depending on the age, don't worry too much about speed at first. It's more important that they learn the fundamentals of the skills first.

4. When and Why to Use the Skill

I like to talk about this immediately after they practice for a couple of reasons...

1. They've got a grasp on how to do the skill and know what it feels like to use it.
2. If we talk about it before practicing the skill, I feel like it's too much information for players to process at once. They'll forget how to perform the skill.

This step is the most commonly skipped over step in the teaching process. No matter how well you teach the skill, no matter how well they learn the skill, it's all irrelevant if they don't know when and why to use the skill during a game of basketball.

We have to put the skill in game context. This involves adding a defender and demonstrating times during a game when the skill should be used. For the crossover, show that when the defender impedes your dribbling lane, you crossover to evade the defender.

5. Repetition

There is value in repetition, as tedious as it may seem. It's what makes the miraculous seem effortless – Pat Williams*

This is where the hard work begins. This is the step all players must dedicate time to if they want to get exceptional at a skill.

As a coach, you must learn what stage of learning the skill that each of your players is at individually. While some of your players might pick up the skill quite quickly, there will be others that won't. And you need to always be pushing each of your players just a little out of their comfort zone

Referring back to the crossover skill, for those that are able to do it quite easily you should stress speed and keeping their head up; while for those struggling to learn the skill you should allow them to go at their own pace and properly learn the fundamentals of the skill.

6. Incorporate the Skill into Live Play

Once the players have become proficient at a skill it's time to take the next step and incorporate it into live play.

This can be in the form of drills that incorporate the skill and even real games.

This will be a gradual process as the player begins to feel more and more confident at the skill they're trying to learn. If you're coaching youth basketball, encourage your players to use the skills you've been learning. It doesn't matter if they make a couple of mistakes. If it works, their confidence will skyrocket.

7. Repeat Steps 5 and 6 – A Lot

The more you repetitions a players puts into learning a particular skill, the more confident they'll become at performing it. The more confident they become at performing it, the greater the chance they'll use it during a game.

Until finally they use the skill during a game without even thinking about it. That's the level we want to achieve.

Key Teaching Bullet Points

- Don't only criticize and correct a player if they're performing the skill wrong. It'll ruin their confidence. Make sure to praise them on a part of the skill they're doing well before correcting them.
- Praise progress, not perfection. Encourage them that they're making progress.
- Never be sarcastic and laugh when a player can't perform the skill correctly. This should go without saying but I see too many trainers do it without realising that it's hurting the players confidence.
- Emphasise mistakes will happen. It's a step all players have to go through on the way to mastering a skill.
- Give feedback individually. Although if the whole group is doing the same thing wrong (which usually means we didn't demonstrate and explain it thoroughly enough) get everyone to stop and go over what's going wrong.

Conclusion

In summary, the 7 steps to teaching a new skill are:

1. Introduce the skill.
2. Demonstrate and explain.
3. Initial Practice
4. When and Why to Use the Skill
5. Repetition
6. Incorporate Skill into Live Play
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6

This is the step-by-step process that I use and encourage others to use. The most important one you need to remember to incorporate is the 'When and why to use the skill'. That's the one I see way too many coaches leave out. It's important!

How to Teach Youth Players the Jump Stop

 basketballforcoaches.com/teaching-the-jump-stop/

Children are out of control. We all know that. They sprint around the basketball court with what looks to us like an unlimited supply of energy. While this is fun and entertaining to watch, the out of control nature that these kids display leads to many turnovers on the basketball court. And coaches don't like turnovers; do we?

These turnovers are due to their inability to stop under control. When players are not balanced and under control, they'll often fall forward because of momentum resulting in a travelling violation. So it's up to us to teach them to stop in a controlled, balanced position.

Easier said than done, right?

Not necessarily... As long as we start with the absolute basics.

First, let's quickly go over the correct way to jump stop. Because if you don't know it yourself, how could you possibly teach it?

What is a Jump Stop?

In its most basic form, a jump stop is when a player comes to a stop landing simultaneously on both feet in a controlled stance. The reason we want them to land on both feet at the same time is because then they can use either foot as their pivot foot. The jump stop is how players stop on a basketball court without travelling.

We want them to land in a triple-threat position. For those that are only new to basketball and its terminology, 'triple-threat' is when the player is in a low, balanced stance with the ball in their shot-pocket which makes them a threat to either shoot, dribble, or pass.

There are 3 main points I stress when teaching the jump stop to my players are:

1. Knee's bent – This keeps us low and balanced.
2. Head up – Allows them to see the court.
3. Small jumps into the jump stop – Jumping too high will cause them to land off-balance.

There are a few other things we can look at as they progress, but I believe these 3 are the most important.



Photo Credit: [ToniMolero07](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

How to Teach Your Players the Jump Stop

Teaching your players to jump stop should happen in four main steps.

1. Teaching the correct landing stance.
2. Jump stops without a ball.
3. Jump stops after dribbling.
4. Jump stops when receiving a pass.

In my years teaching young players footwork drills I have not found a better drill to teach all four steps of the jump stop than the drill 'Go, Stop'. Boring name, I know. Blame the person who invented the game, not me.

The drill involves the players moving up and down the court in a controlled speed and stopping each time the coach either blows the whistle or calls out stop. It's a fantastic drill to teach the basics of a jump stop.

Let's go through the three four and the drill now.

Part 1 – Teaching the Correct Stance – Triple-Threat

The first thing we need to do is teach the players the position they will be in when they land on the jump stop. This stance is called the triple-threat position.

Here's how to set up 'Go, Stop' and teach it:

1. Get into the starting position

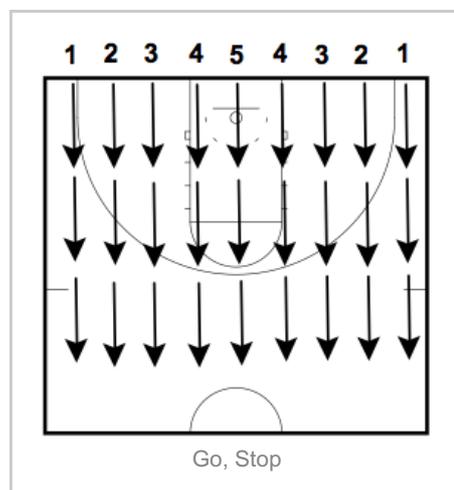
Get all your players lined up along the baseline without a basketball. We're going to be focusing on their footwork to begin with and the basketball will only distract them.

If you have a large group of 12 or more ask your players to partner up and one of the them takes three steps in front of the other. If you have an even larger group of 20 or more you might want to consider running this from sideline to sideline instead of baseline to baseline. This gives them space.

2. Teach the players the triple-threat position

Once they've all got a bit of room it's time to teach them triple-threat. The first thing I do is ask the players to show me the 'triple-threat' stance. This is because that's the position they be in when they land on a jump stop. Depending on the age group and previous training, some will know it, some won't. For those that don't know it, we need to explain it to them.

The two keys to the triple-threat position are having our knee's bent to keep us balanced and keeping our head up to see the floor.



Ask the players to get into triple-threat position and correct any technique flaws you can see. Allow them to relax and then tell them to get into triple-threat again. Go over this a couple of times until your players are used to it.

3. Explain triple-threat is the landing position

Now explain to them that when performing a jump stop they're going to be jumping off one foot and then landing in that exact position.

Alright! Now they're ready to get moving.

Part 2 – Jump Stops Without a Basketball

Teaching the players to jump stop WITHOUT a ball first is very important. The reason being is because it allows the players to focus completely on their footwork rather than the basketball.

Here's how to teach it using 'Go, Stop':

1. Begin the drill by explaining to the players what they'll be doing. Jogging slowly down court until they hear a whistle signalling them to jump stop. When they jump stop they must land in the triple-threat position (low and balanced with their head up). Once they understand what to do it's time to start the drill.
2. Yell out 'go' to signal them to begin the drill and start jogging down the court.
3. After a couple of metres yell out 'stop' to signal them to perform a jump stop. Make sure they all land in triple-threat position, wait for about two seconds and then tell them to go again.
4. Repeat this process 5 – 6 times down the court.

Quick note – One of the most common flaws in this drill is players jumping too high on their jump stop. This creates a lot of momentum when they land causing them to fall forward. Stress that the jump only needs to be small so that they stay on balance.

Part 3 – Jump Stops After Dribbling

Once they've learnt how to jump stop without a ball, it's time to make things a bit more difficult – we're going to add a ball to the drill. Make sure each kid has a ball.

With a ball the drill will stay pretty much the same. Obviously the only difference is that they will be dribbling while they jog. Follow the structure of the first drill stopping your players about 5 – 6 times each time down the court.

Part 4 – Jump Stops Receiving a Pass

Receiving the pass is a bit different because it requires them to jump before catching the basketball.

To teach this, I get the kids to throw the ball a short distance out in front of themselves with backspin on the basketball. Once they've thrown the ball they take a couple of steps towards the basketball, and then they jump stop and catch the basketball in the air after the basketball has bounced and then land in triple-threat stance.

They continue throwing the ball out to themselves with backspin and then performing a jump stop on the catch all the way down the court.

Advanced – Pivoting and Fakes

Once your players have mastered the basics of the jump stop you can start to make it a bit more challenging for them. We can do this by adding pivoting and various other fakes they must do after the jump stop.

The four advanced moves that I recommend teaching are:

1. Forward pivot.
2. Reverse pivot.
3. Shot fake.
4. Jab step.

We must teach all of these moves to the players when they're in the drills starting formation. That way they can learn the moves before the drill.

Forward Pivot – The forward pivot means the body of the players is moving forward around the pivot foot. Make sure that the knees stay bent during the entire pivot.

Reverse Pivot – The reverse pivot means the body of the player is moving backwards around the pivot foot. This one is the hardest for young players to learn. Again, make sure that the knees stay bent during the pivot.

Shot Fake – Teach the players that when they shot fake the ball must not go above their head and they must keep their knee's bent.

Jab Step – Teach the players that when they jab step it must only be short. If they jab step too long they'll become off-balance and won't be able to explode past their defender.

We incorporate these into the drill by calling out one of these pivots or fakes after the players have performed the jump stop.

Other Tips

1. Before each time you run this drill ask the players the key points of the jump stop. Force them to think and remember the different aspects.
2. Make sure the players aren't jumping too high and landing off-balance.
3. If you're teaching them the advanced pivoting techniques make sure they can pivot using both feet.

I hope you found this blog post and the drill helpful. It's the exact process I use to teach all of my young players the basics of footwork which is unbelievably important at that age.

Don't forget to share this with other youth basketball coaches that you think this might help and if you have any other drills and techniques you use to teach pivoting I'd love to hear about them in the comments below.

How to Train a Team of Players With Large Differences in Skill Level

 basketballforcoaches.com/differences-skill-level/



Training a group of players with large differences in skill level is hard.

The difficulty is in finding the balance between challenging the strongest players on your team, while simultaneously improving the weakest players on your team.

But it can be done...

Every day I receive emails from coaches asking how they can find this balance. And this blog post is going to answer that.

Instead of simply sharing my own thoughts, I reached out to 10 basketball experts and asked them the following question:

"How do you meet the needs of all players in practice when you're coaching a team of players with large differences in skill level?"

Here are their answers...

Alex Bazzell - @alexbazzell24



When you work with a wide range of skill levels it's important to know that the best players are sensitive to knowing when they aren't being pushed.

If they feel like they are grouped with players that are less skilled in a drill or skill work, they will tend to not take the drill as important. They need competition to push them.

When attacking skills in a practice you want to split the players up into groups 3 or 4 different groups. The worst thing you can do is just split up guards and bigs on each end.

Here is the issue with that...

Will you have all your bigs catching with their back to the basket or in a pick and roll situation? My guess is probably not.

Same goes for the guards...

Will you want every guard coming off a ball screen and making decisions or catching and shooting 3's?

The hardest thing as a coach is getting reps for your best players that put them in game situations because then your other, less skilled players, will be getting those same reps and when it comes to live games, they will think it's okay to take those shots because they've been told by their coaches it's acceptable because they have practiced them.

My solution is put your playmaking guards, catch and shoot guards, and slashers at different baskets during skill work. On the other end, your back to the basket bigs & more versatile bigs at different rims as well.

This will create 5 different baskets of players working on the unique skills you need them to have in order for the team to succeed.

It's not a secret why the Spurs are constantly winning. Their players know their roles and they rep out their roles everyday.



Chris Oliver - Basketball Immersion

The challenge for a coach is that if you focus on the less skilled group, you disrupt learning for the higher skilled group as they will be bored. If you focus on the higher skilled group, you may lose the lower skilled group as the skills or concepts may be too difficult to grasp.

Ultimately, there is no balance for this dilemma so it is my mindset to coach to the highest level. As long as you are not exposing novices to dangerous training conditions, complex information about the sport that would be represented as hard first instruction will do more to raise the overall level of your players than the alternative.

I would teach a skill or tactic as a whole, judge the need for progressions or not, encourage learners that they can learn these skills even if they can't do them yet, and continue to add layers of challenge as learning progresses.

Why?

Even though a player may not be able to perform a hard-first skill, a less skilled player will still be able to appreciate what is involved to learn a skill, and they will have a better representation of where they are going as early as possible in training. During hard-first training, players are taught how to see complex skills and formations right from the start.



Gary Maitland - @Coach_Maitland

As a coach, like a classroom teacher, having differentiated activities in your sessions are essential. These planned moments pitch your session's objectives at the right level for your players.

For example, all players may be working on finishing at the basket however weaker players could be focusing on scoring consistently without a defender, the mid-level ability group could be going against some controlled resistance and the higher ability group could be going against live defenders. Each of these groups can then progress. The weaker players can move on to scoring at speed with controlled resistance, the mid-level group can now go against aggressive defence and the higher ability group could be given a more challenging scenario to face.

The ability groups will change depending on what skill the players are working on and that keeps your athletes at the centre of your practice.

Above all, it's important that a coach knows his/her players and plans for differentiation to ensure progress is made by all in your sessions. Drills or activities pitched at the wrong level will lead to players becoming demotivated.



Jon Beck - Pure Sweat Basketball

I think you should have fewer real 5 on 5 games and more small sided games 1 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 3 with certain rules that can get touches and decision making opportunities for the middle ground players.

Make their workouts more about skill development and not so much about competition. Make sure small sided games are just as much about learning with certain rules as it is about winning.

Don't water down the practice/drills for the kids who haven't developed the skills yet. That will bore the kids who already have the skills.

Incorporate drills that let the kids who have already developed the skills help teach the kids who need more practice. Sometimes kids learn better and faster from each other than from a teacher/coach/adult.

Pair a couple of better players with a couple of weaker players and let them learn from each other. Every kid has something to give. Every situation can be a learning experience for any player, weak or strong.

Competition is important but at that age it's not nearly as important as learning how to perform certain skills and play. Keep the practices and skill work really FUN, but teach them how to work on their game in a progressive manner.

Most importantly, teach kids how to work and what to work on. Give each kid an individualized progressive skill program so they all can develop.

Let the kids practice in small groups. Kids with better skills work together on those skills and moving those skills to the next level. At the same time, kids with weaker skills work together (maybe with more attention from the coach) to improve their skills. With a smaller group, focus on specific errors that the weaker kids are making and teach them how to correct their errors.



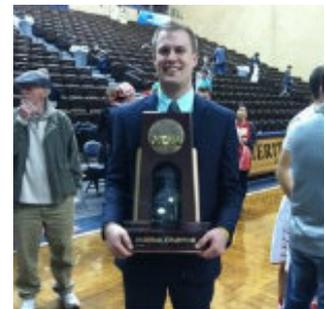
John Carrier - @JohnCarrier42

I still believe in a games approach. I think the key is to modify rules to help players compete at their own level.

For example, you might play some dribble tag for those who are less skilled with the ball. And then later play some rodeo (2 defenders chasing 1) that will allow you to push your more skilled handlers. Both are still getting something out of each.

Also, we play so much 1 on 1 to 5 on 5 in practice that players are constantly working on skills at their level. And it's about teaching players in each situation how to reach just enough so they are not in the thrash zone (success less than 60%) but they aren't having success every time.

Lastly I would recommend balancing teams so that players can compete against similar players as much as possible.



Jordan Petersen - Positionless Basketball

Skill levels can vary drastically at the youth levels and it can be a real challenge to meet the needs of all the players so they continue to develop.

There are 4 things I keep in mind when working with teams and players with differences in skill.

1. Vary drills

Give players options in drills. Give them an advanced way and beginner way or an advanced, middle and beginner way to do a drill. This can be done in most drills with a little bit of forethought and planning.

In a layup drill an advanced layup might be with an inside hand finish and the beginner way might be off of two feet.

In ball handling drills an advanced move might be between the legs and the beginner way would be a crossover.

Allow the player to choose which way they would like to try the drill. This gives players the opportunity to be more successful in a drill and will likely enjoy the game more.

If it is a drill where there is a defender involved, have the defender play demonstration or guided defense with lower skilled players.

2. Keep it fun

Don't bore players to death with drill after drill of skill development without making it some type of game or competition. Play small sided games that work on skills you are trying to improve. This can help speed development, but also keeps it fun for all players.

I think we need to allow players to fall in love with the game or at least enjoy it before we make them take it so serious.

3. Peer coaching

Allow and encourage players teach each other. There have been so many times when a player has been able to explain a skill or concept to another player better than I was able to because they were able to bring it to the player's level.

I often steal the language players use to explain something to each other because it clicks with them better.

4. Live with growing pains

Don't limit players. Encourage them to take chances and help them grow when mistakes are made.

I often watch youth practices or games and lower skilled players aren't allowed to do or try something because they may turn the ball over or not make the correct play.

When coaching youth sports there are going to be a lot of mistakes, but coaches must help players overcome and learn from these mistakes.



Liam Flynn - CoachLiamFlynn.com

I'm always a believer in you train up to your best players, not down to your weakest.

I think if you have players who are determined to be their best, then they will want to always be challenged. If they are the 'best' kids, they won't accept having trainings modified

so as to lower the team's standards. If they are one of the players who is weakest at a certain skill, they will not want to have practice made 'easier' just so they feel more comfortable.

So how does this play out in practice? I'll give you an example.

In my off season, I usually go back and coach at the junior club that I was at for over 10 years, Sturt Basketball Club (In Adelaide, South Australia).

Often times we will have training sessions comprising of two teams, one year in age apart, put together – the 'firsts' or Division 1 team and the 'reserves' or Division two team. The Division 1 players are the best kids in that two year age group (U12, U14 etc) and are mostly a year older than the kids in the Division 2 team. A lot of times there is a great variation in the best kid in the Division 1 team and the weakest player in the Division 2 team. But I never consider splitting the teams, for a variety of reasons.

Mainly because when the Division 1 kids graduate into the next age bracket, those Division 2 kids, who spent a year training against their older and more superior counterparts (and sometimes getting their butts kicked at times!), will be better for it and will take this experience with them to become the Division 1 team the following year.

Most of the times we mix the kids a lot when we are drilling - the #1 ranked player in the age group might compete against any of the kids in the session. But if there is a case where there is a big gap between the skill, physical or mental gap between players we try to put players against opponents of similar abilities.

For example, we always "mass instruct" any offensive or defensive concept with the entire group. If we were working on defensive positioning or rotations for instance, we would bring both teams together on one half court and teach the concept to all players, using the same teaching points and verbal cues for all players. We would then teach the players the drill, 4v4 Shell Drill in this case, using a collection of the kids in the group. But when we split the kids up to drill, we would put players ranked 1-8 in a 4v4 group, and players ranked 9-16 in a group. That way players learn the same concept, but drill against opponents of similar abilities.

I think it is also helpful to have a strong Assistant Coach work with your lowest ranked players. Don't put them out in 'Siberia' with an inexperienced coach. That way the gap will just widen between player Ranked 1 and player Ranked 16. Challenge one of your Assistant Coaches to close the gap.

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Mark Adams - Mark Adams Basketball

All players can and should spend time working on the basics and fundamentals as a whole. Great players never get bored with the basics!

However, I often broke down players into groups based on position played or skill level. By breaking into groups you can teach to that groups skill level while keeping players engaged and challenged.

One of the keys is to get all players out of their comfort zone in order for true growth and development to occur.



Mason Waters - Mason Waters Basketball

Raw Skill, Refined Skill, Game Application. To me, these are the three levels of skill development in basketball. Looking at your athletes' developmental stages through these three lenses may serve as a help to coaching all players to their level.

The next level of skill development is refined skill. This includes increasing the speed and tempo at which a skill is performed. This is the stage coaches are pushing players into when they yell, "Dribble faster and harder!" Yet this stage is not only about increasing speed and energy, it is also about adding a distractor.

Lastly is the level of game application. This is the most advanced skill development level when players have mastered a skill but now have to learn when to use that skill. Most players can do a crossover or perform a certain pivot, but not all players know when to use

a certain move in basketball. Once a player masters or performs a skill (like a crossover), they must then learn when to use that move.

Identify what your players need in view of these three levels of skill development. The best teachers and coaches realize that their pupils are all at different levels of development and require different needs.

Some of your players just need to begin by practicing the raw skills. Some have the raw skills but perform them at an average speed. While others have the skills that are ready to be performed in a game.



Ryan Razooky - Ryan Razooky Basketball

Teach one fundamental move and one finish. Introduce a second move and finish for the advanced players. They can choose which one they want to practice.

This allows both players to practice the fundamentals and advanced fundamentals both based on the same concept/footwork but also allowing a challenge for each.

How to Win Every Youth Basketball Game (8 Terrible Tactics)

 basketballforcoaches.com/terrible-tactics/



I was once asked to fill in as the coach for a team competing in an U12's grand final game because the normal coach of the team had fallen ill the night before.

I was happy to help out and said yes despite not having any idea what players were on the team.

When I arrived at the game the next day I was delighted to find out that we had a great team. I had previously coached most of the players and had watched the others play before.

But the player that immediately stood out to me was our team's biggest player. Let's call him Tom (not his real name).

Tom was the tallest player on the court... And there wasn't a close second.

The next tallest player on the court didn't even come up to his shoulders. He was huge.

So you know what I did... I planted him in the key and told him not to move any time that we were on defense.

"I don't care if your player catches the basketball at the three-point line, just stay in the key. That's all I want you to do."

So he did.

And we won the grand final.

Every time we were on defense he would run back to the key and stick his hands in the air.

He wasn't a great player. He didn't block many shots or grab many rebounds. But his sheer size caused the opposition's best players to miss most of their layups.

So, what's the point of this story?

Was the tactic I used (planting our biggest player in the key) smart coaching?

Sure, it worked. It worked really well. We won the game...

But was it a smart tactic for a youth basketball coach who claims to be passionate about the development of players?

Once upon a time, I would have said yes because I didn't know any better. And a lot of current coaches would agree with me.

Now that I'm more experienced, **I would say an emphatic no.**

But this tactic (and many other similar tactics) are used on a regular basis in today's youth basketball.

Think about this...

What was I depriving Tom of when I forced him to stay inside the key the entire game?

Here are just a few things...

- He doesn't get a chance to practice closing out.
- He doesn't get to practice evading off-ball screens.
- He doesn't get to experience fighting through on-ball screens.
- He doesn't get to practice guarding the basketball on the perimeter.
- And many more!

Not to mention that I was also depriving other players of learning how to play help-side defense because we already always had Tom permanently there. They didn't need to.

I was hurting the entire team's development because I wanted to win the game more than I wanted them to get better.

Sorry, Tom. If I could go back and change how I coached that game, I would. Even if it meant we lost the game.

Which brings me to the main point of this article...

Many of the tactics that win youth basketball games are detrimental to the long-term development of our athletes.

These tactics are most commonly used by coaches who aren't aware of the consequences or coaches that are only concerned about stroking their own ego and winning games.

Here they are...

(Please don't use them).

Terrible Tactic #1: Play Your 5 Best Players as Much as Possible

The first sign of a coach who only wants to win is one that plays their best players as much as possible and their weaker players only sparingly.

They're not interested in even court time.

They start the game with their 5 best players on the court and will only rest them when they're fatigued to the point where they can't possibly run any longer.

Only then will they 'risk' putting in a weaker player.

As soon as their starter is ready to go again, they're straight back onto the court and the weaker player is back on the bench.

What you should do instead:

Every youth basketball coach should strive to give all of their players relatively even time on the court.

There is no substitute for in-game experience when developing basketball players.

For me, the only time I will deviate from even court time is in the last 3 – 5 minutes of a close game, then I'll put in the players who I believe give us the best chance of winning the game.

But up until that point, everyone should be receiving even court time whether you're winning or losing.

I've literally heard a coach say "It doesn't matter if they don't get on the court. They won't be playing in a few years anyway."

Terrible.

Terrible Tactic #2: Run a Tight 2-3 Zone and Force the Opposition to Shoot from Outside

This is the most common tactic used by coaches that aren't concerned with the development of their players.

I've written extensively on why zone defenses are ruining youth basketball which you can read [here](#) so I'll keep this short.

Basically, since most youth players aren't physically strong enough to shoot the basketball with good technique or consistently from outside, coaches take advantage of this by leaving them open on the perimeter and packing the paint with defenders.

Then they simply wait for the offense to miss an outside shot so that they can rebound the basketball and play offense.

When a coach does this, they're depriving their players similarly to how I did in my U12's basketball game to Tom.

The players won't be able to practice closing out, fighting through off-ball screens, defending the pick-and-roll, etc.

Running a 2-3 zone isn't 'smart basketball' like a lot of youth coaches seem to think it is.

What you should do instead:

I believe all youth basketball teams should be playing man-to-man half-court defense.

I don't mind teams using the Pack Line defense although some will argue that it's similar to running a zone defense.

I disagree with this and see the Pack Line as a progression to man-to-man defense by teaching younger teams the correct help positions without them needing to think about denying the basketball as well.

Terrible Tactic #3: Flood the Front-Court with a Full-Court Press

Whether to use a full-court press was something I debated with myself over and over again when I first started coaching youth basketball.

(Yes, I used one when I first began coaching. The 2-2-1 press specifically)

The reason I've decided against using them might seem odd to a lot of coaches out there...

...because they're too effective. Full-court presses flat-out work in youth basketball.

Here's why they work and how it's hindering the development of our players.

As stated in tactic #2, youth basketball players are weak.

To effectively beat a full-court press requires good spacing amongst the offensive team and the strength to make passes over and through the zone.

Since youth players often lack the strength for good spacing, the defense doesn't have to worry about the long pass over the top of the defense and they can simply flood the front-court.

This inevitably leads to a lot of turnovers and the game turns into a 'run and gun' shootout.

This isn't a good thing for youth basketball development.

What you should do instead:

Same point as the last tactic...

Your team should play man-to-man half-court defense.

This allows the opposition to advance the basketball and then the offensive team and defensive team can work on half-court fundamentals which are much more important for development.

Terrible Tactic #4: Don't Allow Players to Play Multiple Sports

If you're a parent and a coach ever tries to restrict your child to playing one sport all-year-round, run away. Run as fast as you can.

Coaches will often use this tactic to get good athletes to 100% commit to them, their team, and their chosen sport.

Keeping the best athletes on their roster all year around will lead to them getting more wins on the scoreboard.

They'll tell parents and players that if they do take a season off basketball that they'll get left behind and won't be able to catch back up.

This has been proven time and time and time again to be untrue.

What you should do instead:

Encourage your players to play multiple sports.

The benefits are countless. The player will develop into a better all-around athlete, they'll experience different sports and be given the chance to decide their favorite, they'll develop more relationships, they'll receive coaching from different coaches, etc.

But not even just the benefits, there are dangers associated with being a single-sport athlete including burnout, injuries, etc.

Terrible Tactic #5: Intimidate Young Referees so That They're Too Scared to Make Calls Against Your Team

Another way to immediately know if a coach has their values and priorities in order is if they scream and yell at young referees.

How often have you seen young, intimidated referees fade from the game after being yelled at and intimidated by a 40-year-old man or woman? I see it all too often.

Some youth coaches will often use this tactic knowing that it will benefit their team throughout the game.

As much as we would love for all referees to be unaffected by coaches, it happens.

All referees have to start somewhere (just like coaches) and the young beginner referees will be affected by what coaches say to them.

If you're yelling at them throughout the game, they will get intimidated and perhaps a few calls will go in your team's favor.

Don't sink to this level for a couple of extra calls.

What you should do instead:

Stop talking to the referees and focus on the team you're coaching.

Don't expect the referees to make every call correctly. You're not a perfect coach. Your players aren't perfect shooters. So why do some coaches expect the referees to be perfect?

Terrible Tactic #6: Only Allow the Best Players to Control the Basketball and Shoot

Youth coaches that only care about winning only want the basketball in the hands of their best players.

It's common to see these coaches instructing the weaker players on the team to stand in the corners to 'space the floor' while the better players on the team isolate on the wing or the top of the key.

When the weaker players do receive the basketball, they're often yelled at if they shoot the basketball or drive to the basket.

How are they going to improve if all they're allowed to do is catch the basketball and pass back to the better players?

What you should do instead:

Encourage your weaker players to make the correct basketball play even if that's shooting the basketball and they miss.

Another tactic I use is when our team is winning by a comfortable margin, I get the players that don't usually advance the basketball up the court to become the point guards of the team.

Terrible Tactic #7: Force Your Biggest Players to Only Play in the Post and Rebound

The biggest players on your team are required to play in the post and rebound, right?

Coaches instruct the biggest players to be the 'big men' on the team. That's the way it's always been.

Their role involves rebounding, playing in the post, and setting screens. Nothing else. “Because that’s what big men do”.

This isn’t restricted to games, even in practice a coach will often split their team up into ‘post players’ and ‘guards’. The post players only work on post skills and the guards only work on guard skills.

Tall players are often yelled at when they dribble the basketball up the floor or shoot from the outside.

Coaching youth basketball this way has to stop.

One of the main reasons is that the biggest players on a youth basketball team are often guards when they advance to the next level.

We can’t restrict a player in the future by assigning them to only one position. You never know how they’re going to grow and develop in the future.

What you should do instead:

Create positionless players.

This is now one of my most important rules for youth basketball. I made the mistake of separating guards and bigs when I first started coaching (read about it [here](#)) but with experience I’ve learned better.

Allow all of your players to experience and practice advancing the basketball up the court, shooting from the outside, playing in the post, etc.

Terrible Tactic #8: Only Run Set Plays on Offense

Another sign of an inexperienced coach or a coach who’s focused on winning is the amount of set plays they use on the offensive end of the floor.

“*Why are set plays so bad?*” you might be asking...

Because they give your players a pass from thinking and make decisions on offense.

Instead, your players already know where they should pass the basketball, where they should cut, when they should dribble, when they should shoot, etc.

By running set plays every time down the floor, you rob your players of the opportunity to make decisions and develop their basketball IQ by learning from experience.

Not to mention I’ve watched coaches work on their set plays for 75% of practice. This is a huge waste of time that could be better spent playing small-sided games or working on skills!

What you should do instead:

Use a basketball offense that gives the players the opportunity to make decisions.

My favorite youth basketball offense is the Read and React offense by Rick Torbett.

In fact, you don't even need to use an offense...

Often I'll simply stress spacing and ball-movement to young players and then let them work it out on their own.

Sure, it's not always pretty basketball, but they learn a lot!

Conclusion

Let's recap the 8 most common 'terrible tactics' youth basketball coaches make:

1. **They play their 5 best players as much as possible.**
2. **Run a tight 2-3 zone.**
3. **Run a full-court press.**
4. **Don't allow players to play multiple sports.**
5. **They intimidate young referees.**
6. **Only allow their best players to control the basketball and shoot.**
7. **Force big players to only play in the post.**
8. **Only run set plays on offense.**

The most important thing to know is that you're not a bad coach if you're currently using any of the 8 tactics above.

All coaches are guilty of making the mistakes above at times throughout their youth basketball coaching career.

I've (unfortunately) used nearly all of the above tactics at some stage in my coaching journey.

I understand that it's not always intentional. Most coaches don't think these tactics will have a long-term impact on the players (just like I didn't), but they do.

Hopefully, by writing this I'll save you the time of working them out yourself!

We all have to remember what's most important in youth basketball (development, participation, fun, etc) and stop letting our ego's get in the way.

Is Social Media Killing Your College Chances?

 basketballforcoaches.com/social-media/

Twitter and Facebook have totally changing the entire recruitment process for basketball in two ways...

1. We now have the ability to stay up-to-date on players current situations. For example: How players are going with an injury, what was their stat line for the night, who played well each game, etc.
2. We now have the ability to perform a background check on potential new recruits.

Today I'm going to be focusing on number 2 because I don't think all coaches and players realize how incredibly powerful and potentially life-changing this ability is.

I know what you're thinking... Life changing? That's a bit dramatic isn't it?

Well not necessarily.

Here are a couple of tweets that inspired me to write this blog post...

Just got off phone with a D1 Assistant coach who told me he would no longer b recruiting a kid due 2 the content of his tweets [#truth](#)

— David Williams (@Dwilliams1515) [March 13, 2013](#)

Just scratched a recruit from my list. Says crazy things, curses, & uses "N" word on social media. Don't need knuckleheads in our program!

— Matt Grahn (@CoachMattGrahn) [December 19, 2012](#)

As you can see from these tweets, recruiters are doing background checks on all social media profiles while they consider their potential players.

An inappropriate comment or photo can be the difference between going to the school you desire, or maybe not even receiving an offer.

It scares me to think that some of these players' dreams are about to be shattered because of some silly things they've posted on social media sites.

You Have No Privacy

Players don't have the privacy that they once had. Not too long ago, colleges would recruit solely based on the talent of the player. They might have spent a few hours with them, but they didn't have the opportunity to get to know much about them until they had signed the player up to their program.

Nowadays, it's a different story. Coaches have the ability to look back on your social media history and find out a lot about you.

All players need to have the mindset that recruiters are going to thoroughly go through every single little thing about you on the internet. Don't give them any reason to reject you based on your online profile. If you get rejected based on basketball talent, fine. You obviously didn't work hard enough. But if you get rejected because of some silly, avoidable thing that you said on Twitter late one night, that's definitely not fine.

What Do Recruiters Look For?

The main thing that recruiters are looking at when examining your online profiles is your character.

Not just your character when it comes to basketball, but your character as a human.

Here are a few of the key things recruiters look at;

- How you interact with your peers.
- Things that you've said about your current team.
- If you've said anything about the coach.
- What kind of photo's you've uploaded.
- Whether you use inappropriate language.

You see, college basketball is a very public sport. It's all over the media. Interviews on TV, sporting scandals in the newspaper. Recruiters will happily cross off their list anyone that they think can potentially hurt the colleges public image.

Unfortunately, I see too many players going off about coaches all the time on Twitter. "My coach doesn't understand me. I never get on the floor", "If he tells me off one more time I'm gunna crack it". Do you think these people are going to get recruited heavily by the top schools? They might... but I doubt it. They'd have to be exceptionally good players.

It comes down to the risks versus the rewards. Are you a good enough player that the reward of having you on the team is far greater than the risk that you'll hurt the schools public image?



Prepare for Recruiters – Clean Up

So, let's get rid of all the junk.

This is for Facebook, Twitter, and any other online profiles you have.

1. First, start by going through all the photos that you've either uploaded or have been tagged in. Delete or untag any that recruiters might find inappropriate.
2. Now it's time for the hard work. You need to go back through all of your tweets on Twitter and posts on Facebook and delete any that might be found as inappropriate.
3. Check your biography on the different social media sites. Make sure it accurately

reflects you and your goals.

That's all you have to do. The process isn't hard, but it is time-consuming and probably not something you want to do. But trust me, it's worth it.

You don't want to take the risk and skip doing it only to find out at a later date that if you did clean up your profiles you might have got accepted. You'll never forgive yourself.

Keeping Recruiters Happy – Staying Clean

Now that your profiles are cleaned up and the recruiters will be happy, let's discuss how to keep it that way.

It's quite easy, really. Don't post or tweet anything that's similar to all the statuses and tweets you've just deleted. Simple.

But let me give you a few tips anyway...

1. Don't let your emotions get the better of you – Got into an argument with a coach? Nearly got into a fight at school? Had words with a team-mate? Keep it off the internet.
2. Don't post any inappropriate photos – I think you can work this one out on your own.
3. Don't use inappropriate language – If you're dropping curse words all over the internet coaches are going to assume you're a 'knucklehead' (taken from the first tweet). As said earlier, you're a reflection of the school.
4. Don't post anything negative about school – This should be obvious since the place you're trying to get into is a college.

Conclusion

If you want to go to college on a sports scholarship you don't have the luxury of being a regular student and doing anything you want. You're in the public eye. There are millions of people watching you.

When people think about a college, they don't think about the students studying physics. They think about the student-athletes that are on national TV for the whole world to see. You are representing the school.

Now I'm definitely not saying don't use social media. I use it myself — I'm on Twitter and I love it — but I am saying you need to think about how the content is going to reflect you each and every time you add a tweet or a post.

Becoming a collegiate athlete is the path you've chosen to pursue and you must live up to the responsibilities that come with the role.

What are your thoughts on players using social media?

– Coach Mac

Man-to-Man Defense *Complete Coaching Guide*



C O A C H M A C

basketballforcoaches.com

Man-to-Man Defense - Complete Coaching Guide



The traditional man-to-man defense is by far the most common defense in the game of basketball today.

This is especially true as players progress to a higher level of competition. In fact, due to the great outside shooting of professional players, every NBA team almost exclusively plays man-to-man defense.

The man-to-man defense involves all 5 defensive players on the court being allocated one opposition player who they're accountable for defending whenever they're on defense.

Of course, there will be times when players switch opponents or help each other on defense, but for the most part, each player is responsible for one player from the opposition.

Learning to be a great man-to-man defender is perhaps the most important skill for a player to learn during their years of youth basketball.

No matter what defense a player goes on to play at the next level or on another team, the skills they learn playing man-to-man defense will transfer. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for players that solely learn zone defense.

If you're coaching youth basketball, taking the time to teach your team man-to-man defense will go a long way to preparing them for the next level.

Strengths

- 1. Every player needs to learn man-to-man defensive principles** - It's crucial that all youth players develop good man-to-man habits and understand man-to-man defensive principles.
- 2. Many Variations** - There are many different ways to run your man-to-man defense depending on the team you're playing against and what the strengths and weaknesses of your team are.
- 3. Preparation for future basketball** - The better players get at man-to-man defense during their youth, the more opportunities they'll get as they advance to higher levels of play.

Weaknesses

- 1. There's a lot to teach** - Players will need to learn more defensive skills than if they were to play Pack Line defense or a zone defense. A lot of situations a player must know how to defend and where to position themselves.
- 2. It will take time for your players to successfully run** - One of the most common reasons for youth coaches running a zone is that they don't have enough time to teach a man-to-man defense. They're right. There's a lot to learn and it will take time. But it's definitely worth it.
- 3. Unable to hide weak players** - In the man-to-man defense, everyone is held accountable for their role defending the basketball and being able to help and rotate when needed.

Man-to-Man Defense Rules

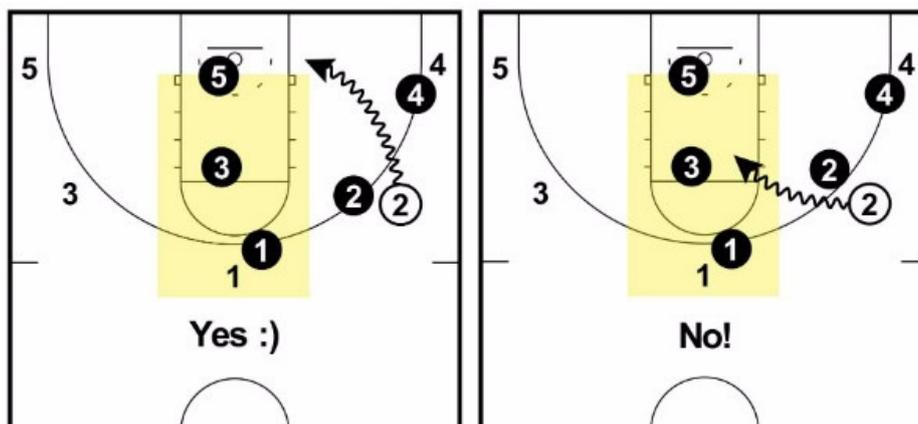
While I've listened to coaches name hundreds of rules associated with the man-to-man defense, there are only 5 key rules that you need to teach to your players.

1. No Middle Penetration

If you plan to run the man-to-man defense with your team, the next sentence is the most important thing you need to teach them...

Not allowing the opponent to into the middle of the lane from the top or the wings is the most important rule of man-to-man defense.

Instead, defensive players must use their stance and position themselves in such a way that the opposition can only dribble down the sideline and the baseline.



When an opposition player has the basketball at the top of the key, we direct them towards the sideline.

When an opposition player has the basketball on the wing, we direct them towards the baseline.

"Why the baseline instead of the middle?"

The reason we direct opponents towards the sideline and baseline is because it's much easier to defend and rotate on a baseline drive than it is when a player drives into the middle of the lane.

This is because the help defenders roles and responsibilities are clear in regards to who is meant to help and rotate when the basketball is on the wings or in the corners.

When the basketball is driven into the middle, however, who is meant to help and who is meant to stay on their player becomes difficult to define which often leads to open scoring opportunities for the opposition.

2. No Ball-Reversals

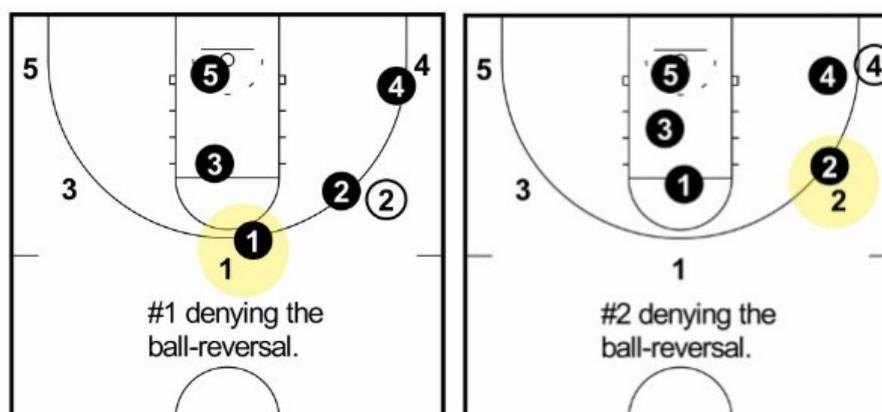
How many times have you heard a coach scream out "Reverse the basketball!" to their players?

A lot, I bet. Perhaps you've even done it yourself.

There's a good reason for it if you have... it works for the offensive team!

The more you can get the defensive team to move and rotate, the more gaps will open up in the defense and the number of open scoring opportunities will rise.

So when you're playing man-to-man defense, once the basketball has been passed to one side of the floor, we never want to allow it reverse back to the top or the opposite side.



The players defending the ball-reversal should be in 100% deny the entire time.

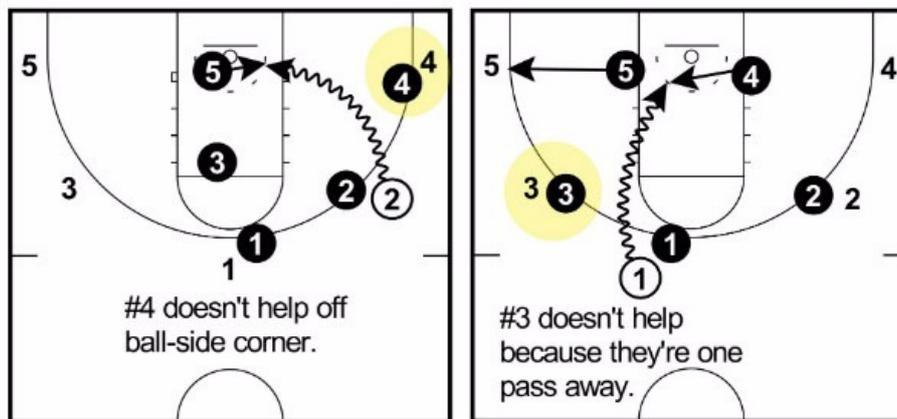
3. No Help from Defenders One-Pass Away

This is the biggest difference between the Pack Line defense and the man-to-man defense.

In the Pack Line defense (which I often recommend), the players one-pass away from the basketball are helping in the driving lanes by taking away dribble penetration. This allows the basketball to be passed around the perimeter.

In man-to-man defense, since the players one-pass away from the basketball are denying the pass to their player, this leaves driving lanes open and means the on-ball defender is more accountable for keeping the player with the basketball out of the lane.

If an opposition player does attempt to drive down the middle, the player one pass away can quickly 'stunt' in their direction to get the offensive player to pick up the dribble, but they can never fully help.



If they do, it will often lead to an in-rhythm jumper or an offensive drive after a difficult closeout.

4. No Face Cuts

A defensive player must never allow their opponent to cut across their face in-between them and the basketball.

The 'no face cuts' rule will most commonly occur when the offense performs a 'pass-and-cut'.

When an offensive player makes a pass to a teammate (they will still happen even if we're denying them), the player defending the passer must immediately 'jump to the basketball' to force their opponent to cut behind them instead of in front.

This rule is also important when playing defense off the ball to stop players from flashing to the ball to receive a pass.



To put it simply, a defender must always stay between their man and the basketball whenever they're playing off-ball defense.

5. Move When the Ball Moves

The final rule is to ensure that players are playing correct off-ball defense.

Whenever the basketball moves, every defensive player on the court should be adjusting their positioning on the court.

By keeping the importance of this in mind, players will learn that they must stay alert at all times and anticipate passes that they may be able to deflect.

As the great Don Meyer puts it...

"Positioning, anticipation, and technique create quickness. Therefore, you can always get quicker."
- Don Meyer

This is incredibly important because the difference between a steal and an open layup or a missed steal and a break down of the defense can be a fraction of a second.

Man-to-Man Defense Positioning Basics

There are 3 roles you can be in when you're on the court playing man-to-man defense...

1. On-ball defense
2. Deny defense
3. Help defense

In this section I'm going to talk about each of them in detail and what's required of a player when they're in each role.

Each player understanding all of these roles is crucial to good team defense. Being out of position by even a small amount can be the difference between blocking a shot or giving up an easy layup.

Positioning is everything.

On-Ball Defense

The role of the on-ball defender in a man-to-man defense is to contain the offensive player while influencing them towards the sideline and baseline.

While containment is the ultimate goal regardless of where the ball is on the floor, if the defensive player is going to get beat, we want it to be towards the baseline instead of the middle. This is why the on-ball defender slightly overplays the middle.

It's imperative that all defenders on the court have the ability to contain their man consistently. If not, dribble penetration will break down your defense very quickly.

In fact, I never encourage on-ball defenders to reach in for steals unless the offensive player mishandles the basketball. There's a far higher chance of them getting called for a foul than getting a steal.



Here are the 5 keys to playing great on-ball defense:

1. Desire to be a great defender.

The biggest differentiator between a great defender and an average defender is that a great defender wants to be a great defender.

All coaches must emphasize the importance of learning how to be a great defender and the benefits your players will get from the skill as they progress to a higher level of competition.

A player who desires to be a great defender is willing to stay down in a stance the entire possession, chase their opponent around the court, dive on any loose basketball to gain possession, take a charge if they're in the proper position, etc.

2. Stay in a balanced stance.

An on-ball defender must stay in a balanced stance at all times so that they're ready to react to the offensive player as quickly as possible.

This means they should stay low, keep their chest up, and place an even amount of weight on each leg.

3. Slightly overplay the middle to force the offensive player sideline or baseline.

The player defending on the basketball should have their head in line with the opponent's shoulder on the side you don't want them to drive.

4. Keep an arm's length distance at all times.

The defender should be able to stick out their arm full length in front of them and just be able to touch the player they're defending.

5. Keep your eyes on the opponent's chest.

It's very easy for an offensive player to fake with their head, eyes, or body. The spot on a player that is most difficult to fake with is their chest.

One Pass Away - Denial Defense

As per rule #3, any player one-pass away from the basketball should be in a denial stance to deter any pass to their player.

A denying defender should have one hand and one foot in the passing lane at all times, their chest should be facing their direct opponent, and they should be looking over their lead shoulder to see both the basketball and their man.

This is important to note because I see far too many coaches teaching their players 'ball-you-man' stance when one-pass away.

The reason this is the wrong stance is because if your opponent was to suddenly backdoor cut, the denial defender would need to do a full 180-degree turn to defend it.

However, if your defender backdoor cuts when your chest is towards the player and you have a hand and leg in the passing lane, all it requires is the defender flicking their head around and the sliding in the deny position towards the rim.

The purpose of this is that we want to remove all easy passing options from the player with the basketball. This is why the man-to-man defense is an aggressive defense.

The distance a denial player should be from their man will depend on the distance the offensive player is away from the basketball. A good rule of thumb would be close enough to ensure you can close the distance and pick off the pass if a lob is thrown over the top.

Once again, the 4 keys to great denial defense are:

- 1. One hand and foot in the passing lane.**
- 2. Chest towards your direct opponent.**
- 3. Eyes over lead shoulder to see both.**

Two Passes Away - Help Defense

Any defender two or more passes away from the basketball is playing help defense.

This requires the defender to be in 'ball-you-man' stance.

The 'ball-you-man' stance means that the defender is pointing one hand at their opponent and one hand at the basketball. They must be able to see both with their peripheral vision at all times.

The position of a help defender will vary depending on where the basketball is on the court and where their direct opponent is on the court at that time.

When the basketball is on the weak-side and below the free-throw line, the players two passes away will often be in either 'High-I' or 'Low-I'.

This is an important concept to understand for the article so I'll give you a brief introduction here...

When the basketball is on either of the wings or in one of the corners, there should always be 2 help defenders with at least one foot on the split-line (the line down the middle of the court).

1. A help defender close to the rim in the paint (low-I)

2. A help defender near the free-throw line (high-I).

By establishing these two help defenders, it makes it much easier for the defensive players to know their understand their roles and rotations on drives to the rim by opposition players.

Here are a couple of diagrams to give you an example...



How to Run the Man-to-Man Defense

Now, let's get into how your team will actually run the man-to-man defense during a game!

First, I'll talk about the positions the players should be in when the basketball is in different areas of the court.

After that, I'll break down what rotations must occur on the floor when there is dribble penetration from the offensive team.

Basketball Top of the Key

Whenever the basketball is within the lane lines at the top of the key, the team has one goal: **Get it out of there!**

As soon as the basketball is dribbled over the half-court line, the point guard defender (x1) immediately starts forcing the dribbler to the sideline by angling their defensive stance.

At the same time, the wing defenders (x2 and x3) pinch in and **allow the pass to be made to a player on the wing.**

(Note: When the basketball is at the top of the key is the only time that players one pass away don't deny the pass.)



As for the help defenders (x4 and x5), both of them have a foot on their respective lane line.

The goal when the ball is at the top is to get the basketball committed to one side of the court.

This can happen either with the point guard dribbling to one side or passing to a player on the wing.

Let me take a minute to explain why we allow the basketball to get from the top to the wing...

When the basketball is at the top of the key, the man-to-man defense is at its most vulnerable.

The reason for this is because on a drive through the middle of the lane, the defenders can be confused on who should help and who should stay attached to their player.

The confusion will often lead to easy layups and open shots.

This is because ball-side and weak-side has not been established.

However, when the basketball is established on one side of the floor, players on the floor know whether they're in help or deny and what their responsibilities are making help and rotations much quicker and easier.

Basketball on the Wing

When the basketball gets to the wing, the most important thing is that you don't allow the basketball to be reversed back to the top of the key.

The player defending one pass away towards the top (x1) must be in complete denial position.

The on-ball defender (x2) should be playing on the high foot of the player with the basketball to take away the middle drive and force them to drive towards the baseline if they choose to dribble.

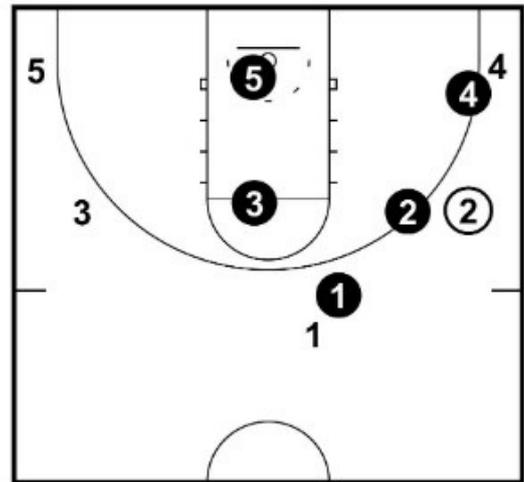
If the offensive player does attempt to dribble middle, the on-ball defender should only slide vertically to force them to the top of the key.

As for the corner defender (x4), they should be in full denial as they're one pass away from the basketball.

(Side note: Although I don't recommend it for youth teams, there can be a benefit to allowing the pass to the corner to occur since it removes even more offensive options. I'll talk about that more in the 'Advanced' section below.)

Looking at the help defenders, x3 and x5 should have a foot on the split line as the basketball is at the free throw line extended or lower.

This puts them in the best position to help, but still gives them time to recover and perhaps get a deflection if the players with the basketball decides to throw a skip pass.



Basketball in the Corner

Once again, when the basketball is passed to the corner, the most important thing is that we don't allow the basketball to be reversed to the wing.

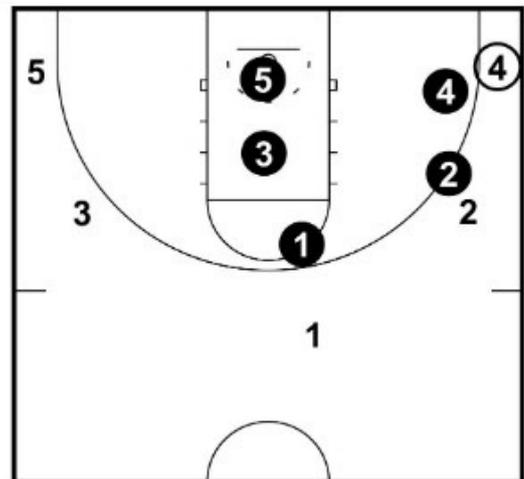
The player one pass away to the wing (x2) must be in complete denial and not allow the pass to be made to the wing.

The on-ball defender (x4) must aim to contain the player in the corner. But by overplaying the high side, if x4 is beaten off the dribble, it must be towards the baseline because there is help waiting.

The player in low-I (x5) is in help position anticipating the drive from the player with the basketball.

The player in high-I (x3) is in help position and is preparing to drop down and rotate if 4 drives the basketball and x5 needs to help.

The final player (x1) is in ball-you-man position and are as low as possible while still being able to intercept a pass to 1.



Dribble Penetration and Rotations

If your players aren't able to make the correct rotations when an offensive player drives the basketball, you will have a very ineffective man-to-man defense.

Make sure you constantly drill the following rotations each and every practice.

Top of the Key Drive:

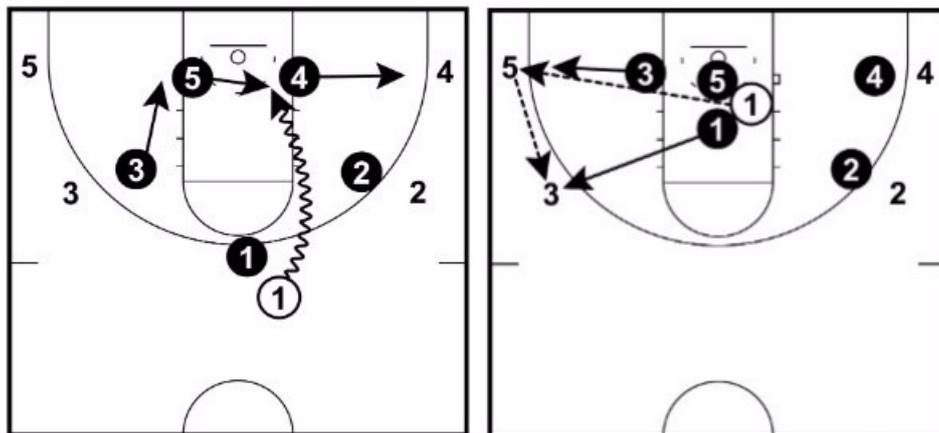
As explained in the previous section, dribble penetration from the top of the key through the foul line is the hardest penetration to defend when playing man-to-man defense.

We never want to let it happen.

This can often occur against a great point guard, if the player defending the dribbler is playing too close to their man, or if we allow ball reversals and rotations and closeouts are poor.

But knowing this will occasionally happen, your players must know how to best defend it.

Here's how to do it:



When the defender at the top of the key is beat and the dribbler gets into the lane, whichever defender is the lowest on the weak-side must step across to defend the basketball.

X3 doesn't help on the drive since they're one pass away. They can quickly stunt to try to make the driver hesitate or pick up the basketball, but they must not leave their direct opponent.

Since help always comes from the weak-side, x4 must step out and take away the corner three-point attempt.

The player that must help is x5 since they're the lowest on the weak-side.

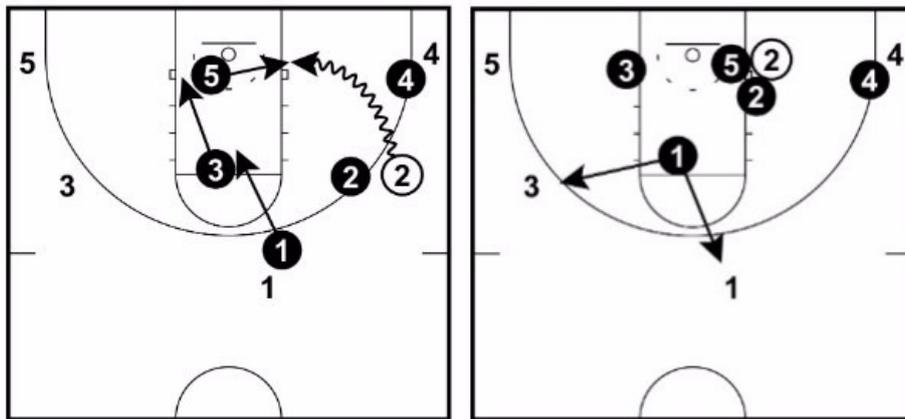
When x5 steps up to help, x1 must immediately rotate down and will now be the player that closes out on the basketball if the pass is made across court to 3 or 5.

Wing Baseline Drive:

When the basketball is on the wing our ball-side and weak-side are clearly established which is great for the defense.

On the baseline drive from the wing, if there's an offensive and defensive player in the corner (x4), they do not help off a ball-side corner player.

*Remember: Help **always** comes from the weak side.*



The player at the top of the key (x1) is denying the ball reversal.

Then since the basketball is on the free-throw line or lower, we have high-I and low-I established in the key.

Low-I (x5) helps on the drive and meets to trap the dribbler just outside the paint. X5 and x2 trap the offensive player if they pick up the dribble.

High-I (x3) must rotate down and prevent the pass to 5 in the corner.

The final defender (x1) drops down and positions themselves so that they can intercept a lob pass made to either 3 or 1 or defend either of them if the skip pass is made over the top.

Wing Middle Drive:

The middle drive from the wing is a bit more difficult and not a drive the defense ever wants to give up.

If the on-ball defender is correctly playing on the high side of the player with the basketball, they should be able to take a large slide or two vertically and cut off the drive or draw a charge.

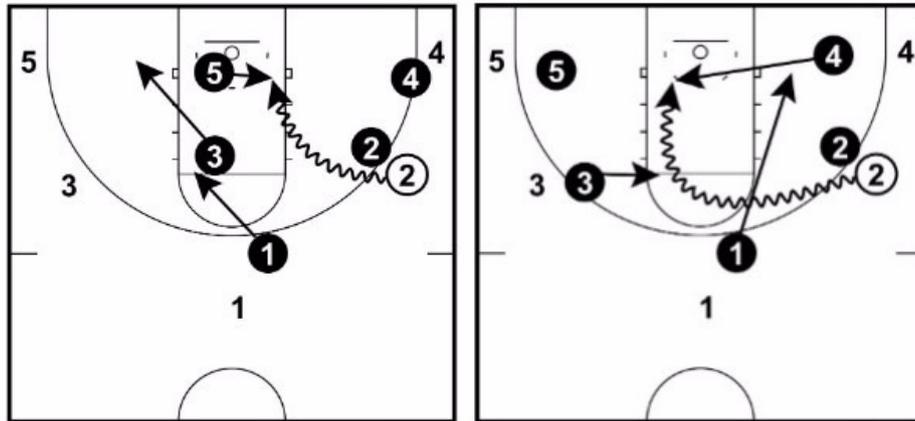
If the on-ball defender has been caught out of position, the next goal is to force the offensive player to dribble to the top of the key.

If the on-ball defender has really been caught out of position and the drive is inevitable, the lowest weak side player must step across and challenge the shot and the correct rotations must take place.

X3 can quickly stunt on this drive with their back to the basketball in an attempt to make the offensive pick up the ball as long as they can quickly close out on their player without giving up the shot. They should never fully commit to a trap as it will leave the wing shooter open.

This can be a difficult rotation as if the dribbler crosses over the split line with their dribble, the help defender (ball-side and weak-side) changes.

Take a look at the following diagrams to see the differences and the rotations...

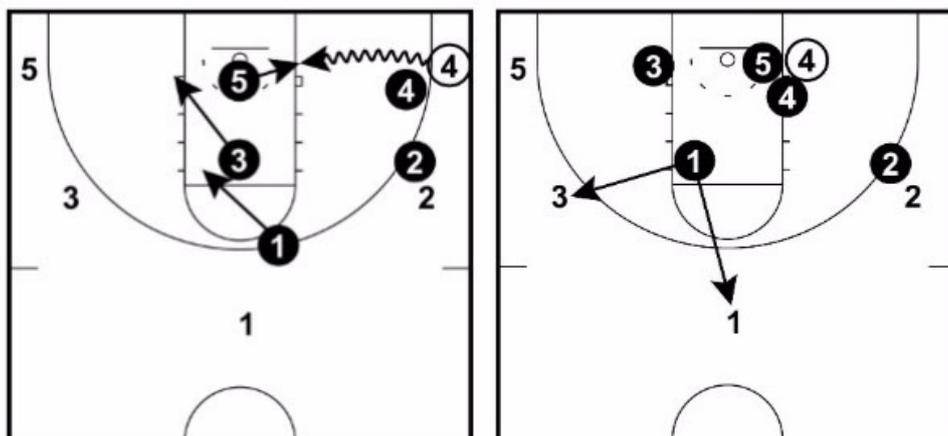


As you can see, allowing the middle drive ends up very problematic and confusing for the defense.

So make sure it never happens!

Corner Baseline Drive:

The rotations on baseline penetration from the corner are very similar to wing penetration



The defender playing on the wing player (x2) makes sure to deny the easy reverse pass back outside.

The player in low-I (x5) is responsible for stepping across to set a trap with x4 if the player with the basketball decides to drive baseline to the basket.

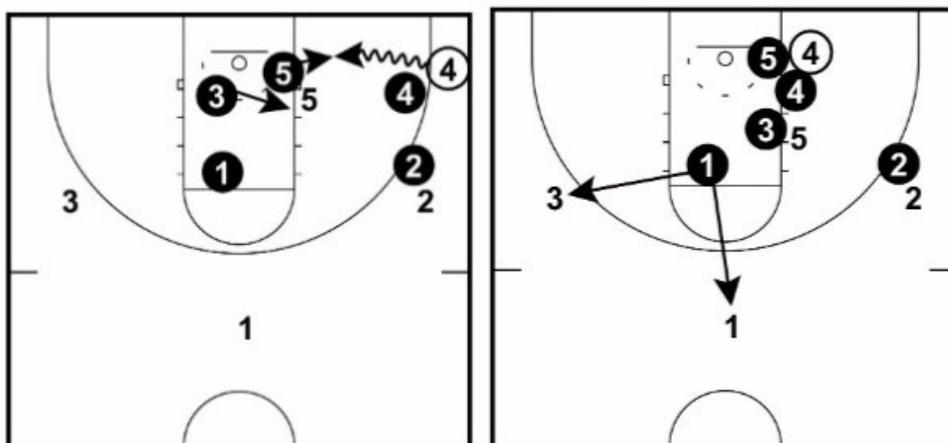
If this occurs, x3 drops down and cuts off the passing lane to the player x5 was defending.

Finally, x1 drops and now has two offensive players they must position themselves in-between. If the interception pass is there, go for it. If not and the skip pass is made, x1 is responsible for closing out on either 1 or 3.

Drive with Low Post Defender

Dribble penetration from the corner or wing, while there's an offensive player in the low post, isn't common but can happen.

Here are the rotations when it does occur:



Since we 1/2 front on the low side when there's a player in the low post, it's easier for the low post defender (x5) to take one step across and trap the dribbler on the baseline with the on-ball defender (x4).

To take away the pocket pass to the low post player, the defender in low-I (x3) must step across and guard the pass to the low post player.

The defender in high-I (x1) must then drop and they're responsible being in position to either intercept a lob pass or closeout on either 1 or 3.

To not give 4 an easy pass out of the trap, x2 must continue complete denial of the outlet pass to 2.

Drive with High Post Defender

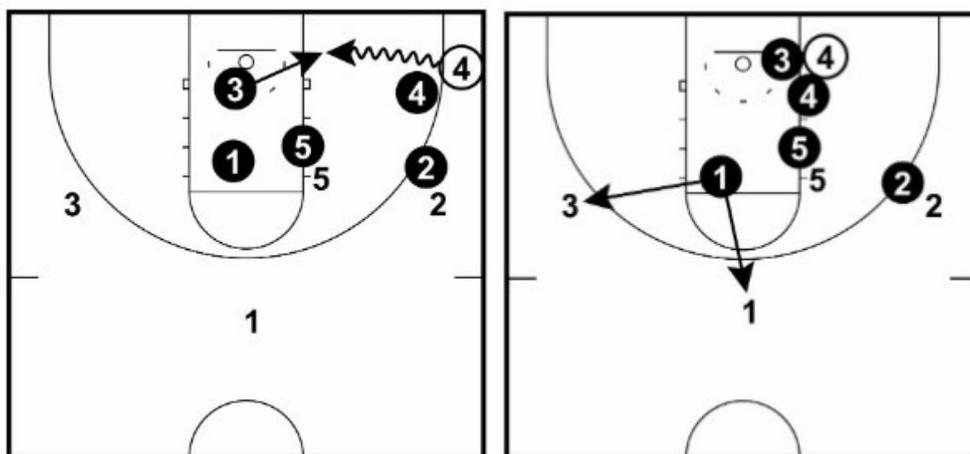
When there are offensive and defensive players in the high post, the defender does not help out on the drive as they're too far away and all it takes is a pocket pass for an open jumper.

Instead, low-I (x3) steps across as traps the dribbler with the on-ball defender (x4) just below the low block.

The defender in the high post (x5), denies the pass to the high post player and doesn't help.

The player denying the retreat pass (x2) continues to deny the pass outside.

This leaves high-I (x1) to drop in and is now responsible for intercepting the pass or closing out on 3 or 1.



Skip Pass Rotations

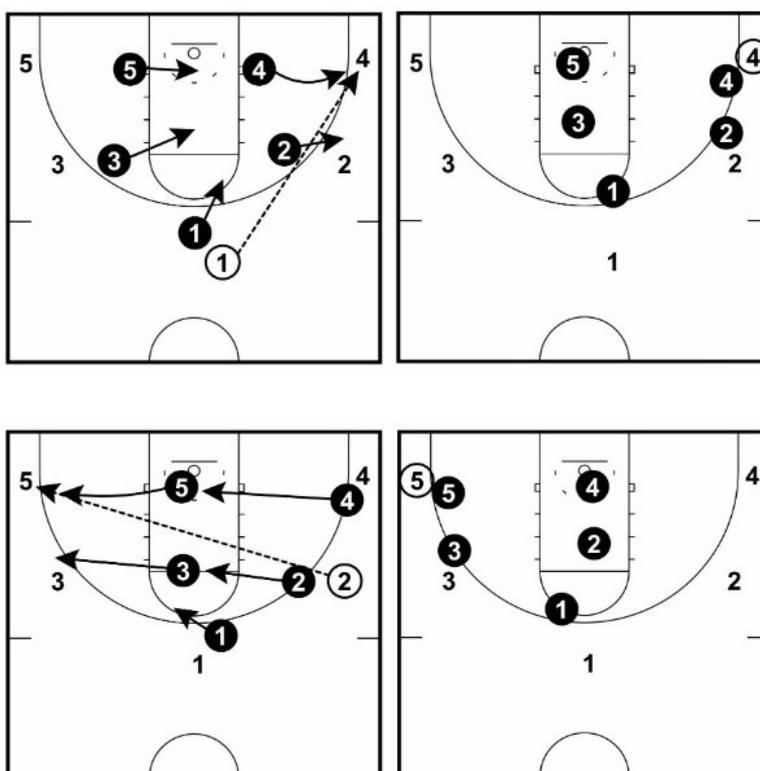
On any skip pass, the most important thing is that the player closing out on the player who receives the basketball closes out in a banana cut so that there's no middle penetration.

Every player on the team must be committed to sprinting to their next position on the flight of the basketball.

Often it's not the closeout player who's too slow, it's the players who were previously on the ball-side not sprinting into help positions quick enough.

Also, depending on what level you're playing, you might want to run the shooter off the three-point line if they're a good shooter.

Here are a few diagrams to show you close out rotations:



Advanced

Top to Wing Pass - Should you allow it?

In the guide above, I break down the variation allowing the pass from the top of the key to the wing because I believe it to be the most effective way to play man-to-man defense.

Since the man-to-man defense is most vulnerable from the top, why would we want to keep the ball there by denying the pass to the wing?

But there are other ways to do it...

Is it easier to simply make a denying one pass away a universal rule including from the top?

Here are a few ways why you might consider denying this pass to the wing:

- 1. Players can sometimes get confused when exactly they should allow the pass and when they should deny.*
- 2. It's another rule for players to remember.*
- 3. Sometimes putting more pressure on the point guard is a good thing!*
- 4. Most teams begin their offense with a top to wing pass. By denying it, you will often disrupt the opponents offense.*



Since there is no right or wrong answer to choosing to deny or allow the pass, each coach must decide individually after looking at the pros and cons.

It's up to you!

Defending the Post

Knowing how your team is going to defend the post is crucial to a great man-to-man defense.

You must have a consistent system that's based on the strengths and weaknesses of the post players on your team.

But before we get into any of that, here's the main rule for defending the post...

Don't let it get there!

Allowing the basketball to get into the post is bad news for any defense. It will often lead to part of the defense collapsing or a silly foul by a post defender.

Before we discuss the ways to defend the post, here are 3 tips to keeping the basketball out of there in the first place...

1. Beat them down the floor

By beating the opposition post player down the floor, it takes away their ability to establish strong early position that can result in a quick pass inside and an easy score.

2. Great on-ball defense

Guards pressuring the player with the basketball can go a long way to discouraging the pass inside to the post player. Every on-ball defender should be active with their hands in the passing lane and tracing the ball.

3. Push them off the block

If a post player does establish position on the block, a post defender can move them further out by keeping their arm bar locked still while pushing the offensive player out with the strength of their lower body.

Positioning to Deny the Post Player

There are many different ways to deny the pass into the post, but here are my preferences:

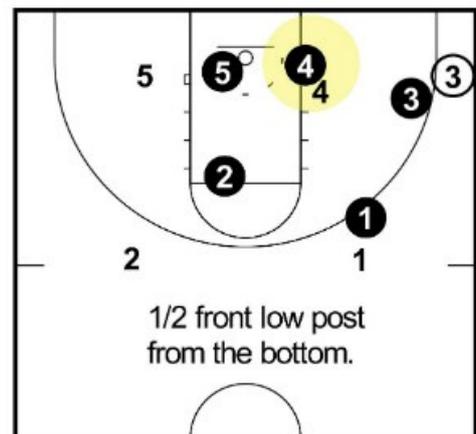
(I'm not a fan of fronting the low post)

1. Basketball above the free-throw line.

When the basketball is above the free-throw line, the post defender should 3/4 front keeping themselves on the line between the basketball and their opponent.

For the offensive team to make this entry pass, it would have to be very accurate and the post defender will still have time to establish position between them and the basket.

Also, keep in mind that there is a player in low-I who can pick off any passes made over the top.

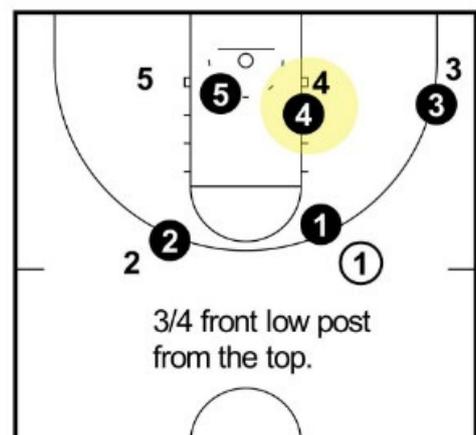


2. Basketball below the free-throw line.

When the basketball is below the free-throw line, the post defender should 1/2 front from the baseline side.

By doing so, they're in perfect position to help on any baseline drives.

Also, since the pass is now shorter, only half fronting the offensive player will allow the defender to still be able to establish position behind if they're unable to get a deflection on the pass inside.

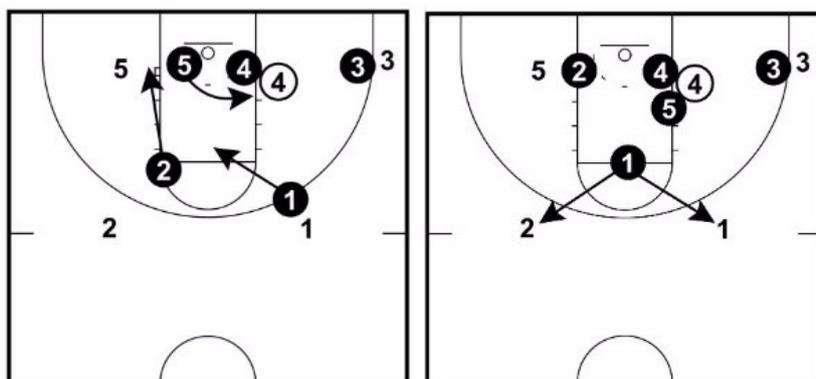


Trapping a Dominant Low Post Player

There will be times when you come up against such a dominant low post player that you have no choice but to send help and trap them in the post.

When this happens, I recommend sending trapping with the player in the low-I help position.

Here's how it works:



When 4 receives the pass in the post, x4 must immediately establish position behind.

Immediately, x5 will sprint across and set a trap on the high side with x4.

X2 drops to defend 5 and then x1 drops and becomes the interceptor.

Their role is to pick off any passes made to 1 or 2. If none are available for steal or deflection, they're the first to close out to whoever receives the outlet pass.

On the ball-side, x3 never allows the simple pass out and is in complete denial while the basketball is in the post.

Transition Defense

You can never have a great man-to-man defensive team if you're not a great transition defense team.

Educate your players on the importance of this and then get them to buy-in and commit to transitioning back quickly after each offensive possession.

The secret to being a great transition defense team is that your players must know how many people are going to the offensive boards and how many people are to immediately retreat on any shot attempt.

The worst possible thing a player can do after an offensive shot is to stand and watch. Neither transitioning back on defense or attacking the offensive glass.

Most coaches refer to this as being in 'no man's land'. A place a player never wants to be!

Here's what I recommend when running the man-to-man defense:

Send three players to the offensive glass and send two players back on transition defense immediately after the shot.

As the two players transition back, the goal is to establish a top defender and a bottom defender.

The bottom defender protects the rim while the goal of the top defender is to slow down the basketball and give the players that were competing for offensive rebounds time to recover on defense.

This is the method I've found the most success with, but it might not necessarily be the best option for your team.



For instance, if you have a very small team that never gets offensive rebounds, you could send all 5 players back immediately after each shot in an effort to never give up any transition baskets. There are numerous NCAA teams that currently do this.

Defending BLOB's

Inbounds plays often provide great scoring opportunities for the offensive team.

They have well-thought-out plays and are in the perfect position to run them.

The main goal when defending a baseline in-bounds plays is to get the opponent to throw the ball to the top and set up their main offense.

If you can do that, you've successfully defended the BLOB.

Defending a baseline in-bounds while playing man-to-man defense can be done in two ways:

1. Stick to man-to-man defense

If you're going to stick to the man-to-man defense on baseline inbounds, there are a few things you must be prepared to do to stop the opponent from getting an easy score.

a. Position the in-bounds defender near the rim

inbounds-defenderThe main goal here is to take away the easy pass and score under the rim and force the opponent to pass out to the wing.

Depending on where the in-bounds pass takes place, the in-bounds passer's defender should position themselves along the lane line connecting to the baseline to take away the under the rim pass.

b. Switch Everything

Since the up-screens and cross-screens can be difficult to defend on BLOB plays, I often recommend that teams switch everything.



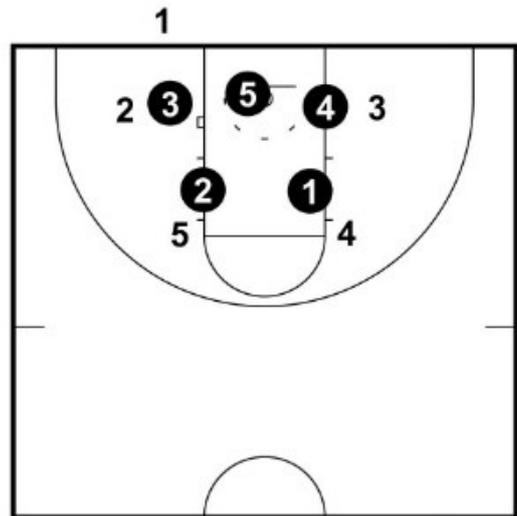
The key is for defenders to stay below the offensive players and keep themselves on the basket side of their opponents.

2. Run a 2-3 zone

Depending on the level of basketball you're coaching and the rules of your league, you might consider running a 2-3 zone on inbounds plays.

Once the play has been in-bounded to either the wing or the top, players switch straight back into their man-to-man defense.

The reasons the 2-3 zone works so well on BLOB's is because it floods the key with defenders and doesn't allow the easy baskets under the rim that can often occur when playing man-to-man defense.



Defending the Pick and Roll

The pick-and-roll is arguably the toughest action in basketball to defend against.

When playing man-to-man defense, there are a few ways you can choose to defend this action...

1. Fight Over the Screen

This is my recommended method of defending against the pick-and-roll.

This requires the screener's defender 'hedging' out high and forcing the dribbler to take a few extra vertical steps which allows the on-ball defender to fight over the screen and recover back in front.

This can be difficult for youth players, but hedging and fighting over screens are great habits for players to get into at a young age as it will be a very important skill when they're older.

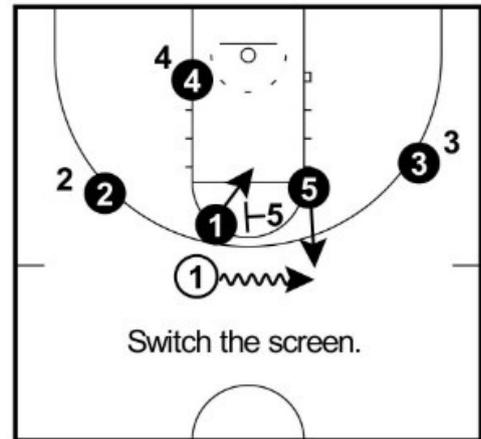


2. Switch the Screen

Another option a coach has at their disposal is to switch on any pick-and-roll.

As the name implies, this simply means that the defenders hold their positions and swap the offensive player they're guarding.

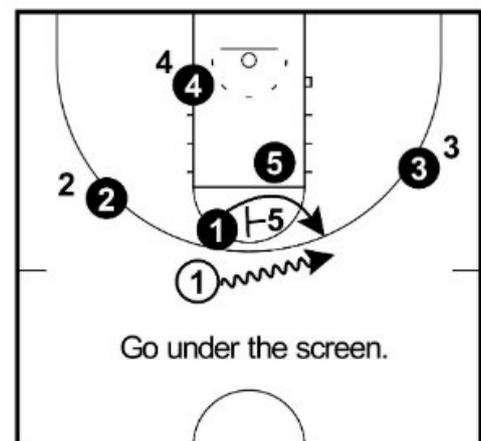
This can be problematic if you end up with small player defending a big player or vice versa, but at the youth level players aren't often smart enough to take advantage of it.



3. Go Under the Screen

To go under the screen, the screener's defender can take a quick step back to give the on-ball defender room to squeeze past the screen and immediately establish position in front of the dribbler.

While this is probably the easiest way to do it, I do believe players are missing out on the important skill of learning to fight over screens and how to hedge.



Conclusion

The 5 main man-to-man defense rules:

1. No middle penetration.
2. No ball reversals.
3. No help one pass away.
4. No face cuts.
5. Move when the ball moves.

The man-to-man defense is one of the best defenses you can run with your team no matter what level you're coaching.

With nearly all high-level basketball teams using this defense, the skills that are learned in man-to-man defense are crucial for all players to develop from the earliest age possible.

Sure, it can be difficult to teach. But they payoff for your players will definitely be worth it in the long run.

If you're a coach that puts developing players over winning youth basketball games, then this defense is for you!

Pack Line Defense *Complete Coaching Guide*



C O A C H M A C

basketballforcoaches.com

Pack Line Defense - Coaching Guide



The 'Pack Line' was created by Dick Bennett of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Wisconsin-Green Bay, University of Wisconsin, and Washington State. It is now commonly used in some form by many coaches including Tom Izzo at Michigan State, Sean Miller and Chris Mack at Xavier, Tony Bennett at Virginia, and Steve Alford at UCLA.

For a bit of history, the term 'Pack Line' wasn't coined or even thought of by Bennett. The word was brought to the attention of Bennett by a person at a marketing company after convincing Bennett to create a DVD on his new defensive system.

Overview of Pack Line Defense

The 'Pack Line' defense is a variation of man-to-man defense. The biggest difference between the two is that instead of the off-ball defenders being out pressing their player and denying the pass, everyone except the player guarding the ball must be inside an imaginary line 16 feet from the rim.

This 16ft line is known as the pack line. You can see the differences in positioning in the diagrams below...



At all times there must be one defender pressuring the player with the basketball, and four defenders in gap/help positions. The only exception is if the offensive player picks up the dribble and it becomes a 'dead ball', then all players can go out and deny looking for the steal.

The premise behind this defense is that by having four players within the pack line, it discourages the opposition from penetrating and getting inside the paint and forces them to beat you with well executed offense and great outside shooting.

When the ball is passed around the perimeter, the next defender closes out with high hands to prevent the rhythm shot and then provides on-ball pressure while the defender who was playing on-ball defense falls back within the pack line.

Again just to emphasize the most important point... At all time there must be one defender pressuring the player with the basketball and four defenders in gap/help positions.

What teams give up in exchange for always being in help position is that players don't have the benefit of denying the pass on the perimeter. This is why the pack line defense is also referred to as 'sagging man-to-man'.

For this reason, the pack line defense requires the players to be patient and play smart defense until the offensive team takes a contested jump shot, or makes a mistake.

As you can probably tell, all five players must work together as a defensive unit for this defense to be successful. If any of the five players aren't performing their job properly, there will be open gaps that can lead to easy scores.

Advantages of Pack Line Defense

1. Prevents Dribble Penetration

Due to four defenders always being inside the pack line, the offensive players will be find it hard to find gaps through the wall of defenders.

2. Prevents Back-Door Cuts

This is a great defense if you're playing against an offense like the Princeton offense that likes to utilize the back-door cut. Since your players are sagging off their man, the offensive team will find it hard to get easy layups off back-door cuts.

3. Lower Opponent Field Goal Percentage

If your team can be patient on defense and not gamble, it will lead to the opponent taking tough contested jump shots.

4. Increased Rebounding

Sagging off their players will put your players in better rebounding positions... as long as they box out.

5. No Easy Scores

This advantage ties in with dribble penetration. If the opponent can't get to the ring and your defense is packing the paint, there will be no easy opportunities to score.

6. Always in Help Position

Unlike traditional man-to-man defense, your players don't need to move to be in help position... they're already there!

Weaknesses of Pack Line Defense

1. Three Pointers Can Beat You

As your players are playing off their player and are in help position, it can lead to open three-pointers if your players don't react quick enough and close out on the ball. If a team gets hot from three

2. If There's No Shot Clock

If you coach in a league that doesn't use a shot clock then the opposition can use as much time as they like passing the ball around the perimeter until they find an open shot. It will come down to who is more patient, the offense or defense.

3. Must Be Patient

One problem that arises when using this defense at a youth level is the players sometimes aren't patient enough. They want to gamble and get a steal so they can stop playing defense and start playing offense.

The 7 Areas of Pack Line Defense

1. Transition/Conversion Defense

Transition defense is the start of every defensive possession and could be the most important of all. There are two main things you need to remember...

1. Never allow easy buckets in transition.

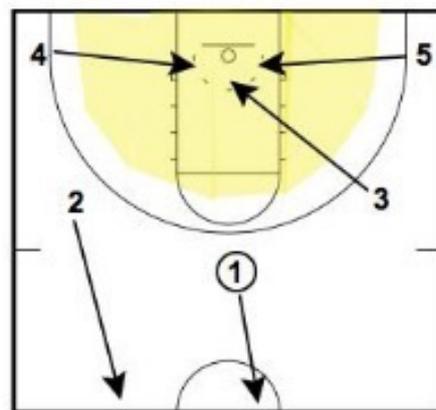
2. "Always take a guy out if he loafs back during a game" – Dick Bennett

The first thing coaches must do is decide how many players they want to send to glass for offensive rebounds and how many they want to immediately send back.

We recommend to always send two guards back on defense and the other three to the glass. That means the guards must get back as soon as the shot is put up... not after the rebound is secured by the other team.

When the ball is rebounded by the other team or a shot is made, the three players that went to the glass must turn and SPRINT back to half-way without regard for their player. Sprinting to half-way is non-negotiable and players should immediately be subbed out if they don't do it. When they get to half court, then they can find their player and establish proper defensive position.

No easy transition scores!



2. On Ball Defense

Contrary to what some coaches think about the pack line defense, there should be A LOT of pressure placed on the ball-handler.

Whoever is on the player with the basketball should be right up on them and harassing them without fouling. We want to make it difficult for them to see the floor and it will make it difficult for the other team to pick as apart with their passing.

The reason we can allow the on-ball defender to apply so much pressure to their player is because, as long as everyone's in the right position and are playing as a unit, they have the confidence that if they get beat off the dribble then there will be immediate help.

Even if they offensive player thinks they can beat their defender one-on-one, they're going to look up and see a wall of defenders and pass the ball off to the next guy.

To teach our players to apply constant pressure we run a lot of one-on-one drills with lots of pressure and recommend you do too. You need to get your players comfortable with being so close to the offensive player.



3. Off Ball Defense

While the on-ball defender is applying constant pressure to the ball, the other four players should be within the pack line in their correct gap/help position.

At all times players should be in a ball-you-man position and down in a low stance ready to react if a pass is made.

If your players are ever out of stance you should immediately sub them out of the game. If they're not in the correct position that's not always bad depending on how new the defense is to them. They might just need more practice at learning where they're meant to be. But being in stance is an attitude towards defense and should be non-negotiable.

Players must constantly be readjusting their position to the correct gap as the ball is passed around on offense. Remember: All five players **MUST** be working together as a unit for this defense to be successful.

The only exception to the rule of being within the pack line is if the ball is picked up by the offensive player and become a 'dead ball'. In that case, everyone hustles out to their player and denies the pass looking for the steal. If a pass is made by the offensive team everyone hustles back to their correct gap position.



4. Close Outs

Since all off ball defenders are always in help positions, they must recover to their player every time they catch the ball. This means they'll be closing out very, very regularly and must to learn how to do it properly.

There are a few important things for players to remember and coaches to teach when closing out...

1. High Hands

We need to keep our hands up on the close out to discourage the rhythm shot.

2. Short Choppy Steps

The last couple of steps should be short and choppy. This allows you to keep your weight back and absorb the dribble.

3. No Baseline

Don't allow your player to get an easy baseline drive on the close out. Close out so that if they do happen to get by you, they're running into the help defence in the middle of the floor.

5. Don't Give Up Baseline

This is more a 'rule' of the defense than it is an area... but because of how important it is to the success of the defense, I thought I'd include it anyway.

Under no circumstances do we let the opposition drive the ball baseline. If they drive baseline we get beat.

We need to force the dribbler towards the middle of the floor where our help defenders are located.

You'll understand the importance of not giving up baseline in the next section when we discuss post-play.



6. Guarding the Post

How you defend the post is one of the few aspects of the pack line defense that the coach will control and that will change on a game-to-game basis.

Guarding the post can be broken down into two areas...

1. Before the post gets the ball

When we're in pack line defense we never want the ball to get into the post. That's the danger zone. How we prevent the ball from entering the post changes with different coaches.

Coach Bennett teaches to 3/4 front the post from the high side and discourage the pass. The reason he never fronts the post is because he doesn't want to allow offensive rebounds and easy baskets.

Coach Boone allows his team to front when the ball is below the free-throw line to completely discourage the ball entering the post at all.



2. When the ball is in the post

It's crucial that on the flight time of the ball entering the post, your players slip behind their player and establish good defensive position on the post player.

One of the main early rules of the pack line defense was "if the ball gets into the post area, get it out of there as soon as possible". I believe this isn't as important as it used to be since we've entered the era of perimeter bigs and post-play skill has gone down. Also, if you're running this defense with a youth team, doubling the post isn't usually necessary.

So the first thing you need to do is decide whether you're going to double the post or not. Traditional pack line defense doubles anyone in the post. The great thing about this strategy is that the players don't have to decide whether to quickly go and double or not. They KNOW they have to straight away. So there is no confusion.

If you choose to double only the one or two best post players on the other team, it will slow down the double because it forces the players to think.

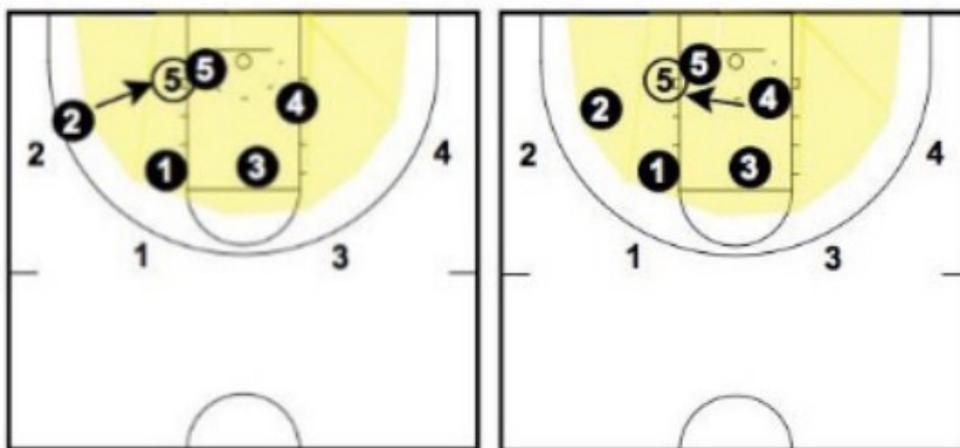
Dick Bennett recommended two methods:

1. Choke the Post

This involves bringing the closest perimeter player down looking for a deflection if the post puts the ball on the ground and to force the big to pass the ball back out.

2. Big to Big

Bennett like doubling big-to-big because they're close and usually are the taller and longer defenders on the court. The guards are also quicker to rotate.



One last very important note: Never allow the basketball to be fed to the post player from the top of the key.

7. Defending Screens

Coach Bennett believes in fighting through all screens and not cheating. He doesn't like switching because he feels it will hurt the team come the end of the season.

Players should be within touching distance of their player at all times when they're being screened. He believes that if you're that close and have are determined to get through the screen, then the screen won't be very effective.

One important thing to note is that while being screened the only responsibility the player has is to chase down the player running off the screen. They shouldn't worry about helping at all. Just chasing down their player.

The only exception to the 'fight through all screens' rule is when the screen is set on the weak side of the floor and the obvious option is to cheat over or under the screen and still be in position.

8. Rebounding

Everyone knows the saying... “A defensive possession doesn’t end until we’ve secured the defensive rebound”. That means we can’t slack off after forcing them into a contested shot... we have to go and get the ball!

On the shot everyone needs to find their player and box out. If they’re in the right help position we will usually have a good advantage to establish early positioning first.

The key is for players to be aggressive and really want to rebound the basketball.



Conclusion

The Pack Line defense really is a ‘team’ defense. Everyone must to be on the same page defensively for it to be effective. If there’s anyone on the team not in position it can lead to easy defensive breakdowns.

It’s a great defense to implement for teams on any level. It’s can be used in youth basketball teams all the way up to variations of the pack line defense in the NBA. It cuts down penetration, forces the other team to beat you from outside, emphasizes the importance of playing as a unit, and teaches them how to play in help position.

Parents: Please Stop Ruining Youth Sports

 basketballforcoaches.com/youth-sports-parents/



A couple of weeks ago I attended one of the most horrifying youth basketball games I've ever watched since the time I began coaching.

I won't specify where it was or which teams participated, but I will give you the details so that hopefully others can learn from them.

I entered the gym as a U12 girls game was about to commence. I'm assuming it was a grand final since the stands were near completely filled.

There were numerous banners being held up and many of the spectators were dressed up in the colors of the teams warming up on the court.

A little over the top for a U12 basketball game, but at the time I didn't give it too much thought.

It wasn't until the game had started that the true horrors of what youth sports can turn into became clear.

Every time a team would score (or do anything positive), the parents and fans would go crazy. Cheering. Stomping their feet. You name it, they did it.

At the same time, the opposing team would be just as quick (and loud) to boo the success of the U12 female athletes on the opposition team.

The parents and spectators of both teams were constantly shouting out to the players on the court...

“Shoot the basketball!”

“Get the rebound!”

“Stop the basketball!”

“Get up and play defense!”

This continued for nearly the entire first half.

With approximately a minute left, the referee made an obvious bad call that resulted in one team being rewarded with two free-throws.

As many in the stands loudly voiced their opinion on this call, one of the opposition parents sitting behind the bench was so unhappy that **he decided to throw one of their team’s banners onto the court out of anger.**

Some of the people around him were quick to calm him down and retrieve the banner, but that was enough for me.

I walked out.

As far as I’m aware, there were no fights between the spectators, no tears were shed by any of the players, and no one was thrown out of the game.

Was the game I witnessed as bad as youth sports parents get? Definitely not.

Was it uncommon behavior for youth sports parents? Definitely not.

These displays of poor parental behavior are common at youth sporting events. Year after year we’re presented with examples such as the following...

- Parents brawl at a 4th-grade basketball game
- Two people punched and then 6-man fight at a 7-year-old basketball game
- A parent asked to leave for belligerent behavior fires a gun outside the gym and chases a referee

Witnessing these scenes encouraged me to elaborate on my thoughts regarding parents involved with youth sports and what changes they can make to improve the youth sporting experience for the players.

So from a youth basketball coach who truly loves the game and cares about the players who participate in it, here’s how you can help...

1. Please Remember Your Role During Games

It’s incredibly important that everyone who attends youth sport remembers what their roles are during a game.

- We have coaches to coach the game.
- We have referees to referee the game.
- We have players to play the game.
- And we have spectators to spectate the game.

A parent's role consists of watching the game and providing support for your child and the other players on the court.

'Providing support' does not mean screaming out to the players, throwing your hands in the air when a player makes a mistake, or displaying terrible body language.

I know it can be a rollercoaster of thoughts and feelings watching your kids competing against other kids, but parents must be able to control their emotions.

Sit back, enjoy the game, smile, and support the players with a clap or cheer after they make a good play.

Which leads to my next important point...

2. Please Stop Coaching From the Sidelines

Reiterating my point above, your role at the game is to watch and enjoy the game; not to coach.

By all means, if coaching is something that you want to pursue there are many clubs all over the world who are constantly looking for coaches of all levels. I encourage you to sign up.

But if you're attending a game as a spectator, do not coach your child or any other players from the sidelines.

For example:

- "Get on #10. He's killing you guys!"
- "Shoot it!"
- "Get up the court and pressure them!"

The reason this is detrimental to your child and the rest of the team is because they'll be receiving conflicting messages from you and the coach.

Conflicting messages = confusion = stress = poor performance.

It's much better for the entire team if you sit back and allow the coach to do their job.

3. Please Stop Creating Entitled Children

"We are in the trophy generation. Give them a trophy for 23rd place. That makes the parents happy" – Tom Izzo

Youth sports is a fantastic opportunity for players to learn how to deal with their emotions and experience failure in a safe environment.

Yet despite their good intentions, too many parents are unknowingly robbing their children of experiencing and learning these incredibly important life lessons.

Adults need to stop springing to the rescue and 'saving' their child every time something negative happens or the child feels a little upset.

Kid: *"I hate my basketball team. I want to play in another team"*

Adult: *"Okay, don't worry. I'll get you moved ASAP!"*

Kid: *"Johnny got a trophy. Why didn't I get one? That's unfair"*

Adult: *"You're right. You deserve one. I'll make sure you get one next year"*

And to make matters worse, after all of this 'babying' of children throughout their youth, us adults have the nerve to say...

"Why are today's kids so entitled! I was never like that when I was young!"

The children participating in youth sports today are a product of the environment we've created and raised them in.

That's on us.

Youth players are fully aware that if they're upset about something, their parents will save them from it. And most take full advantage of this fact.

We must change our ways and allow players to experience and learn how to deal with emotions and how to handle failure.

It won't kill them, I promise.

4. Please Stop Undermining Coaching Decisions

There's nothing that will kill the respect and trust a child has for their coach quicker than a parent undermining the coach's decisions.

This usually happens in two ways:

1. Validating that the coach is wrong.

Kid: *"Why don't I get to dribble the basketball up the court like Jimmy?"*

Dad: *"Because your coach is an idiot."*

2. Putting negative opinions in the player's head.

Dad: *"I can't believe your coach doesn't start you on the court! He has no idea how to coach a basketball team!"*

By having conversations like these with your son or daughter, you're increasing the chances that the player will stop listening to the coach.

And these words won't only stick with your child...

You can be sure that these words will be passed out to the other players, too.

The reason that many parents have these conversations with their children is in an attempt to shift the blame that players are putting on themselves.

If the child is upset, parents believe they're helping their child by blaming the coach and taking the burden off the player.

While this might help them in the short-term, it definitely won't help the team or the individual player long-term.

All of this is not to say that the coach is always right...

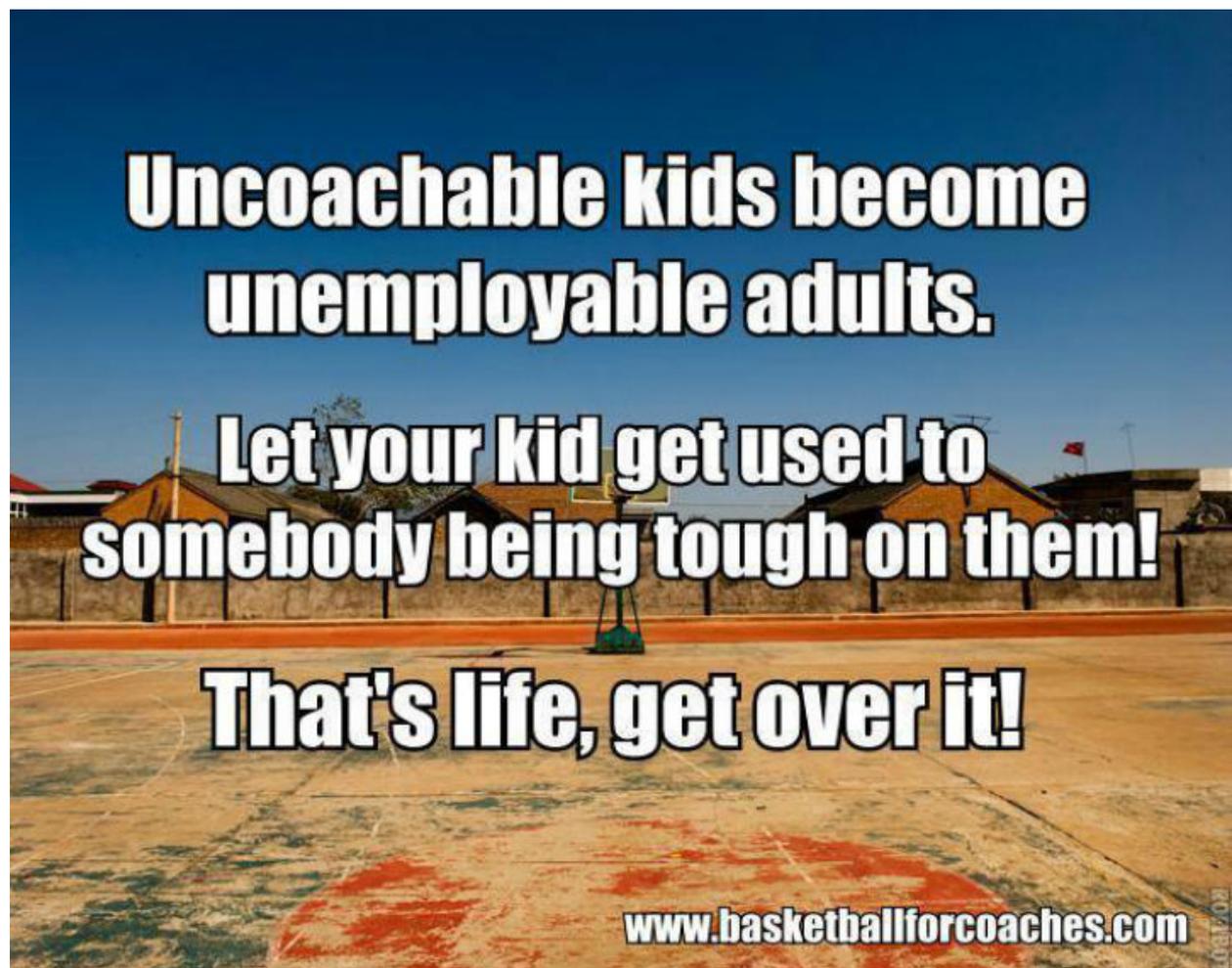
But if you have concerns or disagree with something the coach is doing, you should be discussing that with the coach.

Not your child.

5. Please Allow Your Child to be Coached

One of the most retweeted images I've ever shared on my Twitter profile (link) is the following image and quote...

"Uncoachable kids become unemployable adults. Let your kids get used to somebody being tough on them. That's life, get over it!"



I'll start this section of the article by making it clear that this is assuming your child's coach is coaching them from a place of love and a desire for them and the team to improve.

There are many coaches in the youth sports world that simply don't know how to teach or connect with their team. Some can go so far as to bully their players.

Screaming in a 6-year-olds face about a mistake they made is not good coaching no matter how many times some coaches will try to convince you it's *'tough love'*.

Therefore, this section may not apply to all situations.

With that said, there are also far too many parents who 'baby' their children and jump to their defense whenever a coach attempts to hold them to high standards.

You must allow your players to be coached.

If a player isn't living up to the standards of the team (lack of effort, not listening to the coach, going against the game-plan, bullying teammates, etc), it's part of a youth coach's role to demand better from the player.

A coach must be able to address the player on these issues in a kind way that doesn't make the player feel threatened, but also demands respect and shows that the coach is the authority.

This is where we're starting to run into an obstacle...

Kids aren't used to adults holding them to a high standard.

┆ *"Kids today don't know the difference between instruction and criticism" – Larry Brown*

When a coach does attempt to hold them to a high standard, players can sometimes react negatively and feel like they're being treated unfairly by the coach.

After telling their parents, the parents are quick to label the adult holding their kid to a high standard a *'terrible coach who has no idea what they're doing'* instead of finding out what actually happened.

This is often followed by a heated exchange between the parent and the coach or an immediate appeal for their child to be transferred to another team.

As long as the coach is doing it the right way, a coach must be able to hold the players to the high standards set by the team.

If they can't, it's incredibly hard to teach players the life lessons taught through youth sports like...

- Success requires hard work.
- The importance of body language.
- Respect everyone.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- How to win/succeed with class.
- etc.

How can a coach help teach players that success requires hard work if they can't tell the player then need to be giving more effort?

How can a coach help improve a player's body language if they can't correct the player when they display poor body language?

You get my point.

6. Please Encourage Your Child to Play Multiple Sports

“If someone encourages your child to specialize in a single sport, that person generally does not have your child’s best interests in mind.” – JJ Watt

Each year, more and more parents are being persuaded to have their son or daughter specialize in a single sport for the entire year.

The main argument that many coaches use to convince parents and players to commit is by telling them that if they don’t, they’ll get left behind by those who do specialize.

This isn’t only a blatant lie, it’s also potentially dangerous.

I don’t blame parents for believing that specializing in one sport is the best thing to do for their child at the time without having looked at the research. Especially after the child has shown some natural ability in the sport.

In fact, on the surface, it sounds like a wise decision!

By specializing, more time practicing, playing, and improving their abilities can only lead to positives for their basketball future, right?

Many people even cite the 10,000-hour rule from Malcolm Gladwell as a reason why their child doesn’t have time for other sports.

But in reality, it’s been proven time and time again that specializing at an early age will inevitably lead to...

- **Mental burnout and stress.**
- **Increased chance of injury.**
- **Shortened sporting careers.**
- **Lack of motivation.**
- **And more...**

To add to that, there are the obvious negatives that players will have fewer opportunities to:

- Build relationships with peers.
- Experience different coaches and coaching styles.
- Experience different sports.

Doesn’t sound so great anymore, does it?

It’s up to parents and coaches to encourage multi-sport participation because players aren’t aware of the negatives that will inevitably become more and more clear over time.

Here are just a few superstar athletes who were multi-sport athletes before going on to flourish professionally in basketball...

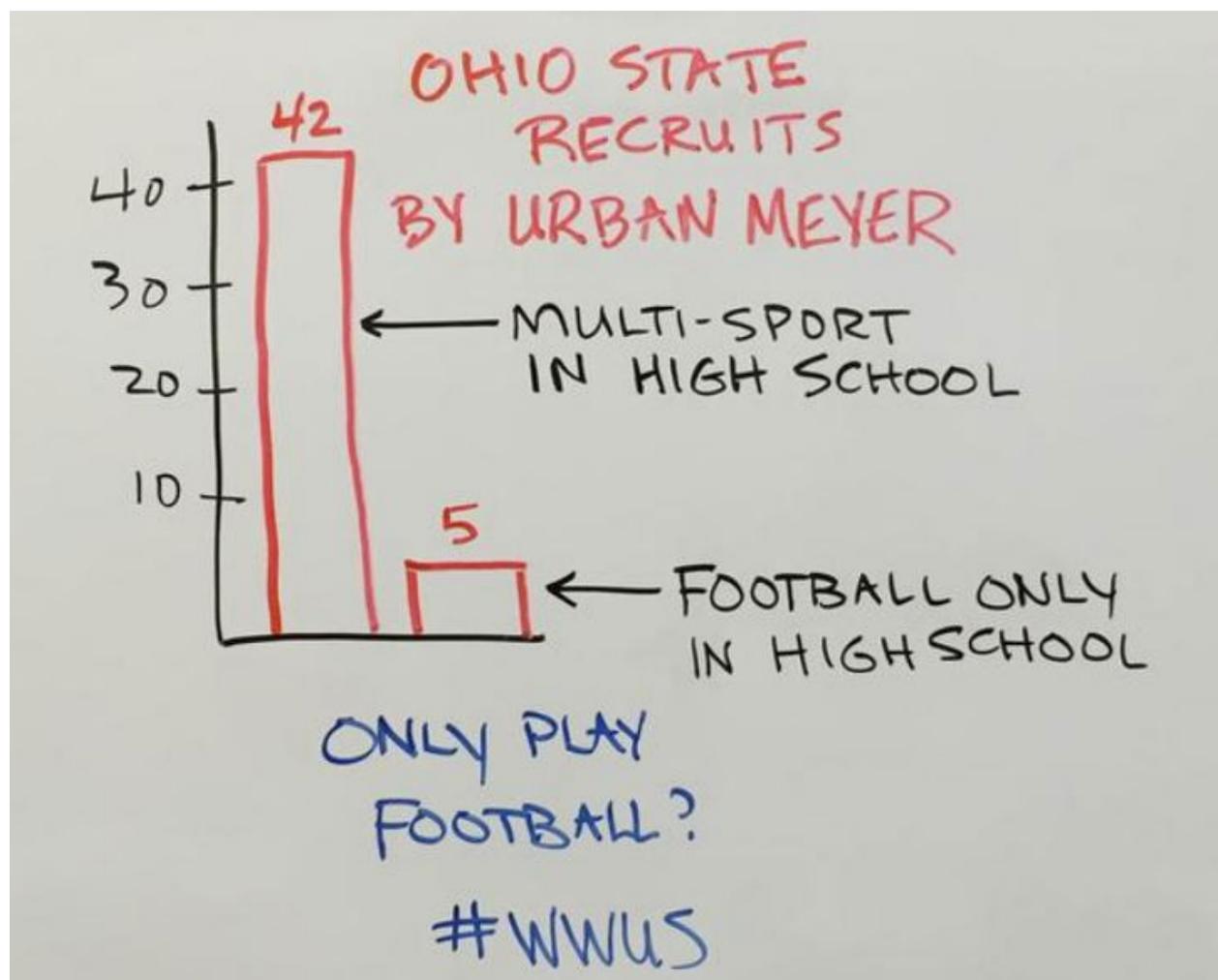
- Tim Duncan, arguably one of the top 10 players to ever play in the NBA, was an incredibly

talented swimmer and had aspirations to compete in the 1992 Olympic Games.

- Hakeem Olajuwon didn't play a single game of basketball until he was 15 years old choosing to play soccer.
- LeBron James was an all-state wide receiver during his sophomore and junior years of high school.
- Elena Delle Donne went so far as to quit playing basketball due to burnout for the first year of college before returning and going on to be the WNBA Rookie of the Year in 2013.

Even as we move away from basketball multi-sport athletes come out on top...

The image below shows that of the 47 football players Urban Meyer recruited to Ohio State, 42 of them were multi-sport athletes during their time at high school.



But what if my child tells me that they don't want to play a single sport? [Read this fantastic article from John O'Sullivan](#)

7. Please Don't Focus on Scholarships

It happens every single day...

A parent signs their child up for a sport and quickly notices that they seem to have a fair amount of natural talent.

Others quickly notice, too.

Coaches start approaching and praising their son or daughter's abilities and encouraging you to sign them up to travel teams, elite basketball camps, and enroll them in personal training.

Next thing you know, parents are thinking about the financial possibilities of the future...

- Securing a scholarship.
- Playing division 1 basketball.
- Potentially playing professional basketball.
- Money, money, money.

I don't mean to burst anyone's bubble, but only 3% percent of players go on to receive a scholarship and 0.02 – 0.03% of players will end up in the NBA or WNBA.

That's 2 – 3 out of 10,000 high school basketball players.

It's far better at the youth sports level to simply allow the child to enjoy the process, encourage them to play multiple sports, and support them in what they choose to do instead of putting the pressure on them to score themselves a free education.

It will save you and the player a lot of stress.

8. Please Consider Your Finances

Finances are a topic I hesitated to touch on, but in the end thought it was far too important to leave out.

As we are all well aware, youth sports can be incredibly expensive.

In fact, in [this article](#) from FlipGive, studies have shown that parents can end up paying as much as \$5,500 a year when participating on a travel team.

And I'm sure there are a lot of parents who spend much more each year. New equipment, fees, travel costs, accommodation, etc. These all add up very quickly!

Naturally, this puts a lot of stress on the parents who are digging deep into their pockets to pay for the experience.

The bigger problem occurs when this stress is transferred to the players.

Numerous times I've witnessed parents directly telling their kids that they had better perform well or everything the parents have spent on the sport will be a 'waste of money'.

Take a second to think about the pressure that this puts on a player! No wonder players burn out and quit at such a young age.

Many parents spend far too much money on youth sports believing that the money spent will pay off when their son or daughter receives a scholarship...

Please remember: Your kid's youth sporting participation is not a financial investment!

You should never expect a single dollar back from the money you put into the youth sports experience.

Are travel teams 100% necessary? No.

Are personal trainers 100% necessary? No.

Is having the latest equipment 100% necessary? No.

Don't add these unnecessary costs to your finances unless you can comfortably afford them.

Conclusion

First off, I want to acknowledge that 99% of parents have their heart in the right place.

They push their children to train and perform because they want them to have the highest possible chance of succeeding.

They encourage or allow them to specialize because they believe it will give them an edge over their competition.

They protect their children by shifting blame to the coaches, referees, or even quality of the facilities.

Unfortunately, most parents aren't aware that many of their actions aren't in the best interests of the players and can even negatively affect their chances of future success.

Going forward, we all need to put a bigger focus on putting the needs of the players first.

Pick and Roll for Basketball (Offensive Guide)



Let's start out with a bold (and true) statement...

“The pick and roll is the most effective action in basketball. This is true from youth basketball all the way up to the NBA level.”

But there's one problem...

Many coaches are missing out important details when teaching their players how to execute the screen and roll.

These simple details can result in your team missing out on many points every game.

Once you learn how the pick and roll should be run and fix up a few mistakes, your team's pick and roll will be far more effective resulting in improved scoring opportunities.

In this article, I'll explain what a pick and roll is, break down the perfect 7-step process that will have your team shooting wide open shots and layups, share drills and plays with you, and much more.

What is a Pick and Roll?

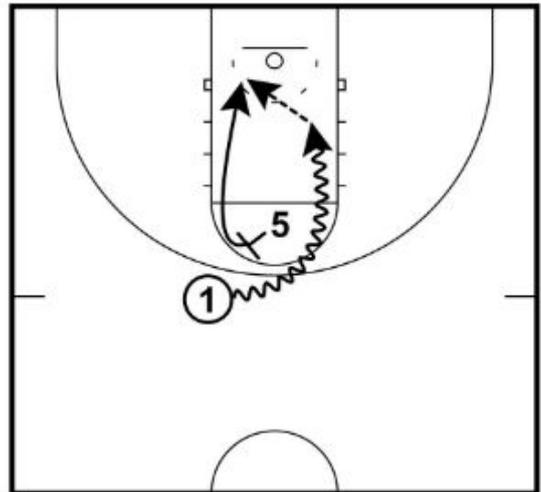
Let's establish some base knowledge on how the pick and roll works with a simple breakdown before diving into much more detail.

The pick and roll (also known as the 'screen and roll', 'on-ball screen', or 'ball-screen') involves an offensive player setting a screen for a teammate in possession of the basketball.

1. An offensive player without the basketball sets a screen for the player with the basketball.
2. The player with the basketball reads the defenders and dribbles off the screen looking to attack and create a shot for themselves or another player on the team.
3. After screening, the screener rolls to the rim looking to catch the basketball and finish inside. That's as simple as it gets.

Looking for more advanced information?

Read on...



How to Run the Perfect Pick and Roll

To make the pick and roll simple and easy for your players to learn at an advanced level, I've broken it down into 7 easy-to-understand steps.

The first three steps focus on the preparation for the screen which is the most important part of the pick and roll. If this isn't done properly, there's very little chance the pick and roll will be successful.

The final three steps focus on the execution of the pick and roll. These require the offensive players to read the defense and make the correct decisions based on how the screen is defended.

Let's go through these steps in more detail...

1. Dribbler Creates Separation

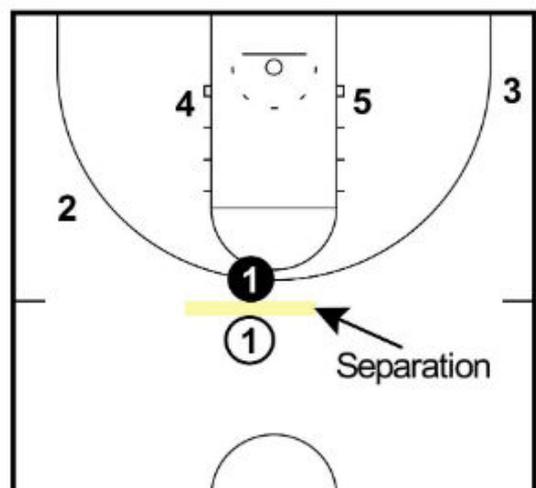
The first step for an effective pick and roll is for the dribbler to create separation between themselves and the on-ball defender.

This sets up the on-ball defender to be screened effectively.

If the on-ball defender is too close, then it will be easy for them to lock on and trail over the screen without being put at too much of a disadvantage.

To create this separation, the dribbler should sweep through or jab step if they haven't used their dribble.

If they are in the process of dribbling, a quick jab and crossover or inside-out dribble will be enough to make the on-ball defender take a step back in preparation to defend the drive.



2. Screener Creates Separation

The second step to an effective pick and roll is for the screener to create as much separation as possible between themselves and their defender before setting the on-ball screen.

By creating separation before setting the screen, we decrease the screener's defender's ability to provide help on the dribbler.

Without good help, the dribbler is often open for the shot or will be attacking a defender who is still closing out to the basketball.

So, how can a screener create this separation?

1. Don't Telegraph the Screen

By giving away where you're going to screen, the opposition is able to establish correct defensive position early and communicate with other defenders.

It's also important that coaches implement an offense that doesn't involve the same screens being set over and over again.

(I recommend: 5-Out Motion and 4-Out 1-In Motion).

This is another reason why it's not a good idea to run the same set plays constantly throughout a game.

2. Sprint to Screen

When an offensive player is going to set the screen, they should explode towards the position of the screen to get an extra step or two on their opponent.

In fact, smart players are able to nudge their opponent off-balance (without committing an offensive foul) before exploding to the ball to create further separation.

Too often we see screeners casually jogging (or even walking) towards the screening position allowing their opponent to establish help position early.

3. Use a 'Ram Screen'

The 'ram screen' is a great basketball action which involves a third offensive player setting a screen for the screener before the screener sets the on-ball screen.

This might be difficult to understand through words, so I've included this great video from Dan Carbaugh on the ram screen.

Since the screener's defender is being screened, it will take them more time to get to the correct help position as they'll have to fight through the first screen.

Again, this gives the dribbler a head start attacking the hoop and the screener's defender must stop the dribbler while they have a full head of steam.

This can be incredibly effective if you're able to incorporate it into your offense.

3. Correct Screening Angle

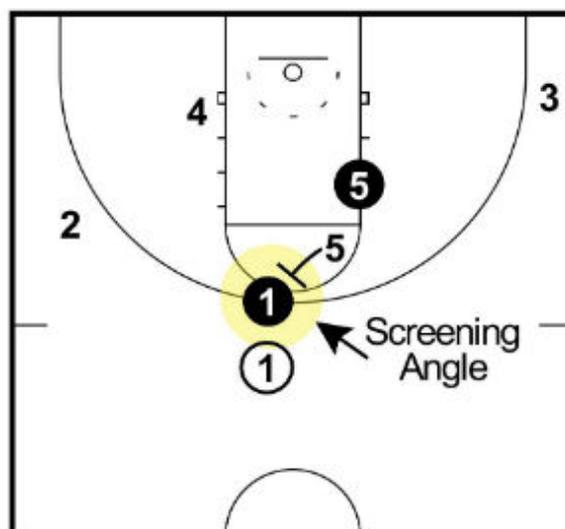
The angle that the screen is set on is arguably the most important part of the pick and roll yet is often overlooked by most coaches.

If you take anything at all from this article, let it be that you focus more on the angle your players are setting on-ball screens.

It's one of those small details that can lead to big results on the court.

So, what's the correct screening angle?

Players should be setting the screen on the back hip of the on-ball defender.



This will force the on-ball defender to fight over the screen and will lead the dribbler in the direction of the basket.

For an example, imagine a pick and roll at the top of the key...

Most of the players I currently see at a youth level will set the screen with their back facing the sideline.

This isn't effective as it allows the on-ball defender to slip under the screen and re-establish position quickly.

The correct way to set this screen would be with their back facing the corner of the court.

This makes it difficult for the defender to slip under the screen and will give the dribbler (and offense) a big advantage when attacking the paint to create a scoring opportunity.

4. Screener Makes Contact

The final part of preparing for the pick and is for the screener to make contact when setting the screen.

This requires them to hunt out the on-ball defender, focus on the correct angle, and then make contact as they set a strong screen.

As this screen is set, 100% focus should be on setting a solid screen. I see far too many players set weak screens as they're too focused on rolling quickly and getting the basketball.

The reason making contact is beneficial when performing the pick and roll is that it leaves no room for the defender to maneuver around the screen.

If the screen is set a step off and there's extra space, it's far easier for the on-ball defender to drop their shoulders and beat the stationary screen.

This rule also prevents young players from setting a screen on an area instead of seeking out one of the defenders which can be a big problem for young teams.

5. Dribbler Attacks Off the Screen

Once the screen has been set correctly, it's now up to the dribbler to read the defense and use the screen.

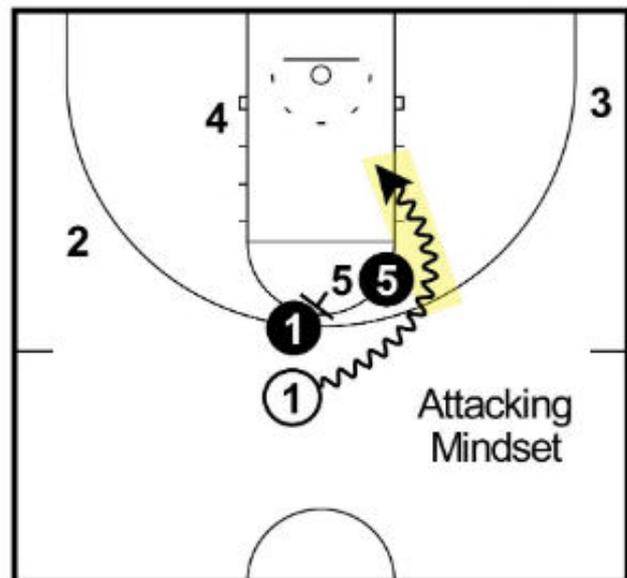
When dribbling off the screen, the dribbler must drive by the screener shoulder-to-shoulder and use at least two dribbles to create separation and see how the defense reacts.

The dribbler must have an attacking mindset!

While we don't expect the dribbler to drive and shoot every time they use a screen, it's important to attack as it will force the defense to rotate and open up other offensive players.

If an obvious pass or shot appears sooner, players can take it. But in most situations, two dribbles is preferred.

Note – It's crucial the dribbler is patient and waits for the screener to be stationary. The #1 cause of illegal screens is because the dribbler is impatient and attacks too early.



6. Screener Rolls to the Rim

Once the on-ball defender has fought past the stationary screen, the screener must then cut to the rim looking to catch a pass and score inside.

While it's up for debate which one is more effective, here are the two ways that the screener can cut to the rim:

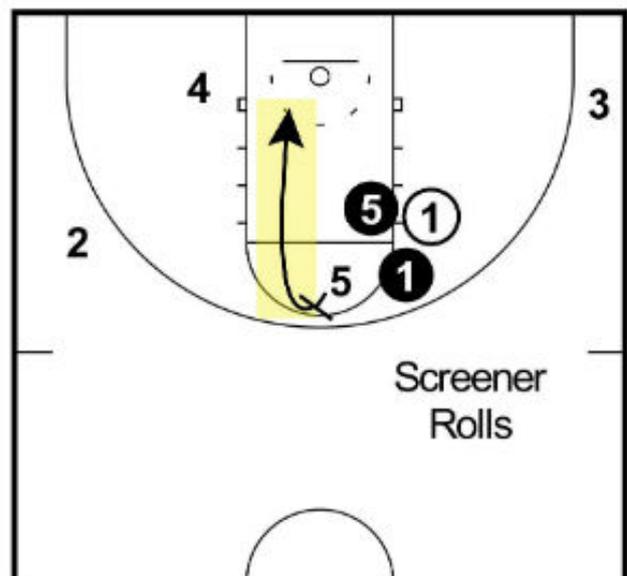
1. Reverse Pivot and Roll

This involves the screener sealing off the on-ball defender by reverse pivoting using the foot closest to the rim as the pivot foot.

2. Dive to the Rim

The other option is for the screener to immediately dive to the rim without reverse pivoting.

Instead, they turn their back on the dribbler for a split second and simply turn and run to the rim looking for the basketball.



7. Dribbler Makes Best Decision

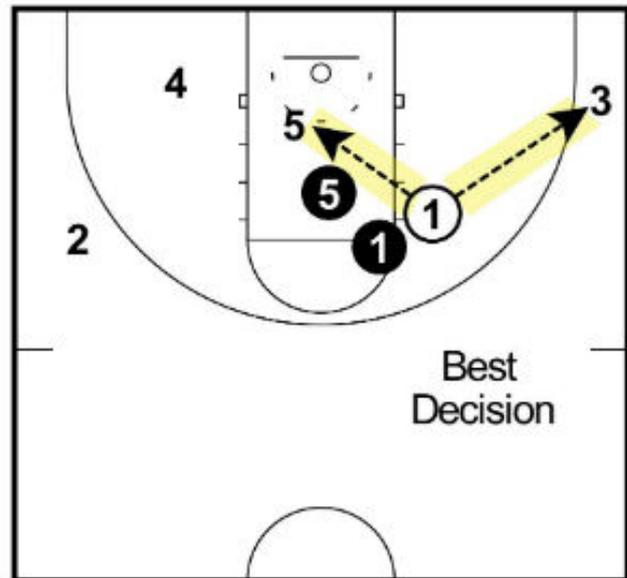
The final step of the pick and roll is for the dribbler to read the defense and make the correct decision.

This could be to attack the rim, pass to the roll player, or dribble in and kick the basketball out to the outside shooters or players cutting to the rim.

Note – The ball-handler must be aware of their teammate's abilities since this will determine whether they make a good decision. For example, it's much better to pass to a shooter on the perimeter than a player who struggles from long range.

More often than not, it's the decision in this step that will determine whether your team gets a great scoring opportunity or not.

That's why it's crucial that you're putting players in the ball-handler position who have the ability to attack and have a high basketball IQ.



Reading the Defense

As the dribbler is attacking off the pick and roll, it's crucial they're able to read the defense and make the correct decision to give their team the best opportunity to score.

Here are the 5 most common reads ball-handler should be aware of...

1. Split the Defenders

Splitting the defenders is a great way to attack the rim if the screener's defender hedges out too far to stop the basketball or attempts a steal.

This option involves the dribbler using the screen, planting the outside foot as they see the defender hedge out, and then pushing the basketball through as they explode towards the rim.

When doing this, the dribbler must quickly change direction and speed as well as keep the basketball low so that it's out of reach of the screener's defender.

If performed properly, this action will commonly lead to a layup or a pass out to an open player on the perimeter.

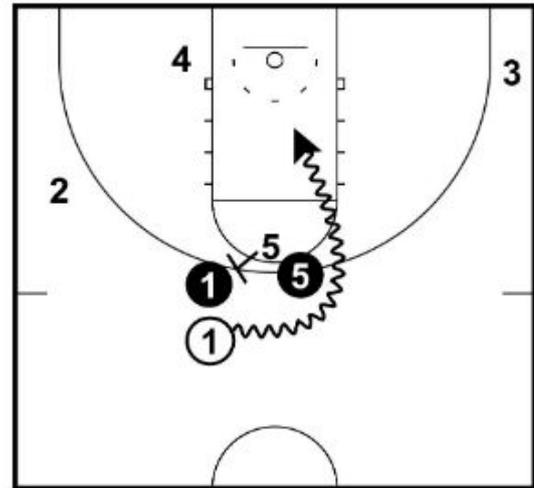


2. Attack the Hip

If the screener's defender doesn't hedge out high and stays attached to the screener, the dribbler must attack the outside hip and drive to the rim.

This ensures that the on-ball defender will be trailing the play providing that the screen was set at the correct angle and the dribbler has attacked shoulder-to-shoulder.

This is the most common action in the pick and roll and will force the other defenders to help leading to a pass out to a teammate or the dribbler attacking the rim.



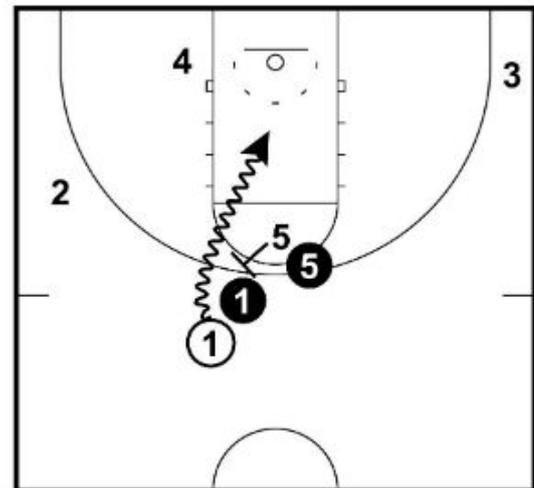
3. Turn Down the Screen

When the on-ball defender anticipates that a screen is coming, they'll often attempt to cheat over or under the screen early.

If they do, it provides the dribbler with a great opportunity to explode in the opposite direction of the screen towards the hoop.

This will often catch the defense off-guard and give the dribbler a 1 – 2 step advantage forcing other defenders to rotate and help.

Since this relies on explosiveness, it's important that the dribbler is down in stance if they want this action to be effective.



4. Back Out

If the screener's defender decides to hard hedge on the screen and the dribbler decides not to split, another great option can be to back out a step or two and see how the defense reacts.

Due to the separation created, if the screener's defender chooses to hustle back to the screener, the dribbler will usually be open for the shot or drive.

If the defense chooses to switch on the screen, there's a high chance that one or two mismatches have been created.

Then the offense has two options:

1. The dribbler can isolate and attack their new defender one-on-one. This can be very effective if it was a post player who switched onto them.
2. The screener can roll to the rim and post up. This can be very effective if it was a guard who is now forced to defend the screener in the post.

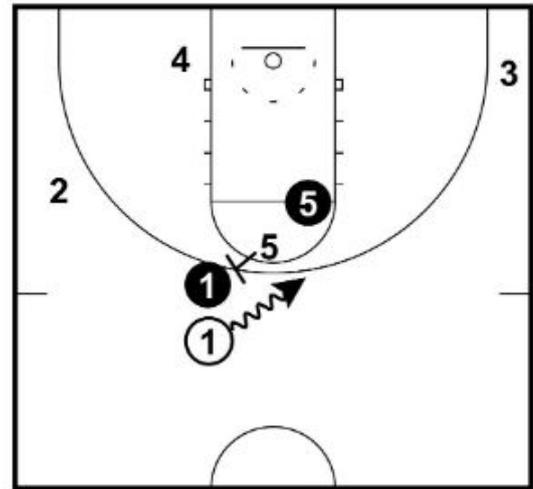
5. Shoot the Basketball

Last but not least... shoot!

If the on-ball defender decides to slip under the screen and the screener's defender hasn't stepped up to help, this can leave the dribbler wide open for a jump shot.

If your players can't make this shot consistently, it will result in the on-ball defender being able to establish front position again.

That's another reason why it's crucial that teams never allow the on-ball defender to slip under the screen on a pick and roll.



Variations of the Pick and Roll

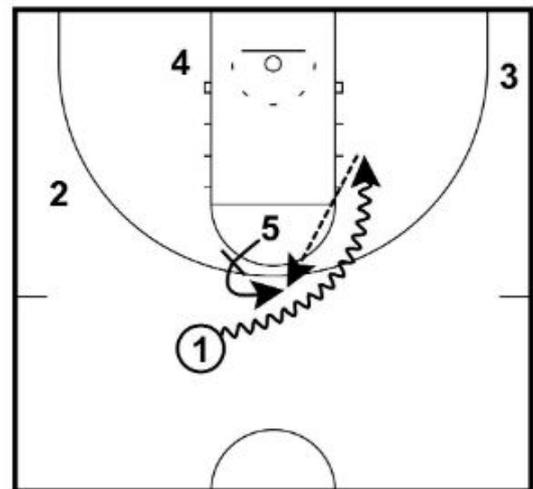
There are two main variations of the traditional pick and roll...

1. Pick and Pop

When running the pick and pop, instead of the screener rolling to the rim, the screener pops out to the perimeter looking to receive the pass for an outside shot or catch and drive.

This variation is very effective if you have a post player who can knock down the three-point shot at a high percentage.

It also helps the ball-handler as it's difficult for the screener's defender to provide help due to the threat of the quick pass and open shot.



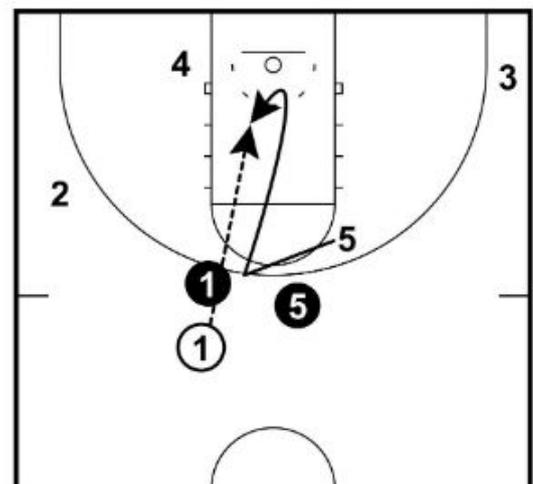
2. Pick and Slip

The other variation of the pick and roll is the pick and slip.

When running the pick and slip, the screener dives to the rim just as they're about to set the on-ball screen.

This variation is best used when the screener's defender predicts the screen and helps too early instead of staying between their player and the basket.

This is also effective when the defenders attempt to trap the dribbler.



Different Types of the Pick and Roll

Below I've listed 11 different types of the pick and roll that coaches should be aware of.

I'll also use this section of the article to show you the positions on the court the three off-ball players should be filling during each variation of the pick and roll.

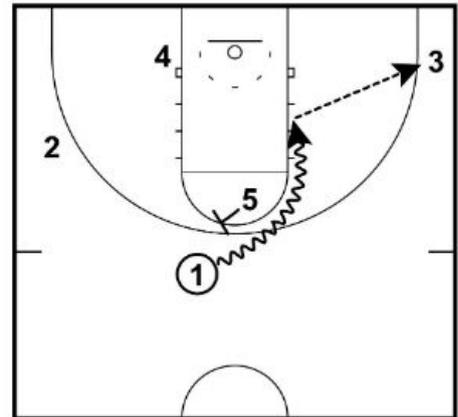
Having great spacing from the three off-ball players is absolutely crucial if you want your team to be effective with the ball-screen.

1. Top Pick and Roll

The 'top pick and roll' (or high pick and roll) is a ball-screen at the top of the key.

When this is run, there will usually be one off-ball player in the short corner and the other two offensive players behind the three-point line.

The two players behind the three-point line should be on opposite sides of the court.



2. Side Pick and Roll

The 'side pick and roll' (or wing pick and roll) is a ball-screen set on the wing leading the ball-handler to the middle of the court.

When this is run, the other three players will usually set up on the opposite side of the court.

One player on the wing, one in the corner, and one in the weak-side low post.

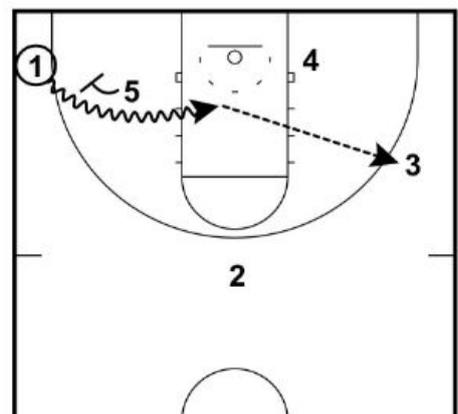


3. Corner Pick and Roll

The 'corner pick and roll' is a ball-screen set on a player with the basketball in the corner of the court.

When this is run, there will usually be off-ball players set up at the top of the key, in the corner, and in the weak-side low post.

The corner pick and roll is a common action in the Triangle offense.

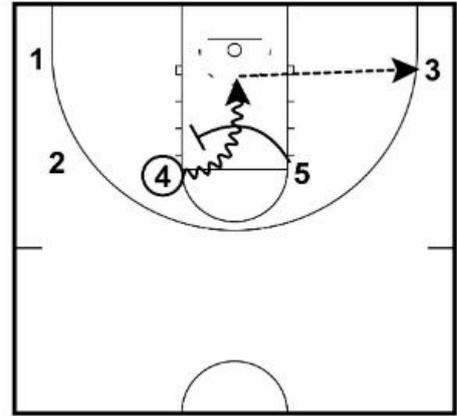


4. Elbow Pick and Roll

The 'elbow pick and roll' is a ball-screen set on a player with the basketball while they're on the high post (elbow).

This will usually be performed by two post players with the other three offensive players outside the perimeter to create space inside.

This should be utilized by more coaches as it only requires one dribble to get to the basket.

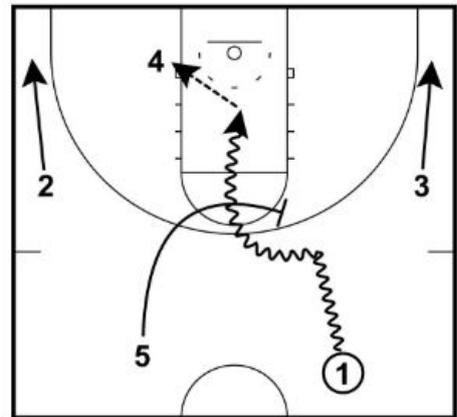


5. Single Drag Pick and Roll

A 'single drag pick and roll' is a ball-screen set in transition.

This is often effective because the screener's defender who is meant to play help defense on the dribbler is caught out of position as they've sprinted back to defend the basket.

This will often result in a clear drive to the rim for the dribbler.

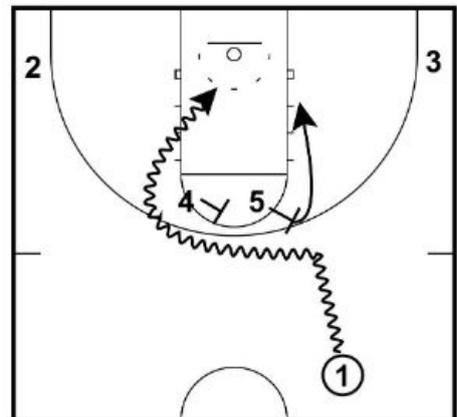


6. Double Drag Pick and Roll

A 'double drag pick and roll' requires two offensive players setting ball screens in transition.

In this variation, the player who sets the first screen (5) rolls to the rim.

The second screener (4) pops out to the perimeter.



7. Horns Pick and Roll

A 'horns pick and roll' begins with two offensive players simultaneously setting a screen on opposite sides of the ball-handler at the top of the key.

This allows the dribbler to attack either direction and opens up the court as they're driving to the rim.

Whichever direction the dribbler elects to attack, the screener on that side rolls to the rim while the other screener pops out behind the three-point line.

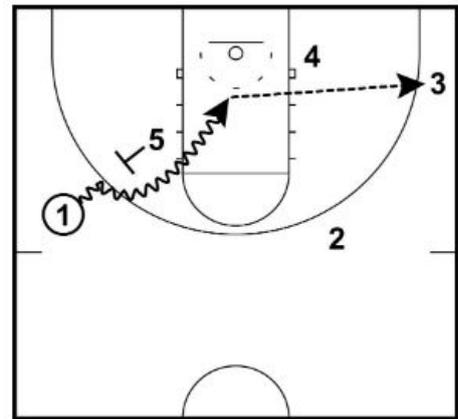


8. Flat Pick and Roll

A 'flat pick and roll' is occurs when the screener sets the on-ball screen with their back facing towards the rim.

This variation of the pick and roll can be very effective if you've got an explosive player who can attack going either direction.

It's also great for catching the on-ball defender off-guard since they won't see the screen coming.

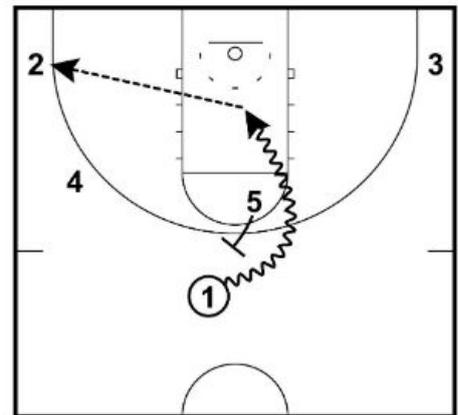


9. Spread Pick and Roll

A 'spread pick and roll' is a ball-screen action while the three off-ball players are all outside the three-point line.

This action is very effective for teams that are able to surround the pick and roll with 3 players who shoot the basketball at a high percentage.

This variation makes it very difficult for defenders to help off their player without giving up an open three-point shot.

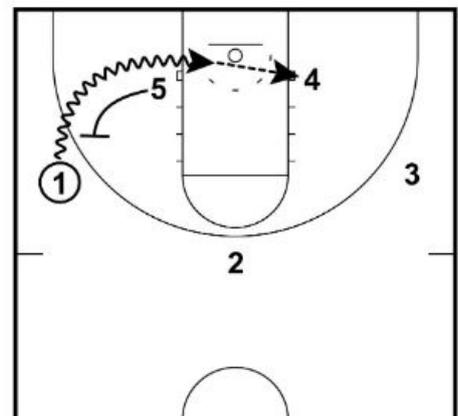


10. Step Up Pick and Roll

A 'step up pick and roll' is a ball-screen set on that wing that directs the ball-handler towards the baseline.

The quick step-up from an offensive player in the ball-side low post can be very effective if it catches the defense off-guard.

The screeners defender will often assume the screen is being set in the middle so they won't be prepared to help.



11. Spain Pick and Roll

The 'Spain pick and roll' consists of a regular pick and roll and then a third offensive player stepping up and setting another screen on the defender of the player rolling to the rim.

This creates a lot of communication problems for the defense and often they'll get confused and leave one of the offensive players open.



Pick and Roll Plays

There are many fantastic basketball plays that utilise the pick and roll action to put players in great positions to score.

Here are 2 of my favorites you can use with your team...

1. Drive Hammer

Overview of the Play:

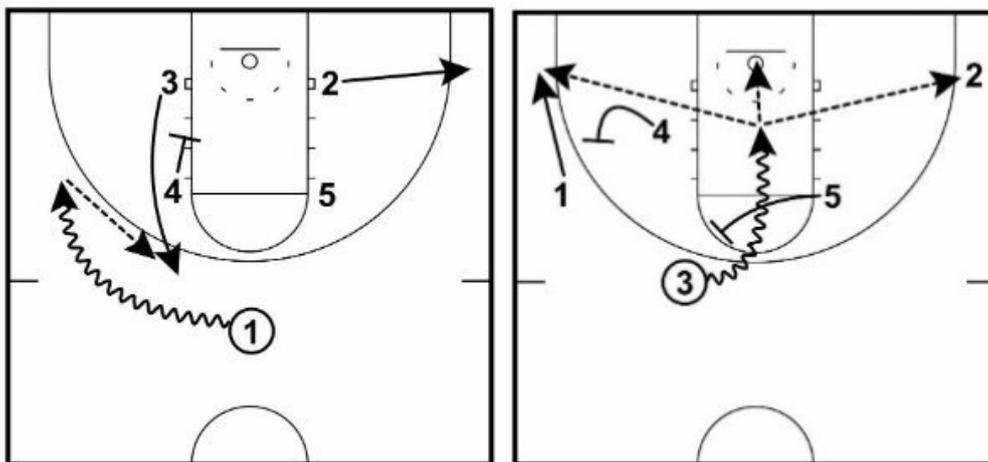
This box set play is designed to get a player attacking the rim off a pick-and-roll with two open passing options in the corners and also the ability to score at the rim depending on how the defense adjusts.

Key Personnel:

- Two guards who can shoot the basketball at a high percentage (1 and 2).
- Another guard who can attack off the pick-and-roll and make the right basketball play (3).

Instructions:

Setup: The play begins in a box formation with 4 and 5 at the top and 2 and 3 on the low blocks. 1 starts out the top with the basketball.



1. 1 starts the play by dribbling the basketball to either wing. For this example, the left wing.

2. The ball-side low block player then cuts high off the screen on the elbow and receives the pass from 1.

3. As this is happening, the weak-side low post player retreats out to the corner to provide good spacing for the next actions.

4. On 3's catch, 5 immediately steps across and sets an on-ball screen. We want this to surprise the defenders and give them little time to react.

5. While this screen is happening, 4 beginning the movement to set a hammer screen on 1's defender as 3 is driving to the rim.

6. 3 uses the screen and attacks the rim looking to score while also having both players in the corners as passing options.

Coaching Points:

- Very important that the screen from 5 is set immediately on the catch to try and catch the on-ball defender off-guard.
- The back screen for 1 must be set as 3 is driving to the hoop. Any sooner and x1 will have too much time to fight over the screen and pick off or deflect the pass.
- The weak-side corner defender will usually be the one that helps on the drive so 3 must be ready to pass out to 2 in the corner as soon as that happens.

2. Horns Side Screen

Overview of the Play:

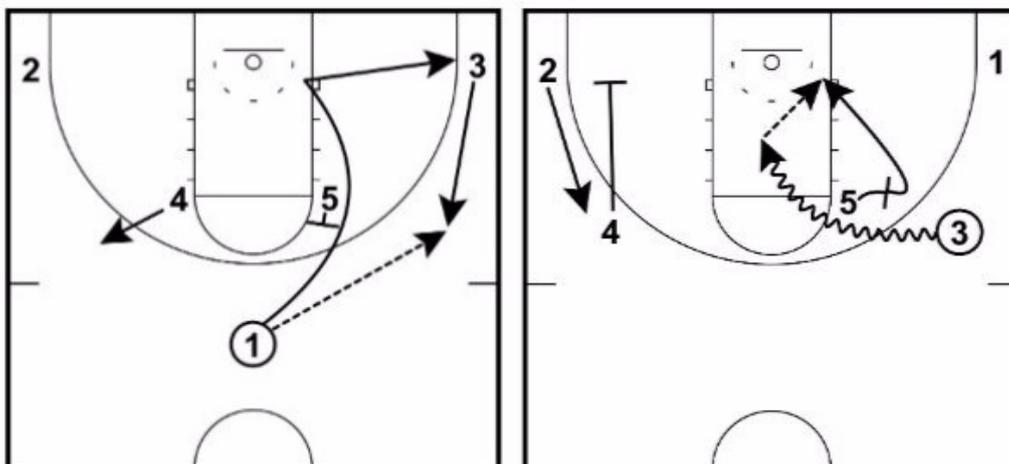
A very simple play out of the horns (1-2-2) formation. Involves a guard receiving the basketball on the wing and then receiving an on-ball screen. On the opposite side of the floor, there's a down screen set to keep the defense occupied.

Key Personnel:

- 3 should be a good decision maker out of the pick-and-roll.
- 5 should be the team's strongest pick-and-roll post player.

Instructions:

Setup: The play starts in a 1-2-2 set with the post players on the elbows and the guards in the corners.



1. The play begins with 3 cutting up to the wing and receiving the pass from 1.

2. 1 UCLA cuts off a screen from 5, and if they don't receive the pass for the layup, 1 clears out to the ball-side corner.
3. 5 sets an on-ball screen for 3 who drives into the lane looking to create.
4. On the weak-side of the floor, 4 down screens for 2 to make the help defense move.
5. 5 rolls to the rim out of the pick-and-roll.
6. 3 now has numerous opportunities and must make the best basketball play.

Coaching Points:

- A very simple but effective play that can be used for all levels of basketball.
- If 2's defender is on split-line, 4 shouldn't screen inside the key and congest it with players. Instead, 2 should simply lift to the wing and will be open for the pass and shot.
- 5's on-ball screen must be set at the correct angle to make it effective. Don't allow the opposition to simply slip under the screen.

Pick and Roll Drills

We've talked discussed how to execute the perfect pick and roll, but there's something important we're missing.

I can hear coaches yelling...

"I now understand how to run the pick and roll... But how do I practice it with my team!?"

It doesn't matter how much knowledge you have, if your players aren't experiencing and practicing the pick and roll regularly it will be difficult to be effective during games.

Here are 2 pick and roll drills I recommend you run during team practice...

1. 2-on-2 Ball Screen

How the Drill Works:

The drill starts with 2 players on offense and 2 on defense. The offensive team will attempt to score out of the pick and roll while the defense will attempt to get a stop without switching on defense.

Purpose:

This drill works the basics of both pick and roll offense and pick and roll defense.

Setup:

- An offensive and defensive player on the wing.
- An offensive and defensive player on the low block.

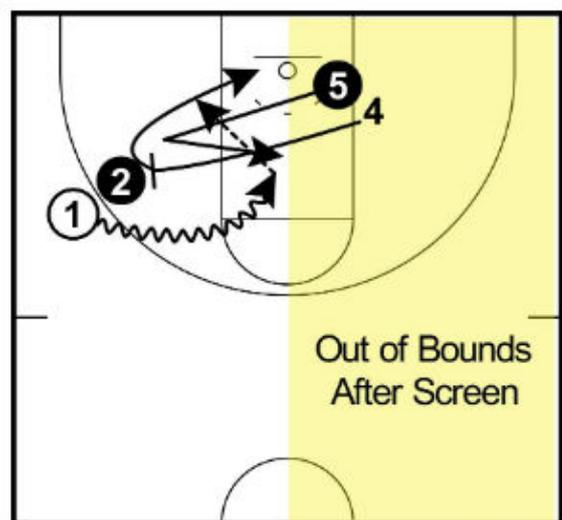
- The rest of the players wait on the baseline.
- The offensive player on the wing starts with the basketball.

Rules:

- The offensive team must stay within the quarter of the court. Crossing the split line is out of bounds.
- The offensive team must start each possession with a pick and roll.
- The defensive team is not allowed to switch.

Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the offensive player on the low post sprinting out to set a screen.
2. The offensive player with the basketball must use the screen and attempt to create a scoring opportunity.
3. The defense can defend the pick and roll any way they want, but they must not switch.
4. If the offensive team scores, they stay in and the defenders rotate. If the defensive team gets a stop, they become the offense and new defenders must come in.
5. Continue this drill for a set amount of time.



Variations:

Change the Screen Location – You can also have the players set the screen at the top of the key or on the opposite wing.

Coaching Points:

- You must talk with your players before starting about how to set a screen. Make contact, correct angle, etc.
- Make sure all your players practice being both the ball-handler and screener. We need to create positionless players!
- Coach your players on making the right read off the pick and roll. Eg. If the defender goes under, shoot. If they go over, attack.

2. Ball-Screen Practice

How the Drill Works:

Puts the dribbler in an advantageous position because there's no help by the screener's defender. The dribbler makes a read and should get an open look most of the time. Then the screener pops out and receives a second ball from a coach for a jump shot.

Purpose:

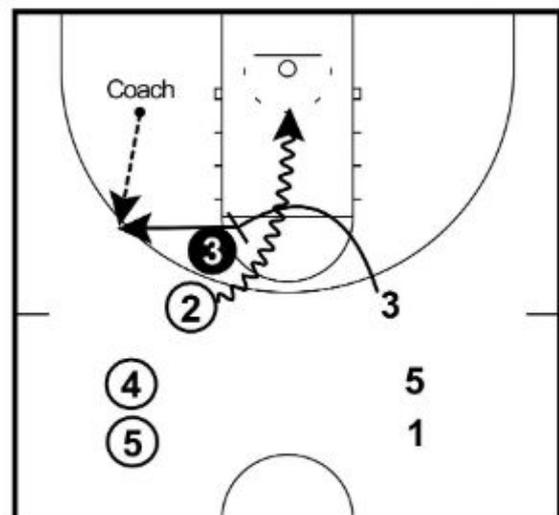
By giving the dribbler a large advantage they are able to learn the basics of how to use a screen with a high success rate. Also, the screener works on popping out for a jump shot.

Setup:

- Two lines: A dribbling line (with a basketball) and a screening line.
- One on-ball defender.
- One coach with a basketball.

Instructions:

1. The on-ball defender begins the drill by playing defense on the players dribbling the basketball.
2. The screener sprints over from their line and sets an on-ball screen.
3. The dribbler uses the screen and makes a read on whether they should attack the basket, pull up for a jump shot, step back for a shot, or not use the screen at all. They shoot the basketball.
4. Once the screener has set the screen they pop out to receive a second basketball from the coach and shoot a jump shot.
5. The dribbler becomes the defender, the defender joins the end of the screening line, and the screener joins the end of the dribbling line.



Variations:

Another Defender – You can progress to add the screener's defender and then play two on two. This means the coach won't pass the ball to the screener for the outside shot.

Screen Other Direction – Make sure your players practice coming off the screen with both their left and right hand.

Coaching Points:

- The screen must be set at the proper angle that doesn't allow the defender to easily slip under the screen.
- The dribbler must explode shoulder to shoulder with the player setting the screen so that they can't easily get through.
- The screener must hold the screen until the dribbler has used it. Don't allow them to pop out too early.
- The dribbler also can't use the screen too early or it will be an offensive foul. They must wait until the screen is set.

Extra Tips and Advice

As I was finishing up writing this article, it occurred to me that there were still a lot of pick and roll tips that I wanted to share with you that didn't fit into any of the sections above.

Below are 5 extra pick and roll tips which will help you implement it into your system and could possibly spark a few ideas for your in-game coaching decisions.

1. Forget Traditional Roles

Don't limit your players to being either a dribbler or a screener exclusively depending on their size and position.

Every player on your team should be practicing both roles.

Your post players must practice being the ball-handler.

Your guards must practice being the screener.

Being able to play positionless basketball is incredibly important for all players and that trend will increase even more in the future.

2. Set Screens With Your Guards

While your players will be practicing both positions, not all coaches will take the initiative to do this.

Since most guards don't practice playing the help position on pick and rolls, they often get very confused and make mistakes when you put them in this position during games.

This can lead to a lot of easy scoring opportunities for the offense.

Also, point guards often set the toughest screens!

3. Attacking a Trapped Pick and Roll

If the defense decides to trap the pick and roll with both defenders, the dribbler should take two long retreat dribbles to create space between them and the screener.

The screener will make a short roll approximately a step closer to the rim and get ready to receive the basketball.

From here, the ball-handler can make the pass screener who will have a lot of space and can shoot the open shot or attack the rim 4-on-3 and make a play.



4. Off-Ball Players Must Be Ready to Shoot

The pick and roll puts the two defenders involved at a big disadvantage if a solid screen is set.

The other three defenders will be forced to rotate towards the basketball to prevent a pass to the screener or an easy layup in the paint for the ball-handler.

This will often leave at least one of the other three offensive players playing off the ball open.

These players must be down and ready to catch and shoot or catch and drive the basketball.

5. Drag Out the Opposition's Best Rim Protector

This is a great in-game coaching tip I don't see enough coaches taking advantage of...

If you're playing against a team with a great rim protector, have the player they're defending step out to set the screen.

Doing so will drag the rim protector away from the rim and forces them to play defense on the perimeter opening up the paint.

Simple, but incredibly effective.

Conclusion

There are far too many coaches teaching the pick and roll incorrectly or leaving out important details.

As it's the most common action in basketball, it's crucial you're breaking down and teaching your players everything they need to know to run it effectively.

That knowledge will not only assist them as they compete on your team, but also assist them if they choose to pursue basketball at the next level.

Run and Jump Defense *Complete Coaching Guide*



C O A C H M A C

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Run and Jump Defense - Complete Coaching Guide



Run and Jump Defense The 'Run and Jump' defense is a full-court man-to-man press with rules that encourage jump-switching and trapping. It was first created by Dean Smith at North Carolina during the 1970's.

This full-court defense is best suited for a team of athletes that want to play an uptempo style game. Big and slow teams should avoid this offense as the rotations require quick movements to be effective.

Unlike most other full-court defenses, there are no set spots on the court for trapping and switching. Rather, the players make their own decisions where to trap and switch based on a few simple rules.

The defense is effective because it forces guards out of their comfort zones with high amounts of ball pressure and then uses switching and blind-side traps to create turnovers.

The last thing you must remember about this press is that it's a man-to-man press; not a zone press. Players do not guard zones on the court, they guard players.

What is a 'Jump Switch'?

Before we dive into how to run the defense, let's talk about a very important defensive movement that not all coaches will know about... a 'jump switch'.

Let's break it down...

A jump switch occurs when an offensive player dribbles towards a help defender and the help defender decides they're going to 'jump' them.



By jumping them, the help defender quickly closes out in the path of the dribbler with high hands forcing them to either stop the dribble, change directions, or throw a tough pass that the defender hopes to deflect.

When the help defender commits to 'jumping' the player with the basketball, they must call out 'Jump!' or the on-ball defenders name'. This tells the current on-ball defender to switch onto the player the help defender was guarding.

The switching player must immediately turn and sprint to guard the open player.

As they pass the player jumping the basketball, the switching player must extend a hand into the passing lane in hopes of getting a deflection and a steal.

Once they've closed the gap and determined the pass won't be made, they must get back into help defense position.



Strengths

1. Increases the pace of the game – This is a great defense for teams that want to play fast. Running a full-court, aggressive defense allows your team to dictate the tempo of the game.

2. Based on man-to-man principles – The Run and Jump press is essentially a man-to-man full court press with a few added rules. Your players will be working on their man-to-man principles which are important for the future success of each player.

3. Your players will have great conditioning – Since you'll be running the Run and Jump every game, your players will be super fit and will be used to playing a fast-tempo game.

4. Teams can't prepare for the Run and Jump – The Run and Jump doesn't have predetermined traps and rotations, it's incredibly hard for the opposition to prepare to play against your team. It's unpredictable. And without the knowledge of how to run it, it's nearly impossible to simulate in practice.

5. Causes a lot of turnovers due to confusion – The opposition will have a very hard time figuring this defense out. Since there are no predetermined traps, as long as your team rotates well you'll find the blind-side traps and switches will wreck havoc on your opponent.

6. Forces the opponent to take quick shots – This is a great defense to run against teams that are great in the half-court. The aggressive Run and Jump will encourage the offensive team to shoot quicker and will keep them out of their offense when they do get the basketball to their front court.

7. The players, parents, and supporters will love it – Who doesn't love a fast and exciting game of basketball?

8. Deep bench rotations – You'll rotate through more of your players on the bench. More players getting quality court time is great for development and keeps everyone happy.

Weaknesses

- 1. Difficult for youth players to learn** – The Run and Jump can be difficult for youth players to learn compared to other press's because there's no set starting point in the press and learning when to run and jump and when to trap takes experience.
- 2. Your team will allow occasional layups and easy baskets** – As with all aggressive full-court defenses, the opposition will occasionally break your press which will lead to their team making a few easy layups.
- 3. Undisciplined players can get into foul trouble** – Playing aggressive on-ball defense is a skill. You'll find that your guards can end up in foul trouble very quickly from reaching in on a trap or bumping the offensive player as they're trying to get in front.
- 4. Rebounding position** – If the opposition does take a quick shot, the defense often won't be in great rebounding position while they're still recovering from the press.

Run and Jump Rules

- 1. The players closest to the rim defends the inbounds pass after a score** – In order to stop the opposition from inbounding the basketball quickly, the player who is closest to the rim after a score must put immediate pressure on the inbounds passer.
- 2. There are no set match-ups** – Since the inbounds defender can change after each shot, that means the rest of the match-ups must change too. Instead of having set match-ups, players must talk to each other and make sure the all opposition players are covered quickly.
- 3. Players must never be behind the line of the basketball** – This rule is incredibly important to ensure that we're in the correct position to help and to jump switch. As soon as the basketball is advanced, we must get behind the line of the basketball. In the run and jump press, we allow the opposition to make the backwards pass.
- 4. Players must commit to rotations** – As with any press, as soon as a player hesitates on a rotation, they're not going to get there in time and the rest of the team will be at a disadvantage. Players have to fully commit to each rotation decision.
- 5. Players must not reach on traps** – The goal of each trap is to make the offensive player throw a high pass to a teammate that one of our help defenders can steal. Of course, players can go for on-ball steals when it's available, but as soon as players start seeking the on-ball steal too often, it will result in unnecessary fouls. Let the offense make mistakes.

Roles and Responsibilities

X1 (on-ball defender)

The main responsibility of the on-ball defender is to put a massive amount of pressure on the basketball. Doing so will prevent the point guard from surveying the floor or making the easy forward pass.

This pressure must encourage the point guard to dribble with the aim being to force them into an uncontrolled dribble.

X1 must also be able to react quickly enough and be fast enough to stay on the point guard's hip to get back in front and cut them off for the trap.

X4 (first help defender)

The first help defender will usually be the player who pressured the inbounds pass (not necessarily always X4)

It's their responsibility to either:

1. If the point guard dribbles down the sideline they must chase hard and trap them on the sideline.
2. If the point guard dribbles towards the middle of the floor they must be ready to jump switch with the on-ball defender.

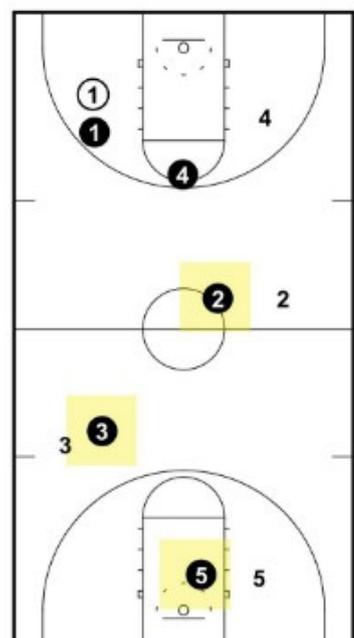
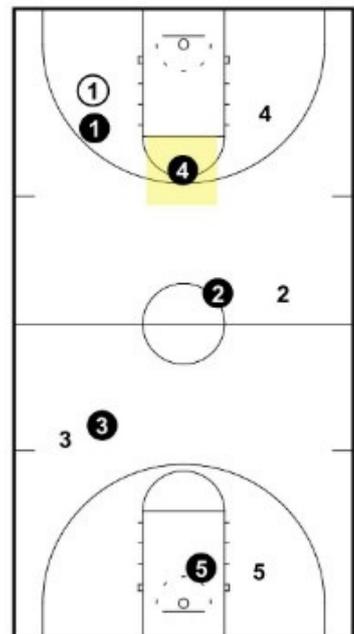
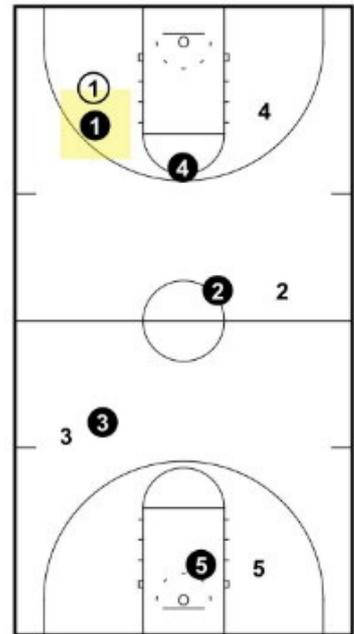
This player must be smart in their decision-making as they have one of the toughest roles on the floor.

X2, X3, and X5 (rotation defenders)

The other three players on the floor are initially responsible for denying the easy pass up the floor by playing their opponents side-by-side.

If X1 and X4 manage to get an effective trap or confuse the defense on the switch, it is the responsibility of the other three defenders to get the steal.

For this reason, they all must be continually readjusting their defensive position so that they're in the best possible spots to rotate and intercept passes.



How to Run the 'Run and Jump' Press

Setting Up the Press

The run and jump defense starts immediately after your team scores the basketball.

A defensive player must put immediate pressure on the inbounds pass to allow the defense time to set up and also to discourage the long pass down the floor.

The player that pressures the in-bounds pass should be the player closest to the ring after an offensive score. This rule is in place to ensure that the basketball is pressured as quickly as possible (x4 in the diagram).

This player might be a guard after a layup or a big after your team makes an outside shot. It doesn't matter. But if your players find themselves deciding who should guard the inbounds pass out of a guard and a post player, we would prefer the post player.

It won't always be obvious who was closest to the ring, so your players must communicate with each other to ensure someone quickly pressures the basketball.



Inbounding the Basketball

As the opposition is in-bounding the basketball, your team must have one defender pressuring the in-bounds pass, and the other four defenders should be matched up in man-to-man.

The most important rule to remember on an inbounds pass is that **we want the opposition to catch the basketball below the free-throw line. Preferably as close to the baseline as possible.**

To do this, the front defenders (x1 and x2) play behind their opponents and allow them to cut to the basketball and make the catch.

If the offensive players screen for each other, the defenders simply stay behind and switch.

The players that are defending at half-court should be standing on the side of their opponent so that they can pick off any passes that are made over the top of the front line. We never allow the lob pass.

Once the basketball is inbounded, the player who was defending the inbounds pass must immediately get behind the line of the basketball.

The run and jump can only be effective when the help defenders are in the forward path of the player with the basketball. This allows us to be in the correct positions to jump-switch or to trap.

We don't mind if the opposition makes a backwards pass. We simply pick the basketball up while everyone falls back into help positions again.



Advancing the Basketball

Once the offense has inbounded the basketball and the defenders are all in the correct positions, the next step is to put a high amount of pressure on the player with the basketball.

We do this to achieve two things:

1. To not allow the point guard to survey the floor and make a forward pass.
2. To encourage the point guard to dribble the basketball.

It's crucial to this defense that your players never allow a pass into the middle of the court. This is why all defenders near half-court should be playing side-by-side on their opposition player.

Instead, the on-ball defender should influence the player with the basketball to dribble down the sideline since that's where our traps occur. They do this by positioning themselves on the dribblers inside hip and by applying a high amount of pressure.



To be clear on this important rule, **it's imperative that the on-ball defender puts a high amount of pressure on the basketball.**

This can be difficult for a lot of players to do because they're scared the dribbler will get the first step and beat them off the dribble. This concern is understandable because coaches have been drilling into them for years to never allow an offensive player to beat them off the dribble.

But in the run and jump defense, we want that to happen!

We allow the offensive player to get the first step which encourages them to dribble down the sideline but ensures the dribbler can't completely cut off the on-ball defender and beat them.

The #1 goal is to get the dribbler into an uncontrolled dribble down the sideline leading straight into the main sideline trap!

Trapping and Run and Jump

Providing that your team has done a good job of cutting off forward passing lanes and forcing the point guard to dribble, there are three possible scenarios that can occur:

1. The point guard reverses the basketball to another player.
2. The point guard dribbles down the sideline.
3. The point guard dribbles towards the middle of the court.

Before we get into a detailed breakdown of each scenario, here's the two most important things for players to remember...

– If the point guard dribbles to the middle of the floor, it's a run and jump. If the point guard dribbles down the sideline, the players set a trap.

– There are no pre-determined spots on the court where traps or run and jumps are made. So it's up to the players to think and make decisions.

Let's talk about each of these in more detail...

1. The dribbler reverses the basketball to another player

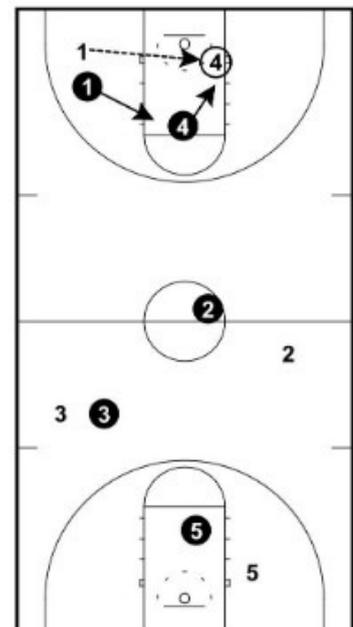
As spoke about previously, no player should be behind the line of the basketball.

This means that we will allow the opposition to reverse pass to another player.

This is often a good result for the defense because a reverse pass is usually made to a player that isn't experienced at advancing the basketball up the court.

Either way, all that happens when there's a reverse pass is the help defender immediately steps up and pressures the basketball the same way the on-ball defender was, and the previous on-ball defender falls and becomes the new help defender.

Simple.



2. The point guard dribbles down the sideline (sideline trap)

The best outcome is if the point guard elects to dribble down the sideline because that's where the defense has the best opportunity to trap.

As spoke about previously, this begins with the on-ball defender positioning their body so that the point guard is encouraged to dribble down the sideline.

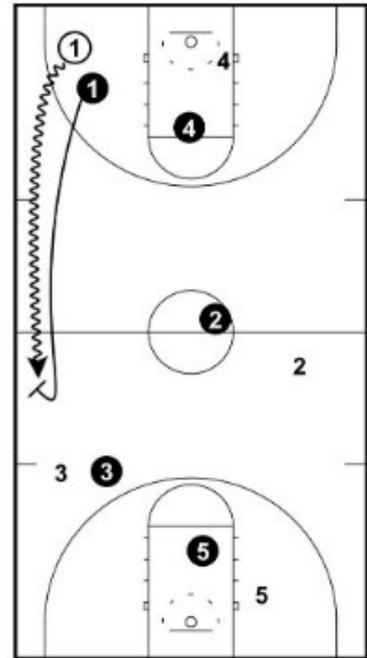
When they do start speed-dribbling down the sideline, three actions must occur:

a. The on-ball defender must sprint to cut the dribbler off.

While we allow the offensive player the first step, the on-ball defender must never allow themselves to get completely beat on the play.

Instead, they must stay on the dribbler's side initially and then sprint in front to cut them off from dribbling down the sideline.

It's important for the on-ball defender to ensure there's space between themselves and the dribbler so that they're not riding their hip up the court. This will always lead to a foul.



b. The first help defender must trail and set a blind-side trap.

The best player to trap the basketball on the sideline with is the first help defender. This is usually the player who puts pressure on the inbounds pass.

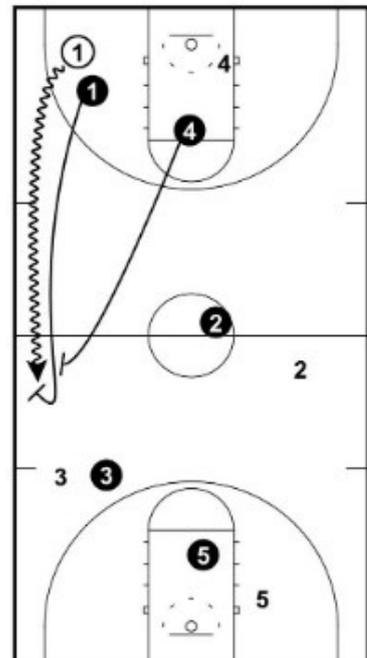
When the point guard starts to dribble down the sideline, this help defender must immediately chase and catch up from behind to set the trap.

Since the dribbler doesn't see the help defender trailing and assumes the defense is man-to-man, this is a very effective trap.

This trap can occur anywhere along the sideline but preferably happens just over half-court. By trapping there, the point guard has to make a much more difficult pass because they're not allowed to pass backwards or it would result in a back-court violation.

If the offensive player crosses over when they're cut off by the on-ball defender, the trailing defender must attempt to tap the ball from behind.

If the offensive player stops or slows down when they're cut off, the on-ball defender and trailing defender must set a strong trap.



Trapping Tip – Do not reach in and try to steal the basketball. Players that do this will foul. Instead, make the guard throw a lob pass that can be intercepted or attempt to get a deflection on the pass.

c. The other three players must rotate and put themselves in the best position to steal a pass.

Once the trap has been set by the on-ball defender and the first help defender, the other three players must position themselves in spots that will give them the best opportunity to intercept or deflect a pass.

These positions will vary depending on where the trap is set, but in most cases the forward pass must be covered (x3), the last defender will stay in the paint to protect the rim (x5), which leaves x2 to anticipate the pass to o4 or o2 and intercept it.



3. The point guard dribbles towards the middle of the court (jump switch)

The jump switch is used when the point guard dribbles towards the middle of the court. It occurs based on the thought that it's too hard to set a great trap in the middle of the court.

A successful jump switch always begins with the help defender being in the correct position. If they're too far away, it gives the dribbler too much time to make a pass. If they're too close, the dribbler can make a simple lob pass over the top.

The help defender must be close to the midline of the court hedging between their own player and the dribbler.

When the point guard starts a speed dribble towards the middle or when the help defender thinks the time is right, they quickly close out to the basketball with their hands up to prevent the easy lob pass over the top.

As they do this, the help defender must yell out 'switch' or yell out the on-ball defender's name so that they know to switch.

The on-ball defender must then immediately turn and sprint to cover the help defender's player that they've been switched on to while keeping a hand in the passing lane.

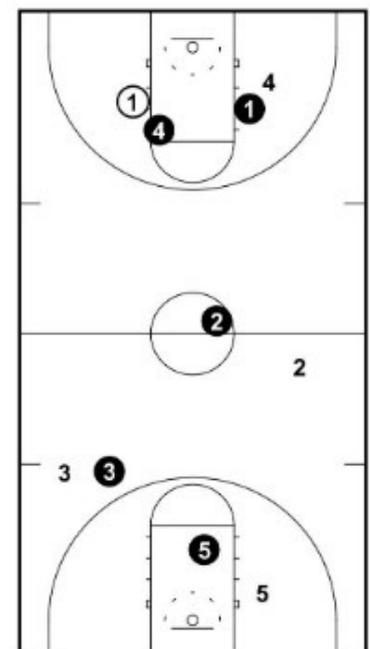
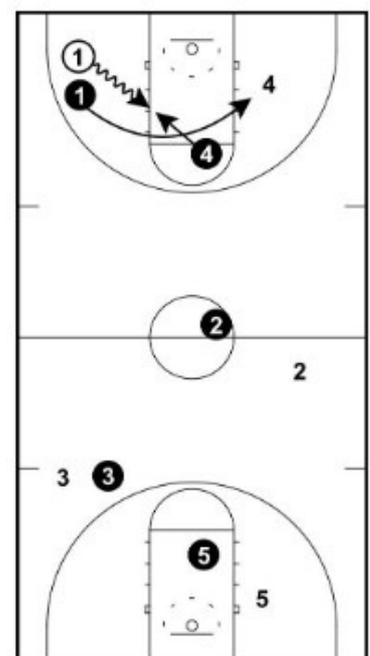
It's important that when the help defender decides to jump switch, they commit 100% to it. If they're too slow to close out, the point guard will have an easy pass to an open player and the defense will immediately be at a severe disadvantage.

The goal of the jump switch is to confuse the point guard into picking the basketball up, rushing a pass that results in a turnover, or into committing a traveling violation.

On the run and jump switch, the main question your players are going to have is some variation of this...

"When should the jump switch occur?"

Unfortunately, there's no easy answer you can give your players
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when they ask this question. There is no perfect time.

The best time to jump switch will depend on the skill of the point guard, the two defenders involved, whether the dribbler knows it's coming, the speed they're dribbling the basketball, etc.

Start by encouraging your players to jump switch when the point guard dribbles with their head down towards the middle of the floor.

Then, as your players get more experienced with the run and jump, they'll develop better instincts and feel for when they should jump switch and when they should stay on their player.

Getting Into Your Half-Court Defense

When to switch into your half-court defense

One of the most important aspects of a full-court press is knowing when to fall back into the half-court defense.

The Run and Jump press is often a one-and-done trap.

After an unsuccessful sideline trap or if the opponent is able to break your press, players must immediately sprint back and protect the paint first and then get into the half-court defense.

A hard thing for players is that there's no specific and clear moment where the players will know to switch to their half-court defense.

If the on-ball defender and a help defender are working hard to set a trap on the sideline, the other players stay ready to get in the passing lanes and get a steal or deflection.

Occasionally the opponent will break your press. When they do, you can't allow the offense any easy layups.

Any player that slowly jogs back after the press is broken should be sat on the bench immediately. The run and jump will never be effective if you don't have players who are willing to sprint.

If you're coaching a younger team, I recommend getting them to sprint back to the paint before picking up their players.

If you're coaching an older team, your players should sprint back into the correct positions.

Similarly to 'when to jump switch', your players will get better at making these decisions as they gain more experience running the press.



Secure every defensive rebound

To be successful with the run and jump defense, your team needs to rebound the basketball.

One of the benefits we talked about at the beginning of the article is that this defense increases the tempo of the game and encourages the opposition to take quick shots.

This means that your players won't always be in perfect position to box out and secure the rebound.

Because of this, it's crucial that your players are attacking the rebounds with passion whenever a shot is put up.

If they have the opportunity, your players should make contact with their player before pursuing the rebound.

But more than anything, remember this piece of advice...

"I always laugh when people ask me about rebounding techniques. I've got a technique It's called just go get the damn ball" – Charles Barkley

Variations

Deny the Inbounds Pass

Your team can also choose to full-deny on the inbounds pass.

This variation can be implemented if you need to get a steal with little time on the clock, if you're trying to cause a 5-second violation, or just to change up the defense and see how the opposition respond to it.

As usual, the closest player to the ring after a score puts immediate pressure on the inbounds pass.

The difference is that the players in the front line must quickly find an opponent and establish ball-side position so that they're denying the inbounds pass.

The defenders further down the court must be defending side-by-side so that if there's a lob pass over the top, they have the opportunity of intercepting the pass.

If your players are unable to get a steal on the inbounds pass or cause a 5-second violation, they simply establish the normal Run and Jump positioning.

The downside of the 'full deny' method is that your team is more vulnerable to screening and players can also get caught out of position if the offense makes a successful lob over the defense or the defender is trailing and the point guard catches the basketball in a sprint.



Trap from the Middle Defender

In the main section of this guide, I only talk about trapping on the sideline from behind the offensive player with the first help defender.

Another option the defense has is to trap with a defender who's further down the court. This will usually be the second help defender.

Let's discuss how it works...

Instead of trapping from the blindside with the first help defender (x4), the second help defender (x2) sees the point guard speed dribbling down the sideline and decides to slide over to cut them off and set a trap with the on-ball defender.

When this happens, x4 must drop back and get into position to intercept any pass that is made to 04 or 02.

Some coaches prefer this method.

Some coaches use both methods.

I do not.

Here are the reasons why I only use the blindside sideline trap.

1. The defender can see the middle trap coming

While in a perfect world the point guard dribbling the basketball down the court has their head down in an out-of-control dribble, that's not always the case.

If the dribbler has their head up and is able to see the floor they'll see the middle defender sliding over and will usually have time to make the correct pass before the trap is set.

I'm not saying this trap will never work, but I find the blind-side trap much more effective.

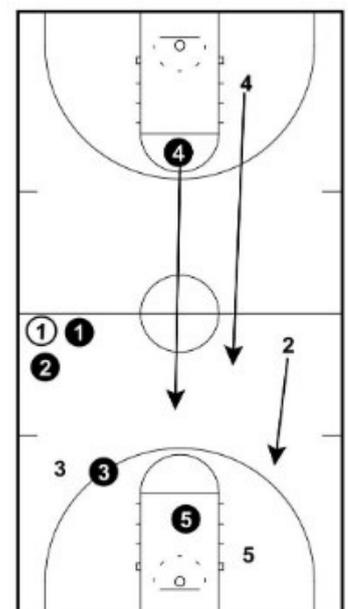
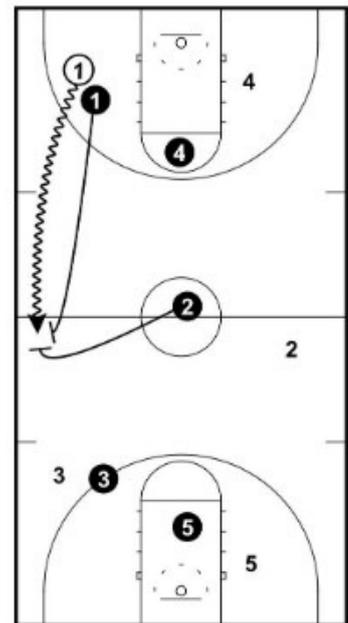
2. The middle trap has difficult rotations

If the middle defender slides over, the first help defender has to retreat before getting into a position where they can intercept a pass to either of the two top offensive players.

Whereas on the blindside trap by the first help defender, the middle defender is already in a great position to read the pass and get an interception or a deflection.

3. So there's no confusion

When coaches use both methods of trapping, it's not uncommon to see both help defenders looking to trap the point guard on the sideline.



Even if they both don't fully commit to setting the trap, if the middle trapper is half-way to the trap before they realize, they're going to be stuck in 'no man's land' and have no opportunity of intercepting or deflecting a pass.

The simpler the better. And I believe it's more effective to only use the first help defender as a trapper and leave the other three players to read the defense, get in the right positions, and pick off passes.

How to Defend Against a Star Guard

Here's a common question that coaches have...

"What do you do when you come up against a guard who is able to dribble through your full-court defense or pick it apart with their on-target passing?"

Every so often you'll come up against a team that have a great guard who makes your defense look terrible.

They're composed, smart, make pin-point passes, and can dribble like few others. They're the ones that make you question whether you should just drop your players back to the half-court defense for the rest of the game.

Do you want to know what to do against star guards like this?

Get the basketball out of their hands.

Easier said than done, I know... but there are a few strategies you can use to do it.

Here are my 2 favorites...

1. Double deny with the inbounds defender

For this strategy, the player who is usually tasked with pressuring the in-bounds pass instead front-guard the player we want to keep the basketball away from.

This creates a difficult double team for the offensive player to break free from since the defensive guard is playing behind and stopping the pass over the top.

When implementing this strategy, it's important that the less-skilled offensive guard is left completely open to receive the pass.

This encourages the in-bounder to make the pass to the less-skilled player which is exactly what the defense wants to happen.



2. Immediately trap after the inbounds pass

The second strategy is to immediately send a trap at the star guard after they receive the inbounds pass.

The trap should come from the player pressuring the inbounds pass.

When you use this variation, it's important that the on-ball defender influences the guard to the middle of the floor after the catch by positioning their feet close to the sideline.

This allows the second trapping defender to close out and set the trap in a good position after only a few short steps.

The goal of this is to get the star guard to pass the basketball out of the trap.

This variation doesn't have to be used solely against star players. You can use this trap at any player at any time as a great change-up to keep the opponent unsure about what your team is going to do.



How to Defend the Clear Out

If you're coaching against experienced coaches, one of the main tactics they'll use to beat the run and jump press is to clear out.

This means that the offensive team will move all offensive players into the front court except the player dribbling the basketball up the court and the player passing the basketball in.

When the in-bounder passes the basketball in to the point guard, they're often instructed to immediately sprint into the front court leaving the point guard in a one-on-one situation.

The thought-process behind this tactic is that by clearing out there will be no help defenders to jump switch or to trail the dribbler and trap on the sideline.

So what should the defense do when the offense employs this tactic?

I've found 2 strategies to be effective...

1. Immediately double the dribbler

If the opposition inbound the basketball to their primary dribbler, you can immediately send a double team at them using the inbounds defender to get the ball out of their hands.

This will force them to pass the basketball to a player who is usually not accustomed to bringing the basketball down the floor.

If they see a clear floor ahead of them and take off in a speed dribble, this can be another great opportunity to push the basketball to the sideline and set a blind-side trap.



2. Bring up a help defender

Even if the in-bounder sprints off to the opposite end of the court you can still choose to leave a help defender in the front court.

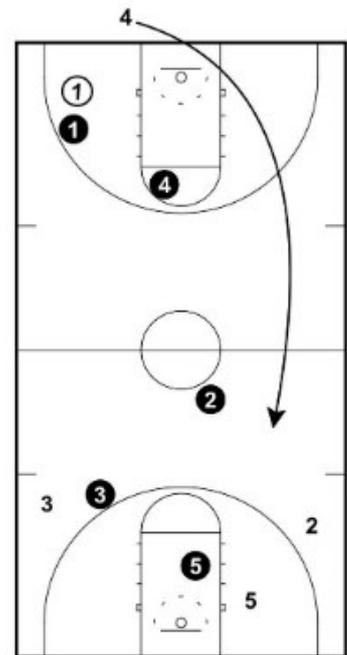
When doing so, every player must rotate up one position so that the player who's left open is the player furthest away from the basketball.

If the dribbler chooses to dribble up the sideline, the help defender trails and sets a blind-side trap as usual.

If they dribble towards the middle of the floor, the help defender can close out with high hands and force the dribbler to make a tough pass or pick up the basketball.

It's super important that if the press is broken, the two players in the front court sprint back and find a player since the other three defenders will be at a disadvantage.

This tactic is very effective in youth basketball since the player with the basketball often can't make the long pass over the top to the open player.



Developing Your Team's Run and Jump System

It's super important that your defense stays unpredictable so that the offense doesn't figure the best way to attack your press.

You can do this by using a mixture of variations.

The easiest way for the coaches and players to distinguish between the different variations is to use colors to identify which type of press to use.

Here are my recommendations and the colors most coaches use:

White – Run and Jump without Trapping

When in the white press, players do not trap on the sidelines.

Players will still use the jump switch if the point guard dribbles towards the middle of the court, but the help defenders do not leave their opponent to trap.

This variation can be useful for young players still learning the run and jump to get them experience using the jump switch without the complexity of trapping and rotations.

It can also be effective for teams that have been trapping on the sidelines and now want to give their opponent a different look. The opponent will be expecting the sideline trap but it won't come.

Blue – Run and Jump with Trapping

This is the normal press described throughout this article.

Front defenders start behind their direct opponent, pressure the basketball, and then either trap on the sidelines with a help defender or jump switch when the basketball is dribbled towards the middle.

This is the press coaches should use most often.

Red – Double Immediately After Inbounds Pass

Red can be used when playing against a star guard whose hands you want to get the basketball out of or simply to give the opponent a different defensive look.

Black – Full Denial on the Inbounds Pass

The black full-court press is most commonly used when your team desperately needs to force a turnover, but it can also be effective to keep the offensive team guessing what you're doing.

Conclusion

If you're going to use the run and jump defense, it's something I recommend you commit to long-term.

You're not going to see instant results since it requires a lot of decisions to be made by the players during gameplay (which is great!). But it's a defense that they'll get much better at as they gain more experience using it.

Another thing I love about the run and jump is that it's based on man-to-man principles which is great for long-term development of your players.

If you have a team that's willing to work incredibly hard on the defensive end of the floor, the run and jump is perfect for your team.

Shot Clocks in High School Must be Mandatory

 basketballforcoaches.com/high-school-shot-clock/



Whether all states in the United States of America should implement a high school shot clock has forever been a highly debated topic.

I was recently urged to write this blog post after seeing yet another important high school basketball game come down to stalling the basketball for several minutes before shooting on the buzzer (twice).

The game I'm talking about was a 4 overtime game in Iowa between [Ames High School](#) and [Hoover High School](#).

Here's a quick summary of the overtime periods (4 minutes each):

OT 1 – Hoover holds the basketball near half-court for the entire 4 minutes and missed the only shot (a fade-away) of the first OT on the siren.

OT 2 – Hoover and Ames combine for a total of 3 field goal attempts in 4 minutes.

OT 3 and 4 – During the third and fourth overtimes there were more shots, but there was still a clear focus on slowing the basketball down.

This is the only (!) shot taken from the four-minute, first overtime. Ames and Hoover still tied at 25 and headed to a second overtime. pic.twitter.com/PHvzHT9ewj

— Joseph Hoyt (@JoeJHoyt) [January 11, 2017](#)

This is not a one-off scenario.

The 'stalling' strategy is a commonly used tactic by coaches in high school basketball across the country.

I think we can all agree that this is not the kind of basketball we want to see in the dying minutes of any game.

A shot clock is the inevitable solution to this problem.

Although my preference is clear, my goal with this article isn't to pretend I know the solution to every question or to imply that there are no negatives to adding a shot clock.

There are.

And just like the positives, I've done my best to cover them in great detail.

Important: Please Read...

I want to take this moment to make something perfectly clear from the start...

I do not blame any high school basketball coach for utilizing the stalling strategy to increase their team's chances of victory.

In fact, I applaud the smart coaches who do this! The coaches of Hoover and Ames did exactly what I would have done in the same scenario.

You see, the job security of a high school coach relies on the numbers in the win and loss columns. As long as they're playing within the rules of the league, a coach must do everything they can to put their team in the best position for success.

That's their job.

Unfortunately, since high school basketball rules allow it, that often means stalling the basketball.

So, the real question is...

"Why are coaches allowed to use this strategy?"

And the answer is...

Because the NFHS allows it to happen.

It's up to the National Federation of State High School Associations Basketball Rules Committee to put rules in place (a shot clock, preferably) that stops this strategy hurting high school basketball.

History of the Shot Clock

Before we get into the pros, cons, and common rebuttals of implementing a shot clock in high school, here's some history on what it is and why it was first introduced...

What is a shot clock?

To put it simply, the shot clock is a timer used to increase the pace of a basketball game.

Once a possession starts, the offensive team must attempt a shot within the set time limit displayed on the shot clock. The ball must be released from the player's hand within this time and either touches the rim or enters the basket.

Failure to get a shot off within that time or hit the rim on a shot attempt on the shot-clock buzzer will result in a turnover.

Why was the shot clock first invented?

The shot clock was first introduced to the NBA in the 1954-1955 season because too many teams were getting a small lead and then stalling the basketball for the rest of the game.

The only way the trailing team could get the basketball back was to foul over and over again until the offensive team went to the free-throw line.

“That was the way the game was played — get a lead and put the ball in the icebox. Teams literally started sitting on the ball in the third quarter.” – Bob Cousy

Sounds fun, huh?

Naturally, this led to low game attendance, next to zero press coverage, and many incredibly boring games of basketball.

The NBA needed to do something to fix this — and fast.

Enter the basketball savior: **Danny Biasone**.



Danny Biasone, the owner of the Syracuse Nationals at the time, was the first person to truly push for a shot clock to be introduced to basketball.

He decided on the specific time of 24-seconds after analyzing the fast-paced NBA games he had enjoyed and noticing in these games that each team took approximately 60 shots each.

2,880 seconds (48 minutes) divided by 120 (total shots) = 24.

And with that, the 24-second shot clock was invented and introduced to the NBA.

—

As for the other levels of basketball...

The women's college game was the next to bring the shot clock into their game in 1970 by implementing a 30-second shot clock which still remains today.

Next was men's college basketball in 1985 with a 45-second shot clock that was later shortened to 35-seconds in 1993 and then shortened again in 2015 to 30-seconds.

The WNBA launched their league in 1996 with a 30-second shot clock and the decreased it to 24-seconds in 2006.

My Recommendation: A 35-Second Shot Clock

Instead of waiting until the end of the article to give my recommendation, I'm going to give it to you at the start because I'll refer to it numerous times throughout the article.

High school basketball should implement a 35-second shot clock.

For both girls and boys.

It's simple, consistent, and is the perfect amount of time to accomplish what high school needs a shot clock for...

It's long enough to complete any basketball offense as long as your team is playing smart, fundamental basketball; while it also removes the opportunity for teams to stall the basketball for several minutes at a time.

Am I opposed to the current 30-second shot clock that girls high school basketball have in place? Nope.

Would I be opposed to a 30-second shot clock or even a 45-second shot clock? Nope.

Let's just introduce a consistent shot clock and then people can talk about adjustments that they want to make in the future.

States Currently Using a Shot Clock

There are currently only 8 states using a shot clock in high school basketball.

California: Boys – 35 seconds. Girls – 30 seconds.

New York: Boys – 35 seconds. Girls – 30 seconds.

Washington: Boys – 35 seconds. Girls – 30 seconds.

Massachusetts: Boys – 30 seconds. Girls – 30 seconds.

Maryland: Boys – No shot clock. Girls – 30 seconds.

Rhode Island: Boys 35 seconds. Girls – 30 seconds.
North Dakota: Boys 35 seconds. Girls – 30 seconds.
South Dakota: Boys 35 seconds. Girls – 35 seconds.



Unfortunately, by going against the NFHS's 'no shot clock' rule, all of these states are ineligible to vote on the rules committee in the future.

Now, let's discuss the 4 most important pros and cons of implementing the shot clock.

Pros of Implementing a Shot Clock

1. Stops Teams from Stalling

Imagine this scenario...

Two high school teams have been competing hard against each other for 3 and a half quarters. It's an enthralling game with only 4 points the difference with 5-minutes remaining.

And then coach of the team with the 4 point lead stands up and shouts out, "*Spread it out! No shots!*"...

You then proceed to watch the final 5 minutes turn into 20 minutes of fouling and free throws.

This is a common finish to a current high school basketball game.

If you have a team that can slow the basketball down without turning it over and also make their free-throws, without a shot clock there is currently no benefit whatsoever for them to risk shooting the basketball and missing unless they get an open layup.

But wouldn't you have loved to watch these two teams continue the exciting game and battle it out until the very end?

I would.

2. Better Viewing Experience

No one wants to go and watch a basketball game where one team stalls the basketball for half of the game.

In fact, when it happens, it's not uncommon to hear the spectators and parents of the team stalling the basketball yelling out to their team to '*shoot it!*' or '*play the game!*'.

A fast-paced game will definitely increase the number of people that attend high school basketball games.

Here are just a few of the other benefits of making high school basketball a better viewing experience for those watching:

- 1. Players enjoy playing in front of bigger crowds.**
- 2. It's great for the community.**
- 3. More money through entrance fees.**
- 4. Increased sponsorship opportunities.**
- 5. More young kids watching the game.**
- 6. And more...**

3. Increased Player Development

This one seems obvious to me.

More playing basketball = better players.

No player on the court is going to improve if one team is holding the basketball up for several minutes at a time while every player on the court is standing in the same spot watching them.

By increasing the pace of the game with a shot clock, players will have more opportunities on offense and defense.

4. Prepares Players for the Next Level

One of the most important roles of a high school coach is preparing their kids for the next level of basketball if they choose to pursue it.

There is a large benefit to allowing players to get accustomed to playing with a shot clock in high school.

By playing with a shot clock in high school, players will...

- a. Experience the pressure of the shot clock winding down.**
- b. Get in the habit of keeping an eye on the shot clock.**
- c. Learn what to do in an end-of-clock scenario.**

A high-school shot clock will prepare players for a college shot clock just as the college shot clock prepares players for basketball at the professional level.

Cons of Implementing a Shot Clock

1. The Price of Installing a Shot Clock

Disclaimer: The prices are approximations based on my own research and talking to different coaches. Prices for each high school will be different depending on many factors.

The price of purchasing, installing, and operating a shot clock are not cheap.

Research suggests that it will cost approximately \$2,000 – \$4,000 for most schools to purchase the shot clocks and have them installed.

Depending on the current facilities in each high school gym, it's not as simple as purchasing a shot clock and away they go...

There are installation costs that will vary greatly depending on the current setup. Some may need to purchase entire new scoreboards to make it happen which will be a remarkably more significant cost.

And the biggest question of all is...

"Where is the extra money going to come from?"

And to be honest, I don't know.

I don't know the budgets of each individual school and I'm not going to pretend like I have a simple solution for each individual school that has this problem.

What I do know is that the high schools in 8 states were able to make it happen.

I'm 100% sure many of their schools had similar financial concerns when the idea of the shot clock was first being talked about seriously.

But when it was made mandatory, they all found a way to pay for it.

This is a one-time cost for each school that will have a significantly positive impact on their school's basketball program for years to come.

2. A Shot Clock Will Lead to More Zone Defense

Many coaches in favor of a shot clock claim that it will without-a-doubt lead to improved defense.

I disagree.

In fact, I think there's a chance that it might hurt overall defense with more teams falling back into a zone.

I'm not completely against zone defenses at the high school level like I am at the youth level, but I do believe it's beneficial for teams to be playing a man defense most of the time.

One of the main reasons coaches sometimes stall the basketball is to drag the defense out of a zone and force them to compete man-to-man.

Once the shot clock is part of the game, the offense doesn't have that option anymore.

3. Who's Going to Run the Shot Clock?

While some schools have a seemingly endless supply of volunteers willing to jump in and help whenever needed, not all schools have this luxury.

Many schools have a hard enough time getting people to fill positions on the scoreboard and helping out with setting up.

The thought of another position to fill would make them cringe.

Deciding who's going to run the clock is one of the most important questions each high school must ask.

- **Will it be a paid position?**
- **Will it be a volunteer position?**
- **Will they need to pay another referee to run it?**

As for the knowledge part of running a shot clock, I don't think it would be too much of an issue.

I've seen plenty of people get taught the basics on how to run a shot clock in 5 minutes and then immediately done a perfect job during a game.

Even a simple YouTube video like this one is perfectly capable of teaching beginners the shot clock basics.

4. A Shot Clock Will Make it Harder for Underdog Teams to Compete

Stalling the basketball is a strategy that many high school coaches employ to compete against more skilled teams.

The theory is, the fewer the possessions in a game, the more chance the underdog team has of coming away with an upset victory.

When preparing for a next game, one of the most important things a coach must do is decide if they want it to be a high-possession game or a low-possession game.

If the coach thinks their team would have more of a chance in a low-possession game (usually meaning they're playing a team more skilled than they are), then they'll often slow the ball down and employ the spread offense at some stage during the game.

This often allows underdog teams to keep game competitive or at least prevent a large point differential.

By implementing a shot clock, these teams won't have the option to slow the game down anymore.

6 Most Common Arguments Against a Shot Clock

1. The ***“We don't need one. Our games are always high scoring. It wouldn't be a factor in our league anyway”*** argument.

This is literally the worst argument against shot clocks of all time.

Nothing makes me more frustrated when I read coaches trying to justify that there's no need for a shot clock in their league by saying things like...

“The league has done the research and the shot clock wouldn't come into play enough for the league to warrant it any further discussion.”

“There's no need for a shot clock at this stage. Look at the high scores of all of our games.”

“I can't even remember the last time our team kept possession of the basketball for 30 seconds without shooting or turning the ball over.”

Sure, the shot clock won't come into play during most regular season high school games...

But do you know when it will?

During the most important games of the season!

When the season is on the line. Knockout tournaments. Playoff games. Championship games.

That's when smart coaches start applying the stalling tactic to give their team the best possible chance to win.

Don't allow the lack of a shot clock to ruin the most important game of the entire season.

2. The ***“We surveyed the coaches of our league and they were split 50/50 on wanting to implement a shot clock”*** argument.

Asking the current coaches in each league often isn't a great strategy for figuring out what's best for the competition.

Want to know the obvious reason why?

Every coach is going to answer by analyzing their current team and asking themselves whether a shot clock is going to help their team or not.

If it wouldn't benefit their team, they'll vote against it.

If it would benefit their team, they'll vote for it.

Naturally, most surveys completed by the coaches in a certain league return close to 50/50 on each side.

3. The “*The fundamentals of basketball at the high school level are already bad enough. Implementing a shot clock and forcing players to rush their shots will just make it worse*” argument.

If your team can't get off a quality shot within 35-seconds, there are far bigger problems on your team to worry about than the shot clock.

Sure, there are going to be times when your team gets close to the shot clock and need to force up a shot attempt; but that should not be often.

If your team is setting strong screens, cutting with purpose, staying aggressive, and moving the ball well, there's no reason it should regularly take a high school team more than 35-seconds to get off a good shot.

4. The “*Why should we change our sport just to entertain the spectators? That's not why we play. If they don't like it they can leave*” argument.

To this argument I'll bring up the numerous benefits of improving the viewing experience stated earlier in the article:

1. Players enjoy playing in front of bigger crowds.
2. It's great for the community.
3. More money through entrance fees.
4. Increased sponsorship opportunities.
5. More young kids watching the game.
6. And more...

But it's not just the spectators that don't want to watch a game that ends 10 – 6 at half time...

The kids don't want to play in them either.

They're bored, humiliated, and they're not developing into better players while they're standing around watching the point guard dribble at half-court.

5. The “*Barely anyone else has changed so why should we?*” argument.

You're right.

There have already been 8 states that have committed to improving high school basketball and there needs to be even more!

Who's going to be next to step up?

6. The ‘*High school players don't have the skills to get off a good shot with only 5 seconds left on the shot clock*’ argument.

There are going to be some wild shots attempted at the end of the buzzer. That's something we have to accept.

It's the end result of an offense not having created a better shot opportunity in 35-seconds.

Players aren't going to miraculously find the skills to perfectly navigate an end-of-shot-clock situation when they enter the college system.

Knowing what to do with the shot clock winding down is something that all high school players should practice and learn before they make the jump to college.

Conclusion

No matter how in favor I am of introducing shot clocks to the high school game, I can appreciate the difficulties that a lot of schools face with funding and personnel.

With that said, the positives of a shot clock far outweigh the negatives.

This is something that we all should be pushing to happen as soon as possible.

There is no doubt in my mind that there will be a point in time when shot clocks are made compulsory in every state; it will be one of the most important and positive changes in high school basketball history.

The only question left to answer is:

How long do we have to wait?

Should Youth Athletes Specialize in Basketball?

 basketballforcoaches.com/youth-basketball-specialization/



Photo Credit: [jDevaun.Photography](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

There's an alarming trend rising in youth sports and it's starting to scare the hell out of me... Children as young as 7 years old are being pushed/encouraged to either play or train for a single sport up to 6 days a week.

This is called 'sport specialization' and it's a super hot topic in the youth sports community. Some parents and coaches believe this is a must if their child wants to have any chance of playing at a high level in the future, others disagree and argue that it hurts the overall development of the child.

But before we get into the pro's and con's of sport specialization, let's make sure we begin this article on the same page by defining exactly what 'sport specialization' is...

Sport specialization is the year round participation and dedication to a chosen sport, at the exclusion of all other organized sports.

Pretty simple. An athlete (or their parents...) picks a sport and dedicates all their athletic development time to training and playing only that sport. Nothing else.

Crazy, huh?

Trust me, it happens more than you think.

Arguments For Specialization

In my opinion there is only one decent argument for specializing at a young age, and, if we're honest, it's a darn good one.

1. The more you train, the better you get

Providing you're working on the right things when you're training, that's an absolute fact that no one can argue. There is a clear correlation between time spent practicing and skill attained.

The only problem is that while you definitely improve with more training, there are negative consequences to training and playing a single sport.

Arguments Against Specialization

1. Who picked the sport?

Was it really the athlete that picked the sport? Or are they only playing it because it's the only sport they've been around to experience in their young lives?

Athletes will benefit from experiencing a variety of sports so that they can truly pick the one that they enjoy the most. Don't assume that because dad played basketball at college it's what the son wants to do. Let them explore.

2. Burnout

Player burnout happens all too often. I'll admit I even experienced it in my playing days. Becoming a good player isn't easy. It takes time consuming, repetitive execution of the fundamentals... not always drills kids love to do. Forcing this repetitive work on a young athlete can quickly lead to them resenting the sport and eventually giving up altogether.

3. Overuse Injuries

Evidence shows there's an increased risk of overuse injuries for players that only play one sport. Playing two sports can work on different muscles you may not normally use.

4. Wider Social Group

Sport is a fantastic way to develop social skills. Children that play two sports have the benefit of interacting and making friends with more children. This is especially important for basketball players as there are usually only 10 – 12 other players on the team.

5. Experience Different Coaching

Multi-sport athletes also have the benefit of playing and learning from another coach. This gives them another role model in their life to look up to. Not to mention you'll have double the chance of getting a great coach that puts the process of getting better ahead of results at a young age.

The Answer You Weren't Expecting

We've just went over the main pro's and con's of sport specialization and ended up with one positive and five negatives... so this should be the time when I tell you that your child should always be a multi-sport athlete, right?

Wrong... but maybe right.

Your child does need to specialize at some point... possibly.

Confused?

Let me explain...

As you can see from the pro's and con's above, if we truly have the child's best interest and wellbeing at heart, we will encourage them to participate in more than one sport. Don't make them pick. It will improve their overall health, assist them to develop better social skills, decrease risk of injury, and a number of other factors.

But if they do want to go on to play at a higher level and maybe even professionally, it's highly advised for most athletes that they do specialize (at some point) in a single sport because it's important to get in as much training time as possible to give them the best chance of success.

So we need to find the middle point at which they get the benefit from playing two sports, minimize the negatives, and maximize their chances of going on to play at a high level.

Let's Change the Question

Instead of "Should youth athletes specialize in basketball?", the real question should be...

At what age should athletes specialize in one sport?

Because let's face it. With the amount of highly skilled and talented athletes around nowadays, players do need to specialize at some point (unless you're Bo Jackson, Jim Thorpe, or Deion Sanders) if they have dreams of playing at the next level and to increase their chances of receiving a scholarship.



Photo Credit: [jDevaun.Photography](#) via [Compfight cc](#)

What Age Should Athletes Specialize?

Right from the get go I'll give you an age because I know that's what you're all after...

13 years of age.

Remembering that this whole article is only my opinion, I believe athletes should start deciding whether they want to become a single-sport athlete at the age of 13 on a few conditions conditions:

1. They want to exclusively pursue one sport

If they're enjoying playing two and don't have a burning desire to pursue one over the other, let them do both. Don't force them to specialize.

2. They understand it's a tough road ahead

It's important that the parents and coach sit down with the athlete and explain to them what it will take if they choose to start being 'serious' about their chosen sport.

The Main Reasons Why Athletes Specialize Too Young

When I try and explain my reasoning behind players not specializing until the age of 13 or more, I'm often met with puzzled looks.

A lot of parents, coaches, and players just can't understand that players aren't put at a disadvantage by not specializing until a later age.

Here are the most frequent reasons I've been told in discussions about why they believe athletes should specialize at a young age.

1. The coach told us we should– There are many coaches out there that advise parents and players to focus on one sport regardless of how young they are.

2. It's the only way they'll have a chance– Some parents are concerned that if their child doesn't specialize then those children that do will become far better players than their child because of all the extra training.

3. It's pointless learning a sport they're going to quit– Why would I waste my child's time learning a sport that he's going to quit in a few years.

More and more I'm seeing parents force their kids to become single-sport athletes because of the reasons above.

There are Exceptions to the Rule

After reading back through the article and talking to some close friends on the topic, I realized there will always be reasons against being a multi-sport athlete.

If you're one of the parents with a completely valid reason as to why your child only plays one sport, to save you from tearing me to shreds in the comments, I'll name some of the most common exceptions below.

1. Tight Budget – Some families simply can't afford for their children to play more than one sport.

2. Child only want to play one sport– The same as we shouldn't force players to be multi-sport athletes, we also shouldn't force them to be single-sport athletes either. If they hate playing and training for other sports, don't force them to do it.

3. Needs more time to study – Playing two sports is a big commitment. With training several nights a week and also games, it starts to add up. If this leaves little time for study and the player is falling behind with their grades it's time to focus on what's most important – their education.

Conclusion

So what's the end result?

All children should participate in multiple sports during their younger years, and then, as long as they want to, specialize in a single sport at around the age of 13.

Why 13?

To name a few reasons, I feel at this age the child knows which sport they're most passionate about, they've received the benefit of playing two sports, they will know if they're willing to dedicate the time and energy to one sport, and they have a fair idea of what they're getting themselves into.

For those parents and coaches that are still hesitant about allowing their child or player to be a multi-sport athlete because it will diminish their chances of playing professionally or receiving a scholarship... You're probably right.

You have a better chance at playing professionally and receiving a scholarship if you do specialize at a younger age.

But at what cost?

The chance of high school players going on to play professionally are very, very slim. So if they don't make it, what have they given up in their pursuit of becoming a professional athlete?

We have to weigh the risk vs the reward.

It's imperative that we keep our focus on the most important aspect of youth sports: the health, wellbeing, and overall development of our athletes.

The 5 Moments Throughout a Game You Must Call a Timeout

 basketballforcoaches.com/when-to-call-a-timeout/

Timeouts are a crucial part of a basketball game and can be the difference between going home with a win or a loss. Yes... they're that important.

Every coach must learn at what stage of the game their timeouts will have the best impact on your teams success.

I received an e-mail a couple of days ago requesting advice on when the best times are throughout a game to call a timeout. Obviously, this differ from game to game, but there some hard-and-fast rules that every coach seem's to stick by that I want to share with you.



Here are five times throughout a game when you should call a timeout.

The 5 Moments You Must Call A Timeout

1. To stop the momentum of the other team (and the crowd)

Just as your team will undoubtedly get hot during certain stretches games, there will be times when the opposition also goes on a run where they seem to make every shot they attempt. Once this starts to happen, their players build on their confidence and your players will start to doubt themselves. If nothing is changed this can quickly turn into a disaster and the next time you look up at the scoreboard the opposition has put on a quick 10 points. Which will possibly be the difference in the game.

Having said that, you should always call a timeout in this situation. Especially if you're playing on the road. It calm's down the crowd, re-focuses your players, and cools down the opposition players.

It's all about momentum. You don't want to let the other team get their confidence up.

2. To change your game strategy

Another reason to call a timeout is when you want to make a big change in your strategy.

For example, if you're in a zone-press and it's just not working and you want to bring your players back into a man-to-man defense. Or you're getting killed in the post and need to explain to your players who you want to double the post.

Sometimes it can be hard to call out the changes that you want to be made, especially with younger players. You need to call a timeout so that you can talk to them and explain the changes without distractions.

3. To draw up a specific play

This is most often used towards the end of a game. Ever wondered why the last 3 minutes of a basketball game seem to go for 10 minutes? Timeouts are the reason. In a close game that goes down to the wire it's not uncommon to see 3 or 4 timeouts called in the last couple of minutes.

Down the stretch is when a coach can start to be the crucial difference in a game. Calling a timeout gives you the opportunity to diagram a new play to give you an open look. Whereas if you didn't call a timeout, your players may be forced to run a play that the other team may have learned how to defend during the game and your players may not get an open look.

4. To give your players a rest without substituting

3 minutes to go, the scores are tied, but unfortunately, your best player is running out of gas. Do you really want to sub them out of the game for a chance to rest? I doubt it.

That's where timeouts come in handy. They allow you to give your players a break without being forced to substitute them out of the game.

5. To fire up your team

I was on the ledge as to whether to include this one as some might think 'to fire up your team' also falls under the 'momentum' point. But I don't think it does.

We've all coached games where our players start off the game sluggish and seem mentally out of it regardless of what the score is.

This is a time you should call a timeout to give them a good ol' kick up the backside to get them focused on the game at hand.

Over to you...

I know we all have different opinions... are there any other stages of the game you think coaches must call a timeout?

– Coach Mac

PS. [I love Twitter.](#)

The 8 Must-Have Requirements of Every Point Guard

 basketballforcoaches.com/point-guard-requirements/

The point guard position is the most important position on a basketball court. Don't listen to anyone that tells you different.

They are required to do many things in the game of basketball that are very different to the other four positions on the court.

While the other 4 positions are mainly focused on putting the ball in the hoop, the point guard must have a different, more team focused mentality.

Here are the 8 requirements of every point guard:



Photo courtesy of Milton-Grahamr

1. They must lead the team

The point guard is the extension of the coach on the court.

They're the ones that direct the team and decide which plays the team is going to run. The point guard position is the equivalent of the quarterback in football.

This includes providing encouragement to team-mates and pumping them up before the game. There's nothing better than team-mates slapping high-fives and shouting words of encouragement at each other. The point guard must be the one that initiates this.

2. They must have a team-first attitude

As soon as your point guard cares more about his own stats than the teams win/loss record, you're in trouble.

It would be easy for a point guard to dribble down the floor and call the play that will create a scoring opportunity for themselves, but a point guard shouldn't care about who scores.

The point guards only goal on each possession should be to provide the team with the best opportunity to score. Irrelevant of who is the one shooting the basketball or getting credited with the assist on the play.

3. They must be able to control the ball

The point guard has a lot of things on his mind during the first 8 seconds of an offensive possession. He needs to get the ball down the court with his head up, read the defence, decide on the best play to run depending on the opposing defence, and get his team-mates in the correct positions.

This leaves little time to worry about if you're going to lose the ball or how you're going to get by your defender. Which is why dribbling and ball-control skills are extremely important to have if you're a point guard.

4. They must have a high basketball IQ

The point guard dictates everything that happens on the offensive end of the floor.

This requires the point guard to have a high basketball IQ in order to control the tempo and also to read the opposing defence and know which play will give you the best opportunity to score.

5. They must know where everyone should be during set plays

If your point guard knows where everyone should be on every play it will give them the ability to decide and run the best plays that will exploit the mismatches, or give the person with the hot hand a scoring opportunity.

6. They must have great passing skills

This one's obvious.

The main requirement of the point guard is to distribute the ball to his team-mates in positions that give them the opportunity to score. This often means tough passes off of a pick-and-roll or being able to get the ball to the post-players on the block.

Great passing skills are essential for all point guards.

7. They must know their team-mates strengths and weaknesses

Again, this comes back to being able to exploit the defence depending on mismatches.

The point guard must be able to utilise the strengths and weaknesses of his or her team-mates.

They need to be able to notice if a certain player has an advantage in the post or off the dribble to call the right play accordingly.

Conclusion

Running a basketball team comes with many great responsibilities. Above all, the point guard must put the team before himself.

I was tempted to include shooting as one of the point guard requirements, but players like Rajon Rondo have proved that being a great shooter isn't necessarily required when you're a point guard. It's great to have, obviously. It can make the game much easier when the defender must honour the shot, but I wouldn't include it as an absolute must-have requirement for point guards.

Are there any other things you believe are requirements for point guards that I've left out? Leave a comment and let me know your thoughts.

– Coach Mac

The 35 Best Basketball Documentaries Ever (Watch For Free)

 basketballforcoaches.com/35-best-basketball-documentaries/

There is nothing I love more as a basketball fan than relaxing at night watching a great basketball documentary. And if you're reading this post, I bet you love them too!

One of the things I highly recommend coaches do is use [watching documentaries as a team bonding activity](#). There's so much to learn and players always enjoy watching them.

Here's a list I put together of the top 35 basketball documentaries of all time...



35. Linsanity

The story of Jeremy Lin's unlikely rise to fame mid-way through the 2012 NBA season with the New York Knicks.

The documentary details the adversity he had to get through in order to make it to the NBA.

34. Year of the Yao

Documents the arrival and and adaption that Yao Ming had to go through in coming to America from China, including his first season in the NBA. And how he put a country of 1.2 billion people on his back as they watched him compete with the best players in the world.

33. Sonicsgate: Requiem for a Team

A 2009 documentary exposing the truth behind the Seattle SuperSonics' tragic exodus after 41 years in the Emerald City. They are now the Oklahoma City Thunder.

32. Jordan Rides the Bus

A look into Jordan's life when he decided to give up the game of basketball and pursuse a career in baseball.

Explore what really motivated Michael to move to baseball.

31. The Doctor – Dr. J

Documents the life of Julius “Dr. J” Erving, the player that popularised the slam dunk.

We see the affect he had on the ABA before merging with the NBA, and his life growing up on in Long Island before becoming an iconic NBA/ABA star.

30. Michael Jordan – To the Max

Take a documentary look at the career of Michael Jordan. Commonly acknowledged as the greatest basketball player who has ever lived.

This film was originally created for IMAX.

29. The Guru of Go

The story of Paul Westhead and his fast-paced offense that he implemented at Loyola Marymount with Hank Gathers and Bo Kimble.

Unfortunately Hank Gathers died on the court in 1990 and this documentary shares what happened.

28. Quantum Hoops

A documentary unlike any other. While most documentaries cover teams on a quest for a championship, this documentary covers the final week of the 2006 Caltech basketball season on their quest for a single win.

27. Salaam Dunk

This documentary follows the incredible story of the American University of Iraq women’s basketball team for a full year as we see what it’s like for them to become athletes, develop friendships, and get through adversity together.

26. Kobe Doin’ Work

A documentary directed by Spike Lee that follows Kobe Bryant during one of the most important games of the season against the San Antonio Spurs.

Get an inside view as Kobe is mic’d up and followed by 30 cameras.

25. The Announcement

The story of one of the hardest times in Magic Johnson’s life, when he announced to the world that he is HIV positive.

This documentary goes in depth into Magic Johnson’s life the days leading up to the announcement, and the years after it.

24. On the Shoulders of Giants

Narrated by Jamie Foxx and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, they share with us the story of the greatest basketball team you've never heard of, The Harlem Rens, and the affect they had on basketball and society.

23. Long Shot – Kevin Laue

The story of Kevin Laue and his dream to be the first one-armed basketball player ever to receive a scholarship and play on an elite NCAA Division 1 basketball team.

22. Lenny Cooke

At one point in his life, Lenny Cooke's potential was rated among LeBron and Carmelo's. But his NBA dream never eventuated due to lack of discipline and a few poor choices.

21. The Iran Job

Follows the life of American basketball player Kevin Sheppard, after he accepts a job to play basketball in the dangerous country of Iran.

Apprehensive and not knowing what to expect, he is surprised to develop close friendships with three Iranian women who share similar political views.

20. Hooked

'Hooked' is the story of one of the greatest players to never make the NBA, Demetrius "Hook" Mitchell.

Unfortunately he found himself in prison after a few questionable life choices (He was arrested and imprisoned for holding up a Blockbuster Video with a water gun).

To show you how good this player could have been, the movie starts off with Jason Kidd and Gary Payton talking about how much better Hook Mitchell was than them at the time.

19. Without Bias

Len Bias. One of the biggest 'What if's?' the NBA has ever know.

After being drafted 2nd overall in the 1986 NBA draft by the reigning champion Boston Celtics, Len Bias was found dead due to a cocaine overdose. At the time Bias was considered one of the best athletes in college basketball with some scouts believing he was prospect than Michael Jordan at the time.

This documentary explores his rise to fame at the university of Maryland and the enormous impact that his death had on all basketball levels including interviews from all of the people close to him.

18. Survive and Advance

The story of Jim Valvano leading the NC State Wolfpack to an NCAA championship in 1983. Their unlikely success came through a series of nine overtime and one point games.

Concluding with the national championship game against Houston who featured Hakeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler, they became one of the biggest underdogs ever to win the title.

17. The Street Stops Here

The story of one of the countries best high school coaches, Bob Hurley Sr, and his committment to improving the lives of the players at St Anthonys and giving them hope for the future.

16. Unguarded

The story of a troubled player with superstar potential, Chris Herren, and his battle against drugs that eventually destroyed his career.

15. Soul in the Hole

Created in 1997, 'Soul in the Hole' is a lesser-known film that documents a team from Brooklyn called 'Kenny's Kings' as they prepare for the Soul in the Hole championship tournament. Getting their name from their coach, Kenny Jones.

The film looks closely at the relationships that Coach Kenny Jones has with his players on and off the court. Particularly the 18 year old star of the team with off-court issues, Ed 'Booger' Smith.

14. Doin' it in the Park

A documentary on pick-up basketball.

Co-directors Bobbito Garcia and Kevin Couliau visit over 180 outdoor courts in New York City. The film explores the history, culture, and social impact of New York's summer b-ball scene, widely recognized as the worldwide "Mecca" of the sport.

13. The Other Dream Team

A documentary on the 1992 Lithuanian Basketball Team who became the symbol of Lithuania's independence movement from the USSR.

Led by their stars Sarunas Marciulionis and Arvydas Sabonis, Lithuania received a bronze medal at the Barcelona Olympics.

12. Requiem for the Big East

Explores how the Big East conference of college basketball quickly rose to become the most successful basketball league in America.

But eventually the league found itself fighting for survival.

11. Gunnin' for that #1 Spot

A 2008 documentary that follows the lives of 8 of the best high school basketball prospects at the time leading up to the 1st annual Boost Mobile Elite 24 Hoops Classic at Rucker Park. All eight players went on to play in the NBA.

Those players were:

1. Michael Beasley
2. Tyreke Evans
3. Jerryd Bayless
4. Brandon Jennings
5. Kevin Love
6. Lance Stephenson
7. Kyle Singler
8. Donte Greene

10. Once Brothers

Documenting the relationship between Drazen Petrovic and Vlade Divac.

Once teammates on the great Yugoslavian national team, their friendship was torn apart after civil war broke out and they found themselves on opposing sides.

9. Benji

The story of a 17 year old Chicago-born player by the name of Ben Wilson who was shockingly murdered the day before his senior year.

Regarded as the best basketball prospect at the time, he was shot dead during an altercation at school.

8. Winning Time: Reggie Miller

A documentary that covers the intense rivalry Reggie Miller had with the New York Knicks during the 1990's and the feud he had with Spike Lee.

7. Bad Boys

There aren't many teams that were ever feared as much as the Detroit Pistons. The Detroit Pistons of the late 1980's – early 1990's would do anything to win. And we do mean anything.

Whether you love them or hate them, it's a fascinating story.

6. More Than a Game – LeBron James

More than a game documents the story of LeBron James and his high school teammates

(Sian Cotton, Dru Joyce III, Willie McGee, and Romeo Travis) in Akron, Ohio, and their journey to dominating high school basketball.

Featuring many highlights of the young crew, we are privileged to see the beginnings of someone soon to become the greatest basketball player in the world.

5. The Fab Five

This is the story of the first five-man starting line up to make it to the NCAA Championship game. Those five starters were Jalen Rose, Ray Jackson, Chris Webber, Juwan Howard, and Jimmy King.

With their baggy shorts and black socks, this team changed basketball in a major way. The only disappointing thing about this documentary is Chris Webber deciding not to participate in it.

4. No Crossover – Allen Iverson

This documentary discusses the bowling alley brawl that Iverson was involved in as a 17-year-old that ended up with him charged and put in jail.

It details the court trial he was involved in and how it became a night that would define Iverson's young life.

3. Through the Fire

Follows the life of Sebastian Telfair during his senior year of high school basketball. His growing up in Coney Island and attending Lincoln High School, and the struggles he went through to eventually make it to the NBA.

Focuses on the big decision he had on whether to attend college or to jump immediately to the NBA in order to improve the financial situation for his family.

2. Magic and Bird – A Courtship of Rivals

There's not much better than a documentary of the rivalry between two of the best basketball players that have ever lived. The HBO documentary explores how they first developed their rivalry during their NCAA years that continued on to the end of their hall of fame careers in the NBA and the influence they had on bringing increased attention to the NBA.

1. Hoop Dreams

By far the best basketball documentary ever made is Hoop Dreams.

Hoop Dreams shares the stories of two athletes, William Gates and Arthur Agee, from middle school to college, and the challenges and obstacles they must overcome in order to make a career out of basketball.

It beautifully documents the struggle that many young players are forced to endure as they grow up in a poor neighbourhood.

Hold up Coach Mac...

“You said we could watch 18 of these online for free... Where are they!?”

I’ve compiled a playlist of all the listed documentaries that can be found on YouTube at the time of creating this post. I’ll do my best to keep it up-to-date and add new documentaries to the playlist when they come out.

You can find the playlist here: [Best Basketball Documentaries: Basketball For Coaches](#)

The Best Defense For Youth Basketball

 basketballforcoaches.com/best-defense-youth-basketball/



Let's play a game.

We're going to design the perfect defense for youth basketball...

Here are 3 important criteria I came up with off the top of my head that are imperative when designing a youth basketball defense:

- 1. The perfect youth basketball defense should prepare players for the next level.*
- 2. The perfect youth basketball defense should allow players to experience all components of defense.*
- 3. The perfect youth basketball defense should be easy to learn.*

Are there any defenses you can think of that fit this criteria?

It's definitely not a zone defense.

Most coaches would guess the traditional man-to-man defense but it's not that either (although your guess is close).

What if I was to tell you that there's a defense that has all the benefits of man-to-man defense except it's far easier for coaches to teach and players to learn?

Because this defense does exist.

It's the Pack Line defense.

Every youth basketball team (any team below high school level) should be running the Pack Line defense.

Before I explain why, let's discuss what this defense is...

What is the Pack Line Defense?

The Pack Line defense is a variation of a man-to-man defense that involves players sagging closer to the basket instead of cutting off passing lanes.

It was created by Dick Bennett of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Wisconsin-Green Bay, University of Wisconsin, and Washington State.

The Pack Line defense is already used by many youth basketball coaches as well as high school teams and some of the best college basketball teams in America.

The best examples being Jim Boone at Delta State University, Mike Neighbours at the University of Washington, and Chris Mack at Xavier University.

But don't be scared off by the big names. This defense is simple enough to employ with players as young as 5-years-old.

Differences Between Pack Line and Man to Man Defense

Let's clear this up...

There is very little difference between the Pack Line defense and a traditional man-to-man defense.

In fact, there's only one main difference...

The position of the defender one pass away from the basketball.

The Pack Line defense positions the defender one pass away in 'help' position.

The traditional man-to-man defense positions the defender one-pass away in 'denial' position.



That's all.

Defending ball screens is exactly the same.

Transition defense is exactly the same.

Boxing out and rebounding are exactly the same.

There are certain 'rules' when running the Pack Line defense such as not allowing players to drive baseline or three-quarter fronting the post, but these aren't set in stone and can be done in a man-to-man too.

There's not as much difference between the Pack Line defense and man-to-man defense as most coaches seem to think.

But the small differences that do exist are important and make defense much simpler to teach than

Let me explain why...

Why the Pack Line Defense is the Best Defense For Youth Basketball

Traditional man-to-man defense is too hard to teach to young players.

It's like trying to teach a 5-year-old how to break a full-court press before they can even dribble with their head up.

Sure, it can happen... but it won't be very good.

Instead, there needs to be a simpler progression before players attempt to master the man-to-man defense.

The Pack Line defense is the perfect defense to introduce players to man-to-man concepts while being much easier to learn.

Here are the two most important reasons why...

Reason #1 – It's much easier for players to learn the Pack Line defense despite only being a small (but important) difference from a traditional man-to-man defense.

Jim Boone and other advocates of the Pack Line defense all believe that off-ball defenders cannot accomplish all three of these things effectively:

1. Deny
2. Help
3. Recover

Think about it...

How often do your players get confused whether they should be in help position or denying the pass to their player?

It happens all the time in youth basketball.

With constant movement of the offensive team, a player can go from denial to help to denial to help in the space of 10 seconds.

This is too much for players still learning how to play the game. No wonder they always get lost on defense!

Implementing the Pack Line defense removes this confusion by removing the denial aspect of defense.

Instead, players only have to focus on two things:

1. Help
2. Recover

Defenders know that when they're not playing on-ball defense, they should be in help position.

The Pack Line teaches the four off-ball defenders where they must be on the floor to help their teammates.

While this might not sound like much, don't underestimate the significance of this difference. It makes defense much easier for youth players to understand.

Reason #2 – It teaches players how to play defense as a team

In a traditional man-to-man defense, it's common to see players denying their player the basketball from all over the court.

They'll often even lose sight of where the basketball is on the court because their focus is on shutting down the player they're defending.

A player's thoughts are: *"If I stop my player from scoring the basketball then I've done my role for the team."*

It's an individual mindset.

Whereas the Pack Line defense is always one player playing on-ball defense while the other 4 players are in help position ready to react to whatever the player with the basketball does.

This changes the mindset from 'how can I stop my player' to 'how can we stop the basketball as a team'.

Quick Note: Just because there's help doesn't remove the responsibility of the on-ball defender to guard their player one-on-one. It must be constantly emphasized that each player must 'guard their yard'.

So how do you teach it?

How to Teach the Pack Line Defense

I've already written a full coaching guide to the Pack Line defense so I'm not going to go into detail in this post.

The purpose of this article is to explain to you why the Pack Line defense is the best defense for youth basketball.

But don't worry...

I will provide you with all the resources you need to implement it with your team!

First, you can find the 2,500+ word guide I wrote on the Pack Line defense on the link below:

[The Complete Guide to the Pack Line Defense](#)

Second, I'll give you 11 free eBooks on the Pack Line defense for free!

[yellowbox]**Exclusive Bonus:** I've compiled 11 eBooks (yes, eleven) on the Pack Line defense into one giant 201-page PDF. It contains everything you need to know to teach your team the Pack Line. To download them for free, [click here](#).[/yellowbox]

2 Common Misconceptions About the Pack Line Defense

There are two frequent arguments used by coaches who are against the Pack Line defense in youth basketball:

1. *"The Pack Line defense is a zone defense disguised as a man-to-man defense."*

or

2. *"The Pack Line defense doesn't develop players as well as the traditional man-to-man defense."*

Both of these accusations could not be further from the truth.

Here is why in more detail...

1. "The Pack Line defense is a zone defense disguised as a man-to-man defense."

This is completely wrong. The only coaches who will say this are those that aren't aware of how the Pack Line defense works.

It is not at all like any zone defense. Players are required to guard an opposing player, not an area.

I'm going to share with you the 4 reasons why zone defense is terrible for youth basketball that I wrote about in my 'Zone Defense is Terrible For Youth Basketball' blog post, and why the same is not true for the Pack Line defense.

a. Zone defense creates poor defensive habits.

To name just a few...

- A zone defense creates lazy on-ball defenders. In the Pack Line, on-ball defense is exactly the same as man-to-man defense.
- In a zone, defense players guard an area by standing and watching the basketball. In the Pack Line, defense players have a direct opponent and must be constantly adjusting their off-ball position.
- In a zone defense, there are minimal opportunities to defend a ball screen. In the Pack Line, defense players must fight through screens exactly the same as man-to-man.
- In a zone defense, there are minimal opportunities for a guard to defend on the inside or a post player to guard the perimeter. In the Pack Line, defense players guard everywhere on the floor.

b. A zone hinders the offensive team's development too.

Most zones in youth basketball will pack the paint with defenders and force their opponent to shoot long shots from the outside.

This is because players aren't guarding a direct opponent, they're guarding an area. So they barely ever move.

In the Pack Line defense, every defender has an opponent. Defenders have to chase their opponent around the court, fight through screens and defend all over the court.

While this develops the defenders and lets them experience all parts of defending, they will make mistakes and the offensive team will be able to take advantage of them.

c. Zone defense doesn't prepare players for the next level.

A zone doesn't prepare players for the next level because of all the poor defensive habits they pick up and because they don't experience enough components of defense.

As we've just talked about, in the Pack Line defense players don't pick up these bad habits and they do experience all components of defense.

So players are prepared for the next level.

d. Zone defense doesn't make basketball fun.

Zone defense isn't fun in basketball because players have minimal chance of scoring because they're forced to shoot long-distance shots.

When running Pack Line defense players won't be packing the key and forcing outside shots.

They'll be playing very similar to a man-to-man defense (except easier to learn).

The defense will make mistakes and the offensive team will be able to move the basketball around and take advantage of them.

Next...

2. ” The Pack Line defense doesn’t develop players as well as the traditional man-to-man defense.”

Let’s start off by remembering that the only difference from a traditional man-to-man defense and the Pack Line is the defender one-pass away.

Players will have to learn how to deny this pass eventually.

But we shouldn’t throw young players into the deep end immediately and expect them to learn the complexity of a man-to-man defense immediately.

The Pack Line defense is a progression.

Use the Pack Line defense to teach the principles and basics of man-to-man defense and then when your players are capable, start introducing the denial aspect of man-to-man.

We must sacrifice some complexity in the beginning to allow players to develop quicker.

Conclusion

The Pack Line defense is the best defense for youth basketball.

It doesn’t matter about the height of your team, how athletic they, or any other excuse that coaches find to run a different defense.

The Pack Line will provide your players with all the benefits of running a traditional man-to-man defense but will be much easier to teach your players.

Due to simplicity and promoting team basketball, the Pack Line defense is the only defense I’ll be recommending for youth basketball from now on.

Until there’s something better...

The Four Roles at a Youth Basketball Game

 basketballforcoaches.com/the-four-roles-at-a-youth-basketball-game/



We have a terrible problem in youth basketball. And it's getting worse.

Here are three examples of it... (see if you can guess what it is).

1. Coaches are always screaming at referees about calls they disagree with.
2. Spectators are coaching kids from the sideline.
3. Players are constantly arguing with the referees.

While this might seem like 3 different problems, it's really not.

They all come down to this...

The people involved in youth basketball games are forgetting their role.

We always talk about player roles... *"This is your role on the team. You're meant to do this. You're not meant to do that. You're a shooter. You're a defender."*

But do we — the parents, coaches, referees, etc — pay enough attention to what our own role is in youth sports?

I don't think we do. And we need to.

Let's discuss what the four roles of a youth basketball game are...

Role #1 – Player

Players role during the game: Play the game of basketball.

Commonly trespasses into the role of: Referee.

Let's start with the easiest one — the player.

The players have the most fun role of all... They get to participate in the game of basketball we all love so much!

Being a player involves giving 100% effort, having fun, and treating the game, opposition, and teammates with respect.

If a player can do that, they've fulfilled their role.

Occasionally, players might become frustrated and begin to trespass into the role of the referee by arguing calls and forgetting their main focus — playing.



Role #2 – Referee

Referee's role during the game: Enforce the rules and maintain order on the basketball court to the best of their ability. Ensure that the players compete in a fair and safe environment.

Commonly trespasses into the role of: None.

The referees are by far the best at sticking to their role during a game.

Coaches might joke that there are a lot of referees who simply spectate and never blow their whistle, but the majority of referees know their role and stick to it.

One important thing all coaches must remember:

The ability and skill level of the referee doesn't change their role or your role. They're still the referee and you're still the coach.

Just because you have a young or inexperienced referee calling your game doesn't give you the right to switch into the role of a referee and abuse them.

Always use proper coach to referee etiquette.



Role #3 – Coach

Coach's role during the game: Be a positive leader. Continually motivate, coach, and support your players.

Commonly trespasses into the role of: Referee.

The role of a coach is to be a positive leader of young people by motivating, coaching, and supporting your players.

The way a coach executes this role depends a lot on what level of basketball they're coaching...

For youth basketball, the coach must ensure they distribute playing time correctly (according to the expectations they set at the beginning of the season), and encourage, educate, and motivate their players, all while making sure the players are having fun!

For higher-level coaches, winning becomes a far higher priority and decisions become based on what gives the team the best chance for success.

The role that the coach too often tries to take on is that of the umpire.

Nothing saddens me more than watching a coach berate umpires who are clearly trying their best.

This isn't to say that coaches aren't allowed to speak to the referees, but it must be done appropriately and with respect.



Role #4 – Spectator

Spectator's role during the game: Watch the game and encourage the players.

Commonly trespasses into the role of: Umpire and coach.

The spectators have the simplest role of the four by far...

The spectators role is to relax and enjoy the game. If a spectator feels the need to yell out (which is completely within their right), it should only be words of encouragement.

They must refrain from yelling at the referees (just like coaches and players), and even more importantly must refrain from coaching the players.

Here's a simple tip all spectators should remember: As soon as you stand out from the crowd, you're doing something wrong.

One of the worst things a spectator can do is coach from the sidelines.

If a spectator is yelling out instructions which conflict with what the coach is telling the players to do (this happens all the time), then it will only make the player confused.

You'll be forcing the player into a lose/lose situation where they must decide whether to follow the coach's advice (and risk a verbal thrashing from their parents on the car ride home) or follow their parent's advice (and disrupt the team's game plan).

Here's an example of this:

I'm against players following their shot. It ruins shooting technique, puts doubt in a player's mind before they've even shot the basketball, and I'd rather players get back on defense.

Most parents want their son or daughter to follow their shot. I guess this is because they assume it will miss and the player will have an opportunity to secure the rebound.

As you can imagine, this leads to some incredibly confused players when they know my philosophy is opposed to what they're hearing their parents yell out from the sidelines.

And a confused player isn't a good player.

This isn't to say all spectators have no idea what they're talking about. A lot of them do. A lot of them would make great coaches. A lot of them are current coaches.

But if you're not the current coach of the team playing, then you're a spectator and it's best for everyone to keep your coaching thoughts to yourself.



Summing Up...

It's important to understand that the role you fill will often change on a game-to-game basis.

But, for the most part, you can only fill one of the following roles during each individual game.

- Player
- Referee
- Coach
- Spectator

(There are rare exceptions like a player-coach. Quick shout-out to the great Bill Russell leading the Celtics from 1966 – 1969. Champion.)

Every person involved in a basketball game must know their role before the game begins, accept their role, and stick to it throughout the game.

In the words of Lou Holtz...

“It always amazes me that spectators want to coach, coaches want to officiate, and officials just want to watch the game.” – Lou Holtz

– Coach Mac

The History of Basketball

 basketballforcoaches.com/basketball-history/



Who invented basketball? That's a question I receive a lot as a coach.

As coaches and lovers of the game, it's important (and fun!) to know the origins of how basketball first began.

Who Invented Basketball?

The game of basketball originated in December 1891 by a Canadian born man by the name of James Naismith.

Naismith was a teacher at the YMCA training school in Springfield, Massachusetts. He was required to train young men to become instructors at newly opened YMCA centres.



Dr. James Naismith

With the cold weather keeping the class indoors, in December 1891, Naismith was asked by the schools Superintendent of Physical Education, Dr. Luther. H. Gulick, to create an indoor game that would keep the young men active during the cold winter months.

Upon this request, Naismith nervously set out to create a game that his class would enjoy. In a diary found many years later he had written...

“I felt this was a crucial moment in my life as it meant success or failure of my attempt to hold the interest of the class and devise a new game”

With the help of his wife and memories of playing ‘Duck on a Rock’ during his childhood, he decided to create a game that would focus on skill rather than strength.

For those who are curious... ‘Duck on a Rock’ was a game in which players threw rocks at a certain target placed on top of a large boulder or tree stump.

The game he ended up inventing is the game we all know and love today – basketball.

How Basketball Was First Played

Basketball required very little equipment to play... two peach baskets hanging 10 feet above the ground, and a soccer ball.

The object of the game is to work as a team to throw or bat the soccer ball into the opposing teams peach basket, while defending a score in your peach basket from the opposition team.

As you can imagine, it was a major pain getting the ball out of the peach basket when a team finally scored. Some say they used a long poll to push the ball out, others say someone was required to climb a ladder to retrieve it...

Either way, the initial players weren’t great shooters so they didn’t have to worry about this too much! Heck, in the first game ever played there was only one score during the entire game! But I’ll explain more about that game later in this article.

Originally the game involved nine players on each team... What! Why nine players? Because Naismith’s class had 18 people in it.

He also developed rules for the game known as ‘The 13 Rules of Basketball’.

The 13 Rules of Basketball

1. The ball may be thrown in any direction with one or both hands.
2. The ball may be batted in any direction with one or both hands, but never with the fist.
3. A player cannot run with the ball. The player must throw it from the spot on which he catches it, allowance to be made for a man running at good speed.
4. The ball must be held by the hands. The arms or body must not be used for holding it.
5. No shouldering, holding, pushing, striking or tripping in any way of an opponent. The first infringement of this rule by any person shall count as a foul; the second shall disqualify him until the next goal is made or, if there was evident intent to injure the

person, for the whole of the game. No substitution shall be allowed.

6. A foul is striking at the ball with the fist, violations of Rules 3 and 4 and such as described in Rule 5.
7. If either side makes three consecutive fouls it shall count as a goal for the opponents (consecutive means without the opponents in the meantime making a foul).
8. A goal shall be made when the ball is thrown or batted from the grounds into the basket and stays there, providing those defending the goal do not touch or disturb the goal. If the ball rests on the edges, and the opponent moves the basket, it shall count as a goal.
9. When the ball goes out of bounds, it shall be thrown into the field and played by the first person touching it. In case of dispute the umpire shall throw it straight into the field. The thrower-in is allowed five seconds. If he holds it longer, it shall go to the opponent. If any side persists in delaying the game, the umpire shall call a foul on them.
10. The umpire shall be the judge of the men and shall note the fouls and notify the referee when three consecutive fouls have been made. He shall have power to disqualify men according to Rule 5.
11. The referee shall be judge of the ball and shall decide when the ball is in play, in bounds, to which side it belongs, and shall keep the time. He shall decide when a goal has been made and keep account of the goals, with any other duties that are usually performed by a referee.
12. The time shall be two fifteen-minute halves, with five minutes rest between.
13. The side making the most goals in that time shall be declared the winner.

The First Game of Basketball Ever Played

The first game of basketball ever played on the 21st of December, 1891, at the YMCA training school in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The gym was incredibly small. Only 50 feet x 35 feet, compared to current day courts which are 94 feet x 53 feet.

Naismith arrived early that day. After posting the '13 Rules of Basketball' on the bulletin board of the gym, he then nailed a peach basket to the lower rail of the balcony on both ends of the gym.

When the players arrived, Naismith split his eighteen students into two teams of nine players and done his best to teach them the 13 rules of basketball.

They were now ready to embark on a game destined to change sport forever...

Little did James Naismith or of any of his players realize how big this new game would become in a very short amount of time.

The players involved in the first basketball game were;

Team 1:

John J. Thompson, Eugene S. Libby, T. Duncan Patton, Frank Mahan, Finlay G. MacDonald, William H. Davis, Lyman Archibald, Edwin P. Ruggles, William R. Chase.

Team 2:

George Weller, Wilbert Carey, Ernest Hildner, Raymond Kaighn, Genzabaro Ishikawa, Benjamin S. French, Franklin Barnes, George Day and Henry Gelan.

The final score of the game ended 1 – 0. Team 1 were the victors.

William R. Chase scored the only goal of the game from 25 feet away from the basket... becoming the first person to score a goal during a game in basketball history!

– Coach Mac

The Method Used Only By The Worlds Best Shooter

 basketballforcoaches.com/method-used-by-the-worlds-best-shooter/

The man I'm referring to when I mention the 'worlds best shooter' is none other than Dave Hopla. Hopla regularly shoots 98+ percent from the floor. A number the rest of us mere mortal coaches and players can only dream of.

Yet as great as he is, for some reason players aren't copying the methods that he has used (and is still using) to become a great shooter.

The worst thing about it all? It's not a secret. He's not hiding it from anyone. He talks about this method on many videos he features in and in many articles published about his shooting... Yet I still see barely any players copying his methods.

Want to know his secret? Here it is...

Dave Hopla records every single shot he takes... Every. Single. Shot.

Something every player needs to start implementing to drastically improve their shooting ability.

5 Reasons Why Recording Your Shots Will Make You a Great Shooter

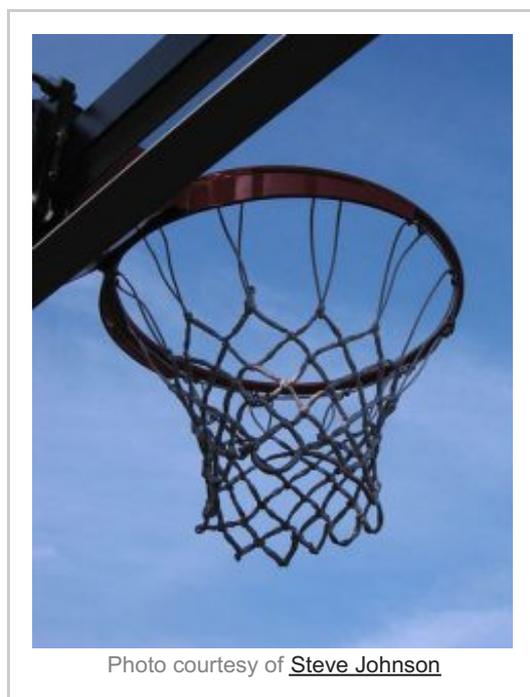
1. You Cannot Improve What You Don't Measure.

The best way I've found to convince players to start recording their shots is by referring to the weight room. How many people go to the gym without a plan and a record of the previous weight they lifted so they can improve on it? Not many.

Everyone that goes to the gym has a plan and records their completed sets and reps accomplished.

Why do they do this? Because they want to keep improving. If they didn't record the amount weight they lifted and for how many repetitions then they wouldn't know if they're making any progress or not.

Imagine going to the gym and just chucking on the closest weight you can find. Think you're going to make any strength gains doing that? Doubt it. But it's basically what's happening every time players are going to the gym and to 'get up some shots'. Players head down to



the gym and start shooting from where ever they feel like that day.

Why would improving shooting ability be any different from the weight room? Why do we keep track of our training in the weight room but not on the basketball court? It doesn't make sense.

2. It Makes Every Shot Important

When your players are just in the gym getting up shots most of the time they mean nothing. They're not at game speed. The player isn't mentally locked in. There's no pressure on the shot. And all this ends up with players shooting half-hearted not really caring whether the ball goes through the hoop or not.

How much is that going to help improve your shooting ability? Not very.

When you're recording your makes, every single shot is important and your brain knows it. You're locked in. You're concentrating on your technique.

3. You Can Set Goals

Each day the player steps into the gym they'll have a goal to strive for. You'll know your previous best and your average and will want to perform better than both of them.

By setting goals you'll be able to challenge yourself each time you step onto the court.

And when you get down to the last couple of shots you're taking to achieve your personal best it's not much different to shooting the ball in crunch time in a real game. That's pressure you won't get from regular shooting.

4. You Will See Improvements

The problem with improving is that it's a slow and gradual process. And because the improvements players make are so gradual, players will hardly ever notice the improvement they've made in their shooting ability.

This can be a motivation killer for a lot of players.

How often have you heard a player comment "I put in so much effort but it's just not working!". Little have they realised that they've gone from shooting 60% from the free-throw line to 70% but haven't even noticed a change.

The change is so gradual that they will adapt to it along the way without noting the success of the hard work they've put in.

By recording your shots you'll see the undeniable proof of the improvement in the data.

Players will be able to look at the data and see that the extra shooting practice they're putting in is worth it and it will encourage them to do more and keep improving.

5. You Will See Your Weak Areas

The data doesn't lie.

I've talked to many players that claim to be great three-point shooters, but if they started recording the makes and misses they actually shoot, I'm sure a lot would take back that statement.

Recording your shots will tell you the areas of the floor you should be looking to shoot from during games, and also the areas you need to focus more on improving in practice.

What's next?

If you're a coach and want to see your players improve their shooting ability, you should share this article with your players. That could mean sending them this article via e-mail, printing out copies to give to your players at training, or sharing it on social media sites.

If you're a player: Take this advice and use it. It will help you improve. The greatest shooter in the world does it. Why don't you?

PS: If you want to connect with Dave Hopla, you can do so by visiting him on his [website](#) or on [Twitter](#).

The Offensive Guide to the Pick and Roll

 basketballforcoaches.com/offense-pick-and-roll/

The pick and roll is one of the most effective, oldest, and most commonly run basketball plays in history.

It was first made into an art form by John Stockton and Karl Malone at Utah. It can be devastating against any defense when the players know how to run it properly.

Overview of the Pick and Roll

Before I get into the finer details of how to efficiently run the pick and roll, let's go over what exactly a pick and roll is.

At the most basic level, a pick and roll is an offensive play that involves a player setting a screen for a teammate that has the ball.

You want the person with the ball to have great decision making, passing, and dribbling skills. The person setting the screen is usually a forward or a center.

For this article I'm going to assume the centers and forwards and setting the screen, and the guards and dribbling the ball.

The most important thing is for the guard with the ball to have great decision making, passing, and dribbling abilities as they are the ones that will be in charge of creating the play.

It **can** be run from anywhere on the court, but most coaches only run it from either wing or at the top of the 3-point line. These are the places where the guard will have the most space to create.

Now let's get into the main things each position should be doing to make the pick and roll successful.

I'm going to provide you with step-by-step instructions on what each player should do.

Guards

Here are the 5 requirements of the guards to running a successful pick and roll.

1. **Set the defender up.** This is to keep the defender honest and make sure they stay in



front of the player with the ball and don't cheat. This can be done with a quick dribble move away from the screen. All you need to do is a quick in-and-out or a jab step.

2. **Come off the screen shoulder-to-shoulder.** There should be barely any space between the dribbler and the player setting the screen. It's the guards job to run the defender into the screen! This gives the defensive player has no chance of staying in front. They're going to be behind and give the guard a head start to the hoop.
3. **Be patient.** Wait until the screen is fully set. Patience is an important part to an effective pick and roll. Too often inexperienced guards takes off before the screen is set.
4. **Attack coming off the screen.** There should be an obvious change of speed. It won't be long before the defender hustles to catch up and get's back in front.
5. **Read the defense.** Once they've used the screen, the guard must read the defense and make a decision about what to do next.

Recap: The 5 guard requirements.

1. Set the defender up.
2. Shoulder-to-shoulder.
3. Be patient and wait for the screen.
4. Be in attack mode.
5. Read the defense.

Forwards and Centers

Here are the 5 requirements of the forwards and centers to running a successful pick and roll.

1. **Don't telegraph the screen.** This isn't always easy because at a younger level the same plays are run over and over. The defense is going to gradually learn when and where the screens will come from. Which makes it impossible not to telegraph. But I still believe it's a crucial step that all players must learn. For instance: In a close game, if you draw up a play during a time out that the defense hasn't seen before, not telegraphing a screen may be the difference between your shooter getting an open shot or not.
2. **Sprint to set the screen.** It's imperative to create separation between the screener and his defender. It will make it a lot easier for the guard to decide what to do once they've used the screen and a lot harder for the defenders to decide whether to switch on the play or not.
3. **Hold the screen.** The more separation you can create between the guards defender and the guard, the better. It will force the defenders to switch, whereas if you roll too early, the defenders will have a better chance to recover.
4. **Roll or dive to the basket** After setting a screen on the guards defender, you have the option to either dive to the basket, or reverse pivot and roll to the basket looking to receive the pass for the layup.
5. **Show a target hand.** On the roll make sure that the bigs call for the ball and show a target hand where they want the ball to be passed to.

Recap: The 5 center and forward requirements.

1. Try not to telegraph the screen.
2. Sprint to set the screen.
3. Hold the screen.
4. Roll to the basket.
5. Show a target hand.

But what about the other 3 players?

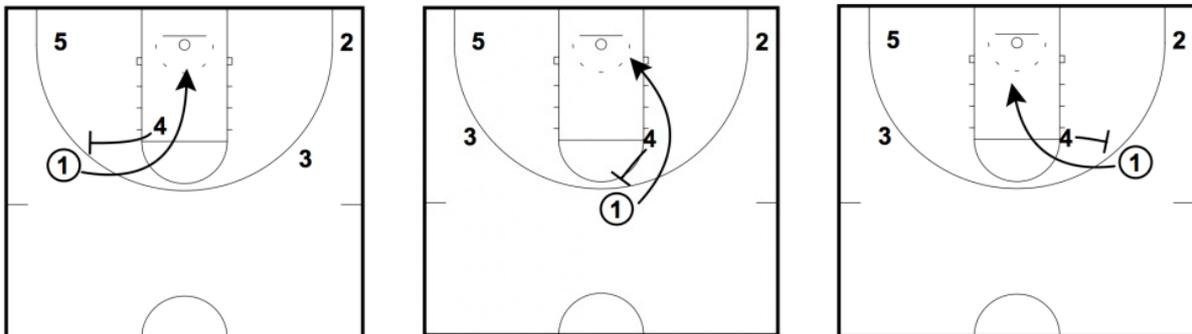
If you were thinking that; good question. Because the other three players on the court are just as important in the pick and roll as the two running it.

The other three players must **space the floor**.

They must recognise the pick and roll is happening and spread out accordingly. This generally involves them moving outside of the three-point line so that the guard has space to create a play.

Assuming that the three players can knock down the outside shot, if any of the defenders drop in to help out guarding the pick and roll, the guard can pass to the open player for the wide open shot.

This is how the other three players should space themselves depending on where the pick and roll occurs...



This Jerry Seinfeld Secret Will Motivate Your Players to Train Every Day

 basketballforcoaches.com/jerry-seinfeld-secret/

The other day I came across a [fantastic article on LifeHacker](#) written by a software developer named Brad Isaac (a fantastic website by the way. If you're not subscribed to it I advise you to ASAP).

In the article Brad tells of a night he met the Jerry Seinfeld at a club and had the opportunity to ask Seinfeld for any tips that would benefit an up-and-coming comic. What Seinfeld revealed next is a method that he used to motivate himself to write every single day. Don't worry, I'm not trying to turn you into a writer. The method he revealed can be used to improve any area of your life.

While I was reading through it I was inspired to write a blog post on it's method because it transferred so well to getting consistent action from your players. It's something I've tried in variation in the past, but a method I never thought to blog about.

Want to know what the method is?

The 'Don't Break the Chain' calendar method.

What is the 'Don't Break the Chain' Calendar Method?

The 'Don't Break the Chain' calendar method is a motivational method that uses a calendar placed in a prominent position (usually on the wall of your room) to track your progress on achieving a daily task. For each day that you achieve this task, you get the privilege of drawing a big cross in the box on the calendar of that day.

The theory behind the method is that as these crosses start to build up, you'll force yourself to perform the daily activity simply because you do not want the chain of crosses to break. Building momentum.

Let me show you a quick example of how we can apply this method to our basketball players...

Let's say that you give your players a shooting workout that they must complete every day. They start with a blank calendar, and for every day that they perform the shooting workout, they cross off the day of the calendar.

Pretty simple, ey?



Photo courtesy of [Shankbone](#)

Why is this Method so Effective?

The key to this method consistent action.

The calendar method relies on taking small steps that will add up to big gains in the long run.

Not bombarding your players with a daily basketball workout that consists of shooting 2000 shots per day along with a 45 minute ball-handling workout which they do while it's new and exciting but then abandon the idea three days later.

Would it be awesome if they did that every day? Absolutely.

But will they do that every day? Absolutely not.

So by small steps I simply mean a reasonably easy workout that your players know they will be able to perform every single day no matter what.

By all means experiment and see how much is too much for your players. The daily minimum is going to vary greatly depending on each player and the level that you're coaching.

I guarantee that if your players do a little bit every day, it will eventually add up to big improvements. Because as Tony Robbin's says...

"In essence, if we want to direct our lives, we must take control of our consistent actions. It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives, but what we do consistently" – Tony Robbins.

Before I go on I want to bring up a quick point that's probably at the back of your mind...

The whole time I've been writing this post I can picture coaches screaming at me; "Small steps!? What do you mean small steps!? No one will become a great player by only making 100 shots per day!"

Believe me, I understand that.

If you set a small, achievable task of only 100 makes per day and 4 days a week the player goes out and makes 1000 shots a day, terrific!

But what if they then wanted to slack off the other 3 days of the week? This method doesn't allow that. Even on those other days the player must still make those 100 shots.

And what about the less talented players on the team? This method motivates them to get up their 100 shots per day too!

That's the beauty of this method. Small steps.

Anyway, now that I've got that off my chest, let's move on 😊

What is the Best Calendar to Use?

Before you do anything else, I advise you select which calendar is going to be the most appropriate for you or your players.

There are two calendar options you and your players can use to track your daily habit progress. But I recommend one much higher than the other...

1. The Wall Calendar

This is by far the best option in my opinion.

A wall calendar will serve as a constant reminder that you need to perform your daily activity every time you see it. Which is why it's a must that you hang the calendar in a place that you will frequently see it.

If you miss a day, you know that you'll be feeling guilty about it the rest of the month every time you see the calendar.

Also, it forces you to be accountable because anyone could see the calendar. No one wants people asking them why half of the calendar is filled with red crosses and the other half isn't.

You can either use a full-year calendar with all 365 days on it, or use a normal 12 month calendar. Jerry Seinfeld recommends using the 365 day calendar, but I like to use the 12 month calendar.



The reason being is that after each month you can assign a new workout to your players. This keeps it fresh and interesting; and also lets you adjust the workout to the current time of year.

There are two options to get a wall calendar. Either buy a calendar or print one off your computer.

Here's what you do if you'd like to print it...

If you're using a Mac (like me), if you go into the calendar application and click Command+P, a perfectly designed calendar will appear for immediate printing.

If you're on a Windows computer, perform a Google images search for 'Printable calendar (month) (year)' and you'll find many great designs ready for easy printing.

2. A Digital Calendar

A digital calendar means a calendar program on your computer or an app on your iPhone.

I don't like this option because I think it lacks the accountability factor that the wall calendar provides and it also requires that you remember to do it. You don't get constant visual cues like you would if you used a wall calendar.

If you miss a day in the digital calendar it's easy to slide it to the back of your mind and forget about it because most calendars won't show you the entire month; you'll just put in a yes/no whether you performed the task that day and that will be the end of it.

Though this can be a good second option if you are someone who travels a lot and it isn't possible for you to use a wall calendar.

The best free iPhone app I found to keep track is called 'Way of Life'. I won't list any others because all of the apps do the same thing and I'm sure you've got much better things to do that read about identical apps that offer exactly the same benefits 😊

How to Use this Method

The first thing you're going to need to do is assign your players their 'daily basketball homework'. This can be any kind of workout that you want them to perform daily. Remember to make it small and achievable.

Here are some basketball related examples of things you can use the 'Don't Break the Chain' calendar method for...

1. Make 100 shots
2. 10 minute ball-handling workout
3. Conditioning
4. Gym
5. Watching film
6. A vertical jump program

I like to stick to shooting or ball-handling workouts, but I listed the others as other possibilities.

As a side note, this method can be used to monitor **any** activity that you want to perform daily.

I don't recommend you assign any non-basketball related activities to your players... but perhaps **you** would like to start using this method to achieve a goal or habit that you've been putting off for a long time?

Here are a few other goals you could use the calendar system for...

1. Meditating
2. Yoga
3. Eating vegetables
4. Reading
5. Waking up early
6. Writing
7. Eating breakfast

8. Stop smoking
9. Avoid alcohol
10. Avoid soda

Now that you've chosen the calendar you're going to use and picked your daily activity, it's time to work out how to use the calendar to monitor their progress.

If you're using the wall calendar (please do), the first thing your players need to do is purchase a big, thick red marker. Each day your players complete their task, they get the privilege of drawing a big red cross through that day.

If you're using an app, spend some time getting to know how it works. Usually all you need to do is load the app and then click either yes/no if you've completed the task or not.

Conclusion

As we went through earlier, this technique can extend far beyond basketball. I'm a big believer in teaching players more than just basketball. This is a method that your players will be able to use for developing many different habits and achieving anything they desire.

I'm currently using it to make sure I get in at least half an hour of reading every day. Excluding right before I go to sleep. I realized reading was an area I could improve on and the calendar method is working wonders in helping me achieve my goal.

Half an hour isn't much, but it's a small step that I know I can accomplish every day. I know that without using this calendar system in place I would let it slide and miss out on a ton of great knowledge.

I think your players will find they achieve similar results in regards to their basketball skills.

Remember... small, consistent steps can help you achieve anything.

Triangle Offense

Complete Coaching Guide



C O A C H M A C
basketballforcoaches.com

Triangle Offense - Complete Coaching Guide



From 1990 to 2010, the triangle offense (also known as the 'Triple Post Offense') was by far the most dominant offense in basketball.

During this time, the Chicago Bulls and Los Angeles Lakers used the triangle offense to capture 11 NBA championships.

Some of the greatest players to ever step on the court thrived in the triangle offense including Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Kobe Bryant, and Shaquille O'Neal, and Pau Gasol to name a few.

One might say that the reason the triangle offense is so effective is because it had the above players running it. I wouldn't disagree with that, but no one can argue that this offense is very effective at putting players in great positions for them to score the basketball.

What is the Triangle Offense?

The triangle offense is a continuity basketball offense that combines perfect spacing with a series of actions based on player decisions resulting in a beautiful basketball offensive system.

It is best utilized by players with a high basketball IQ and great basketball fundamentals.

There are an endless number of potential actions out of the triangle offense (far too many to cover in this guide) which is what makes it such a deadly offense. It can be customized to take advantage of the strengths of the team as a whole and the strengths of the individual players.

Unlike set plays where there are pre-determined decisions and actions, the triangle offense relies on the players reading the defense and making the best basketball play depending on the options available.

Where Did the Triangle Offense Originate?

While Tex Winter's name springs to mind for many when discussing the origins of the triangle offense, it was actually Sam Barry at the University of Southern California who designed the original offensive system that would later become the triangle offense.

Tex Winter was one of Sam Barry's players and believed in the offense so much that he would later expand and improve the system while coaching various roles at universities including Kansas State University and Marquette University.

In 1985, and after many more years of coaching college basketball and perfecting the offense, Tex Winter accepted an assistant coaching role with the Chicago Bulls where he would eventually team up with Phil Jackson to install the triangle offense on a Bulls team that was in desperate need of a team-focused offense.

The result?

A total of 11 NBA championships.

6 with the Chicago Bulls and 5 with the Los Angeles Lakers.

Advantages of the Triangle Offense

Positionless Offense – In the triangle offense all 5 positions are interchangeable. While the center typically fills the low post position for a majority of the time, they can be rotated out of the post. This is incredibly important for developing well-rounded players.

Continuity Offense – The triangle offense can be run continuously until an open scoring opportunity presents. This is unlike set plays that have a predetermined finishing point where if the offense didn't get a good shot, they now must improvise without structure.

Develops Basketball IQ – As players are required to read the defense throughout the offensive possession and make decisions based on the other players on the court, this is a great offense for developing basketball IQ further.

Involves All Players – The triangle offense doesn't allow any one player to dominate the basketball for a majority of the possession. The basketball must be passed around and all players are involved in the offense at all times even if they're not in possession of the basketball.

Disadvantages of the Triangle Offense

Requires High Basketball IQ Players – While this offense will develop basketball IQ better than most other offenses, it does require a decent amount of basketball IQ from the start to be successful as the offense relies on quickly reading the defense and making the correct basketball play.

Players Must Memorize the Offense – This is one of the main reasons I don't recommend the triangle offense for youth teams. There are a lot of actions to memorize. Every single decision made by a player on offense results in a series of specific next actions. All players must have these memorized by heart for the offense to consistently be successful.

Requires a High Level of Fundamentals – There are certain cuts and passes throughout the triangle offense which require a high level of fundamentals to be done successfully. If your players can't fake before cuts and passes, don't have the ability to change speed and direction, and can't attack the defense 1-on-1, the triangle offense might not be best for your team.

You're Handing Control to the Players – I've listed this in disadvantages because I feel that's the way most coaches will feel when first implementing the offense. Understand that by running the triangle offense the coach will no longer have full control of the offense. The players must read the difference and make decisions. It takes a strong-minded coach to be comfortable with this.

Who Should Run the Triangle Offense?

The triangle has the highest chance of working successfully with well-rounded, high-IQ players who are willing to share the basketball.

I do not recommend this offense for youth basketball due to the experience necessary to make the correct passing decisions and read the defense. Though I have watched youth teams that could definitely be successful using the triangle offense.

I do highly recommend the triangle offense for the high school level and up.

If you've got players who were raised on development-focused teams and have great basketball fundamentals, the triangle offense can be very effective way to further develop their basketball skills and IQ.

To be more specific, It can be difficult for teams to be successful with the triangle offense without a low post player who can both score and pass at a high level since so much of the offense is run through the post.

Triangle Offense Positions

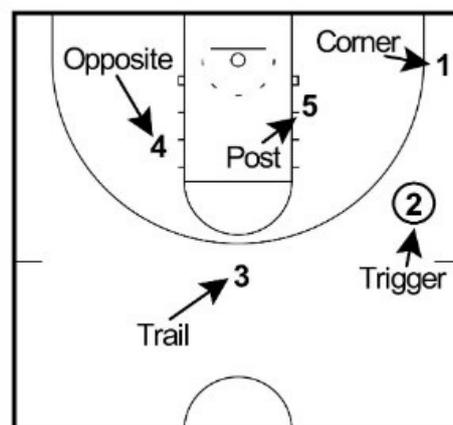
When the offense is set up after an entry, the offense consists of a 3-man triangle on the ball-side of the court known as the '**Sideline Triangle**', and 2 players on the weak side of the court set up in the '**2-Man Game**'.

These 5 spots on the court are the main positions within the triangle offense structure and must be filled whenever the triangle offense is set up.

Position #1 – Corner – The 'corner' is located in the ball-side corner. This will most often be the point guard and should have a good ability to shoot the basketball and create shots off the dribble.

Position #2 – Trigger – The trigger is located on the wing and will usually possess the basketball after an entry. The passing option that they make from this position will dictate the entire offense so it's important to put a smart player in this position.

Position #3 – Post – The post is located on the high side of the low block and should be positioned directly between the trigger and the basket (line of deployment). The high positioning allows players to cut above and below with space. The post player is preferably a good passer and can also finish in the post in a one-on-one situation.



Position #4 – Trail – The trail is located at the top of the key when the team has entered into the offense. This player is most likely the other guard and should be able to hit the outside shot as well as cut and create off the dribble.

Position #5 – Opposite – The opposite player is located approximately a step off the weakside mid-post. This player is likely the other post player but should be capable of interchanging with all positions on the floor.

The Line of Deployment

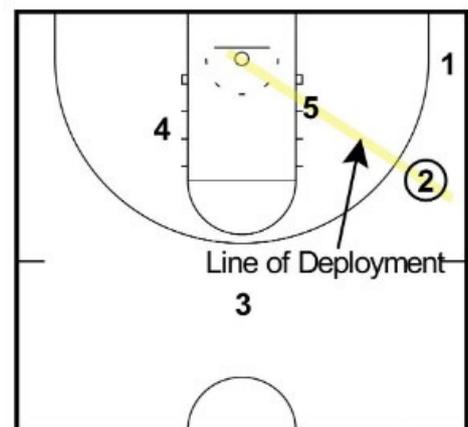
The *'Line of Deployment'* is a concept of the triangle offense that all players must understand in order to take advantage of the post and make the correct passing decisions when initiating the offense.

Let's break down what it is and how it works...

The *'Line of Deployment'* is the straight line between the trigger, low post player, and the basket.

The logic behind this concept is that as long as the trigger (2), the low post (5), and the basket form a straight line, the defender will be forced to play behind the post player.

This allows the trigger to make a simple, undefended pass into the low post which is the #1 option from the trigger spot.



If the post defender chooses to front or half-front the low post, they've been *'deployed'*. With smart passing, this should always result in a high-percentage scoring opportunity for the low post.

If the defender half-fronts from the high side, the trigger passes to the corner and then the corner passes inside.



If the defender half-fronts from the low side, the trigger passes to the top and the top passes inside.

As you can see, if you've got a smart low post player, this can be a fantastic offense to run which will result in them getting a lot of great scoring opportunities close to the rim.

Taking advantage of the line of deployment relies on two things:

1. The low post player's ability to recognize that their defender is 'deployed' and being able to quickly adjust their positioning to take advantage of it.
2. The perimeter players being able to quickly recognize the post defender is 'deployed' and being able to make the correct pass that will give the low post player the best advantage inside.

The Importance of Great Spacing

It's impossible to write a great triangle offense article without a section dedicated to the spacing of the players on the floor.

Without great spacing, the offense has very little chance of being effective.

Tex Winter sums up its importance best...

"I am literally a fanatic of spacing" – Tex Winter

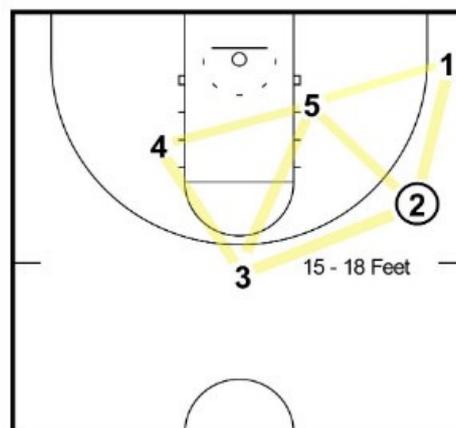
If players are in the correct triangle offense positions, they should always be 15 – 18 feet away from each other depending on the age group and size of the court.

Why 15 – 18 feet?

At this distance, players are far enough away from each other that it's incredibly difficult for the defense to trap an offensive player or disrupt a passing lane without giving up an open shot in the process.

At the same time, the offensive players are close enough together that the basketball can be passed quickly and accurately.

To teach the correct spacing to your players, I highly recommend investing in flat cones that you can place in the correct positions on the court. That way players will always know whether they're in the right spots.



Entries into the Triangle Offense

As with all offenses, the triangle offense starts with getting everyone into the correct positions to run the offense. This means forming the sideline triangle and the two-man game on the weak side.

There are many initial formations that you can use to enter into the offense (1-2-2, 1-3-1, 1-4, etc), but my favorite is the 2-2-1 formation.

I prefer setting up from the 2-2-1 formation because a two-guard front allows for an extra player to pass to if the offense is having difficulty advancing the basketball up the court or provides an extra defender if the basketball is turned over.

This extra player is crucial if you're coaching a youth basketball or high school basketball team as these situations occur often.

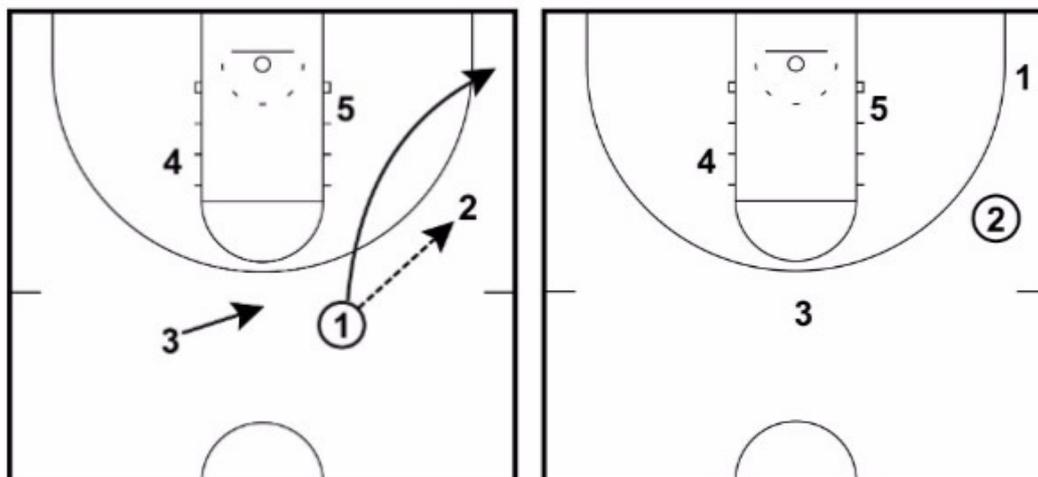
For that reason, in this article, I'll be focusing on entries into the triangle offense out of the 2-2-1 formation.

Entry #1 – Inside Cut

The inside cut is the most common and quickest entry into the triangle offense.

It involves 1 making the pass to 2 and then cutting in-between 2 and 5 to the corner position.

5 slides over and establishes position high on the low block, 3 slides to the top of the key, and 4 moves close to the mid-post area on the weak side.

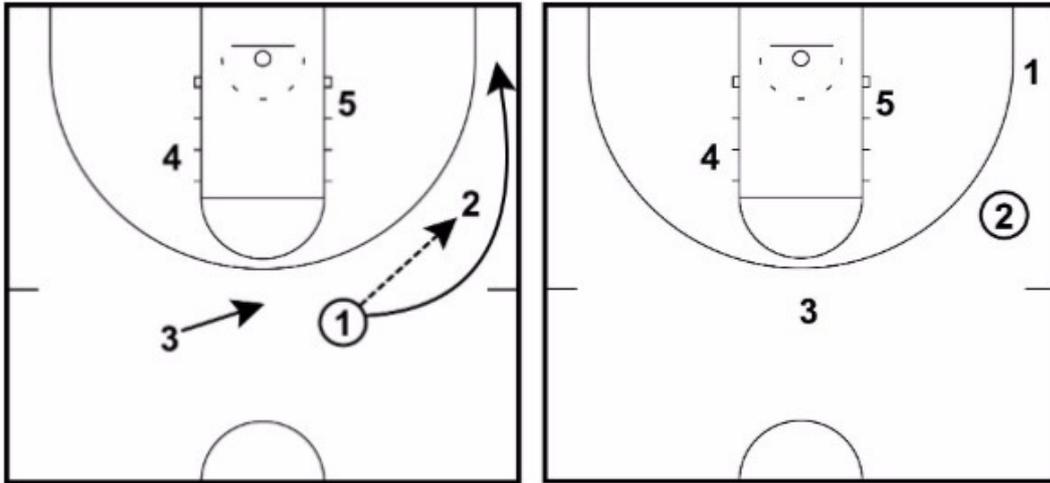


Entry #2 – Outside Cut

In this entry, 1 cuts above 2 to the corner.

5 slides over and establishes position high on the low block, 3 slides to the top of the key, and 4 moves close to the mid-post area on the weak side.

This can be the best option if 2 catches the basketball closer to the three-point line than usual or if it looks like 2 can make the immediate pass down low to 5.

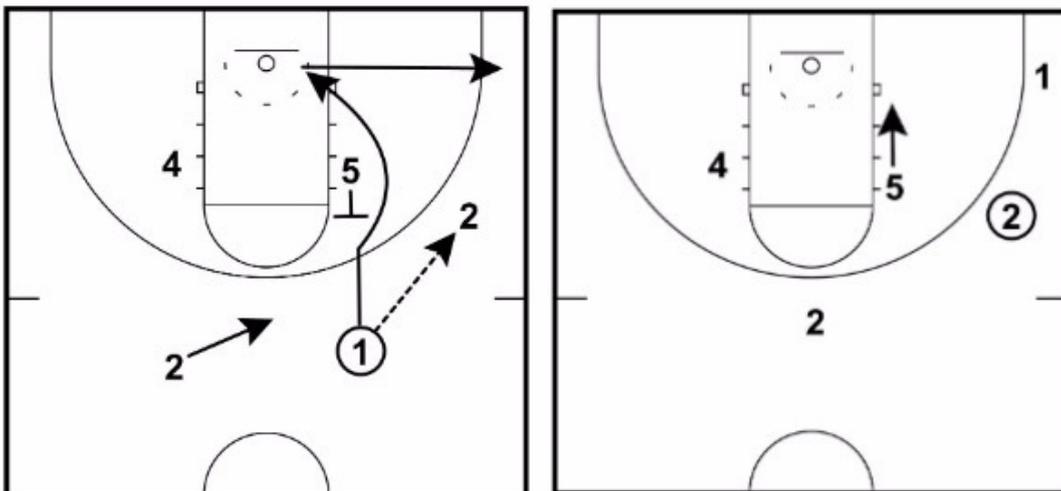


Entry #3 – UCLA Cut

5 steps up and sets a up-screen at the ball-side elbow area. 1 passes to 2 and then makes a UCLA cut looking for the pass and layup.

If the pass isn't available, 1 clears out to the corner and the 5 slides back down to the low post.

3 slides to the top of the key and 4 moves to the mid-post area.

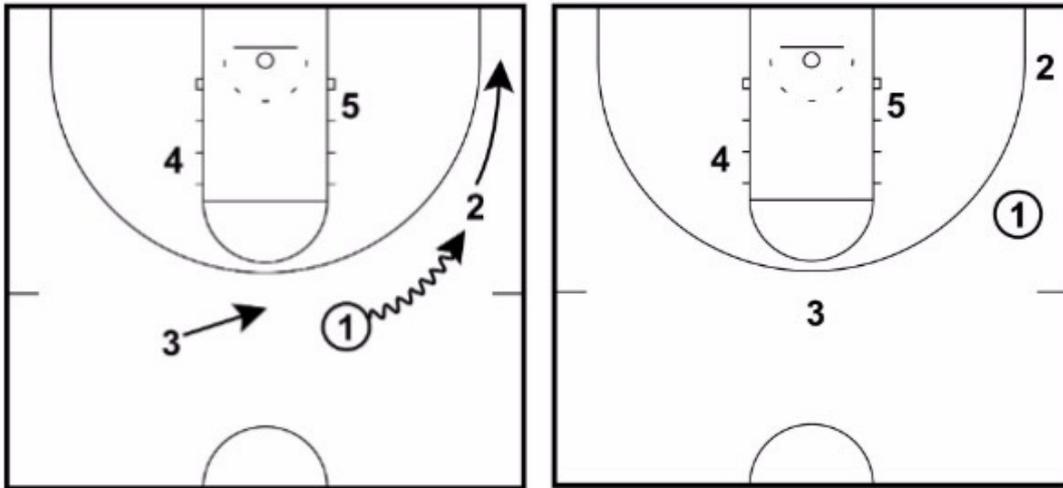


Entry #4 – Dribble Entry

For this entry, 1 dribbles down to the trigger spot and becomes the trigger. This pushes the player that was filling this position (2) down to the corner spot.

5 slides over and establishes position high on the low block, 3 slides to the top of the key, and 4 moves close to the mid-post area on the weak side.

This can be an effective entry if your lead guard is struggling to make the pass to the wing.

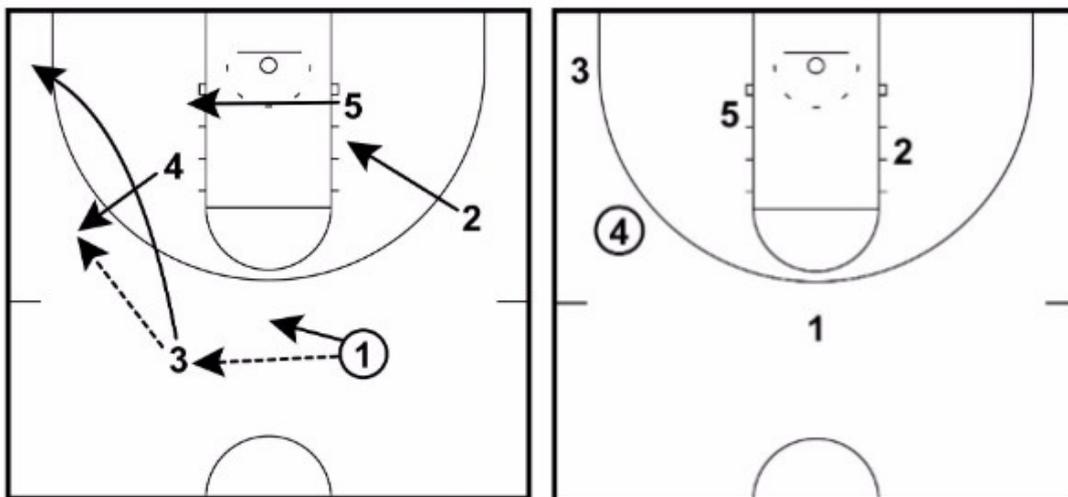


Entry #5 – Weak Side Entry

The weak side entry is a great variation to confuse the defense or if the lead guard is struggling to make the pass to the wing.

It involves 1 reversing the basketball to 3 and then 4 stepping out and receiving the pass at the trigger spot.

3 cuts through to the corner, 1 fills the top of the key, the player initially in the ball-side trigger spot (2) becomes the opposite, and 5 slides over and establishes low post position.



Entry #6 – Post Pop Entry

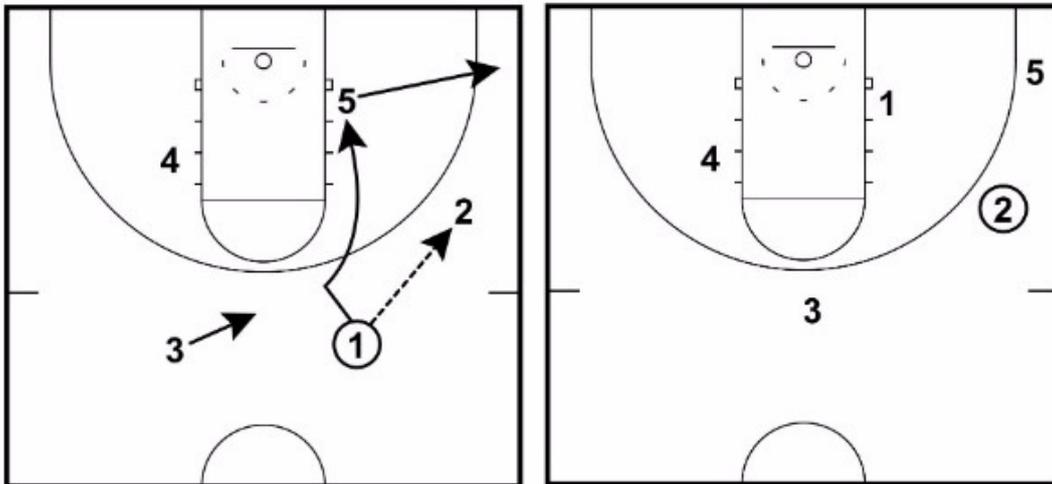
In this variation, when 1 makes the pass to 2, 5 pops out to the corner.

From this position, you can send either the lead guard, trail, or opposite to the low post position.

For this example, we'll show the lead guard (1) cutting and establishing position on the low block.

3 slides to the top of the key and 4 moves to the mid-post position on the weak side.

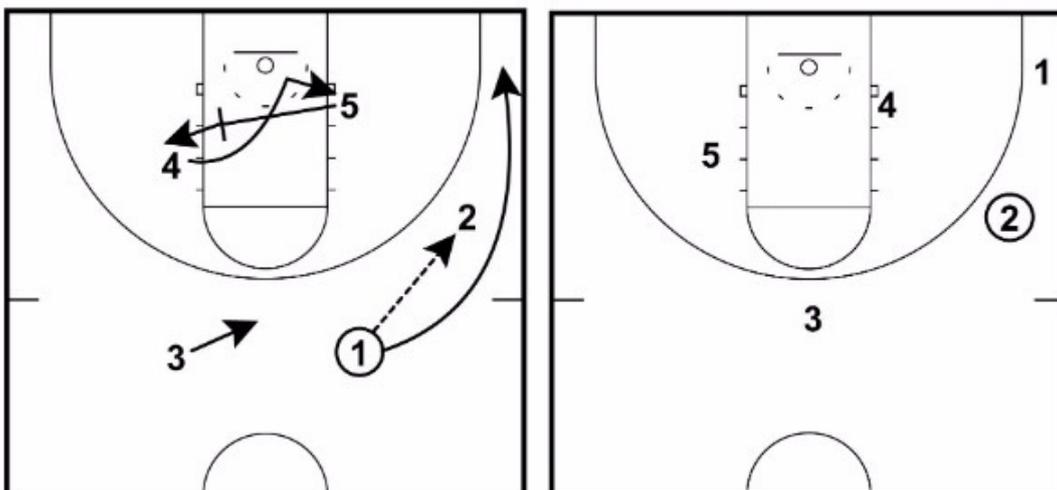
This is a great variation if you've got a post player who can play effectively on the perimeter, if you've got a mismatch at another position, or if you want to drag the post's defender away from the rim.



Entry #7 – Post Screen Entry

This entry involves the 5 screening across for 4 as they switch positions. This often opens up a quick pass inside from 2 to 4 as they cut to establish position on the low block.

1 fills the corner with outside cut, 3 moves to the top of the key, and the player who was in the post (5) now becomes the opposite and holds their position on the weak side mid-post.



Choosing the Best Entries for Your Team

As you can see, there are an unlimited amount of entries into the initial triangle offense set. Feel free to come up with your own that suit your team's strengths!

Choose 2 or 3 of the above entries that best suit your coaching style and the team's personnel while putting players in different positions to succeed.

Coach Mac's recommendation for a youth or high school team:

- 1. Inside Cut**
- 2. Dribble Entry**
- 3. Post Pop**

This will allow your players to enter into the offense using a variety of different movements while not overwhelming them with too many options.

Running the Triangle Offense

Once your team has filled the correct triangle offense positions, it's time to discuss how to run the offense and the different options available out of the offensive structure.

In it's simplest form, the triangle offense can be broken down into two parts:

- a. The Sideline Triangle – Formed by the corner, trigger, and post.**
- b. The Two-Man Game – Formed by the trail and opposite.**

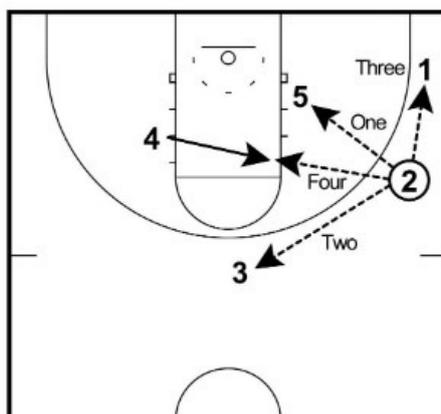
Let's break them down separately...

a. The Sideline Triangle

The most important thing to know about the sideline triangle is that the pass from the 'trigger' position will dictate the next movements by all players on the floor.

From the trigger position, there are 4 passing options that all lead to a different series of actions. The trigger must read the defense and make the smartest pass to initiate the offense.

Here are the 4 passing options from the trigger position...

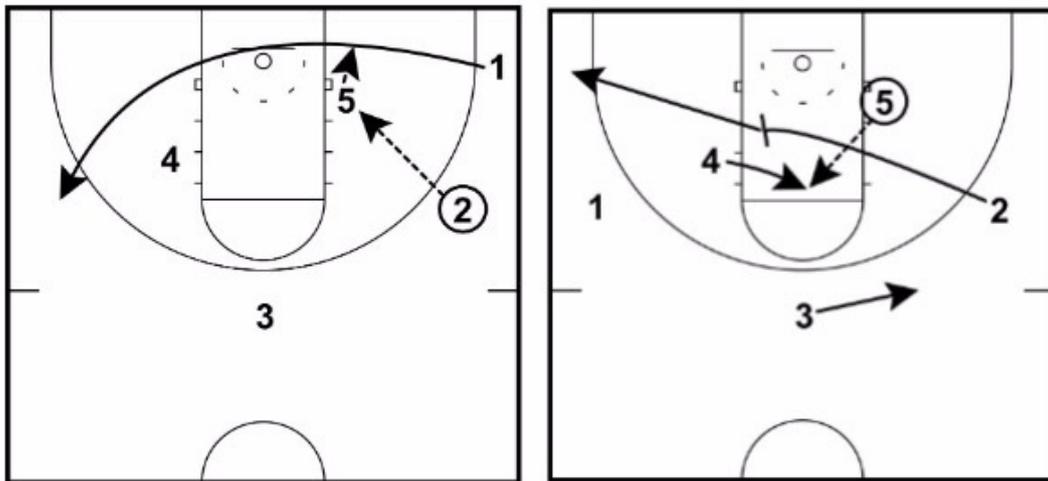


Passing Option #1 – Post Pass

The first option that 2 must look at is whether they can make a direct pass to 5 in the post.

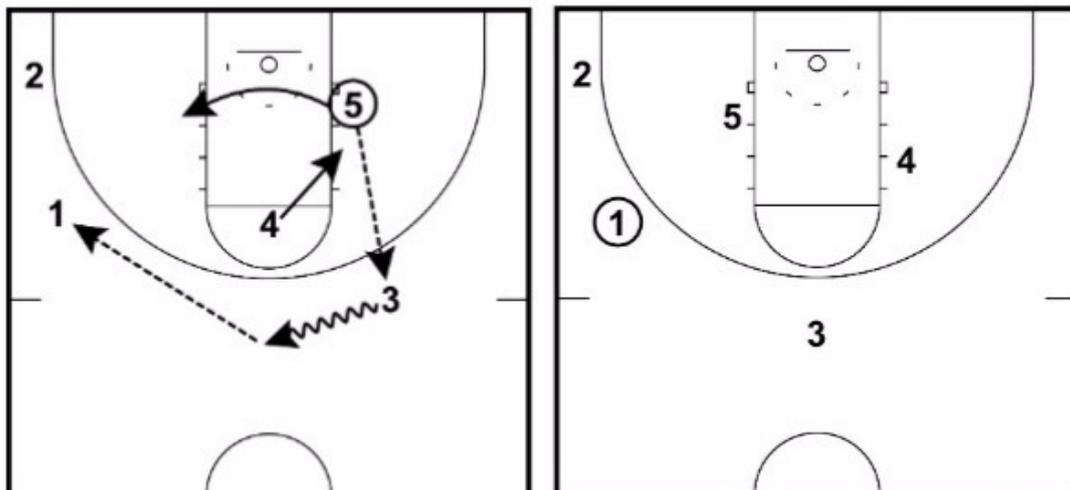
Providing that the trigger and low post are lined up with the rim (line of deployment), this is often a simple pass with little chance of turning the basketball over unless another defender is helping to prevent it.

Refer to the 'Line of Deployment' section of this blog post to understand what to do when the low post defender is overplaying or denying this pass.



When this pass is made, unless 5 is in position for a quick score, 1 must immediately cut along the baseline looking to receive a quick pass that can lead to a reverse layup. If they don't receive the basketball, they cut out to the opposite wing.

A second later, 2 cuts above 5 and sets a screen on the 4's defender. This allows 4 to cut to the high post and will often leave them open for the free-throw line jumper.



(TIP: These cuts must be made hard and with purpose! Any player jogging through these cuts is letting the team down.)

After screening, 2 clears out to the weak side corner.

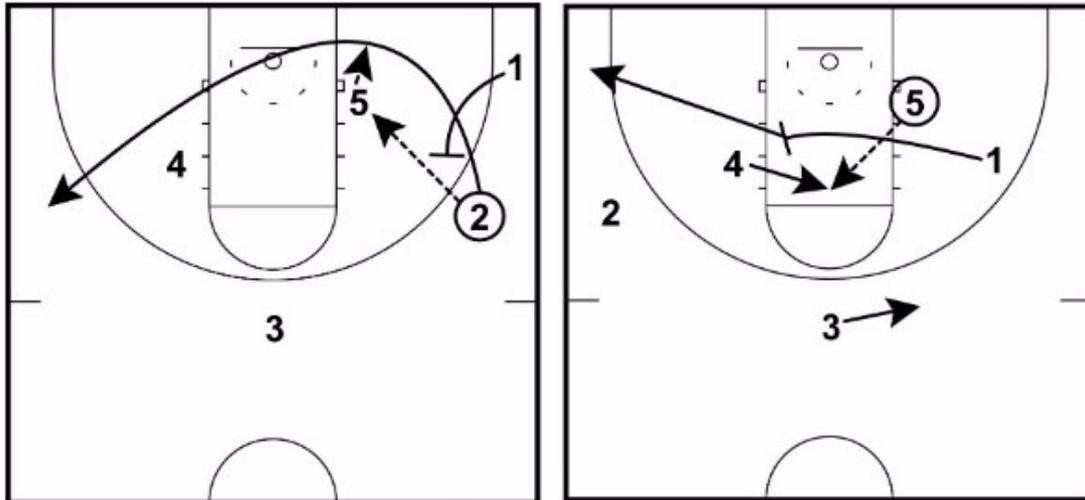
Both of these actions keep the weak side defense busy and allow the post player to back down in the post and finish with a post move if they feel they have an advantage.

If none of those options result in an open shot, the basketball can be passed out to 3 at the top or can be skip passed to 1 in the trigger spot.

The offense then sets back up and runs the offense again.

Variation: Post Split

Another option out of the pass into the post is called 'post split'.



Post split involves 1 setting a quick up screen for 2 who cuts baseline looking for the pass and layup before cutting out to the weak-side wing.

A second later, the 1 cuts above 5 and sets a screen on the 4's defender.

(This option is simply reversing the roles of both players from the original option).

Option #2 – Reverse Pass

The reverse pass to the top of the key leads to a two-man game on the opposite side of the floor.

This has many fantastic options that you can take advantage of depending on the personnel on your team.

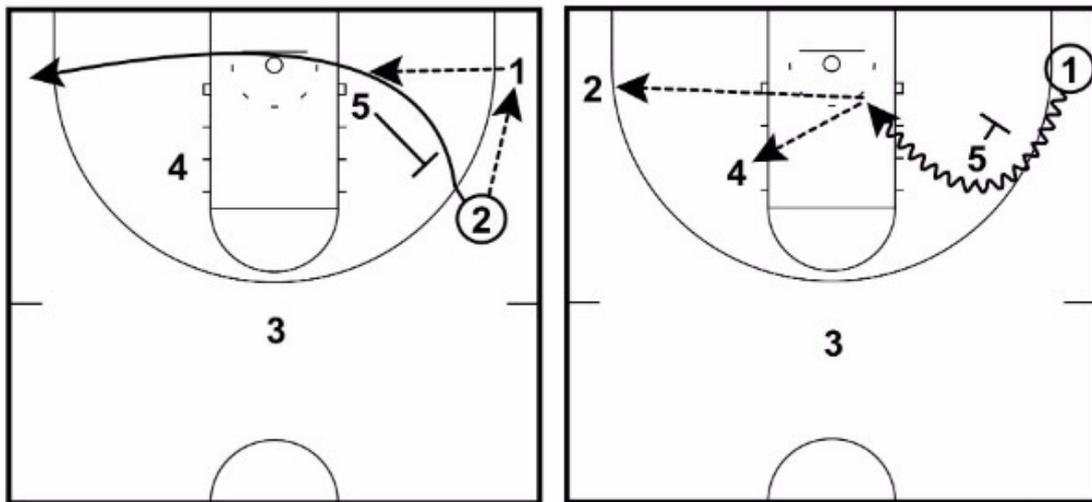
I'll cover these option in the '**two-man game**' section in part 'B' below.

Option #3 – Corner Pass

The third passing option for the trigger is to pass to the corner.

When 1 receives the basketball, the first thing they must look at is whether 5 has established good low post position and if there's space for a pass inside and score.

If not, the 5 will step out and set a back screen for 2 who cuts to the rim looking for the basketball and an open layup. If 2 doesn't receive the basketball, they cut out to the weak side corner.



5 immediately transitions from setting a back screen for the trigger spot to setting an on-ball screen for 1 who will dribble up before receiving the screen to create more space.

This two-man game can be incredibly effective as the ball-side of the court has been cleared out and the help defense will hesitate to rotate off the weak side mid-post or leave a player wide open on the opposite side of the court.

Option #4 – Weakside Flash

For the weak side flash option to be effective, this player in the opposite position must be constantly reading the positions of the other players on the floor.

There are two specific situations where the opposite player should flash to the basketball and receive the pass:

1. When the post (5) player is being fronted or half-fronted from the low side

When this occurs, it's a great opportunity for the opposite to flash, receive the basketball, and then make the quick pass inside to 5 who has sealed off the defender with correct footwork.

Even if they don't receive the basketball, by flashing to the basketball when the post defender is fronting, there will be no help defense on the opposite side of the floor and 2 can make the lob pass to the low post.



2. When the trail (3) is being denied the basketball

If 3's defender is denying the pass from the trigger spot, this is a great opportunity for 'blind pig' action.

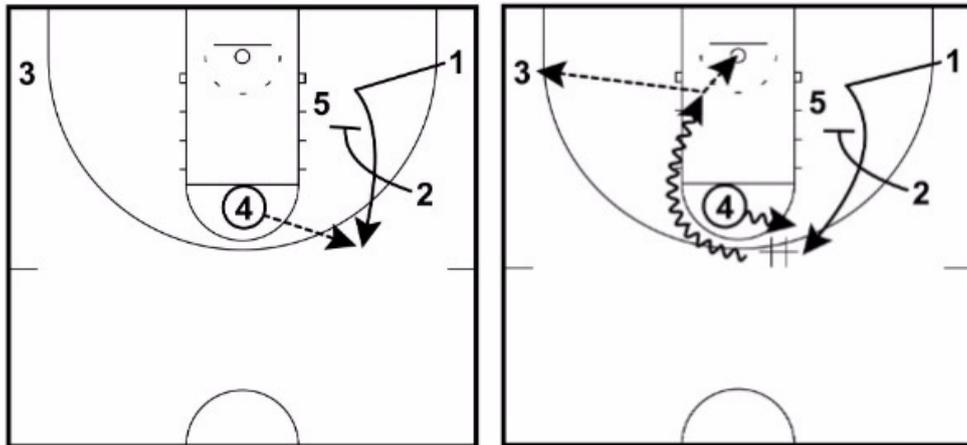
This involves 4 flashing to the basketball, receiving the pass, and then dropping the pass off to 3 as they quickly backdoor cut towards the rim for the open layup catching their defender out of position.

If 3 doesn't receive the pass they clear out to the corner.

After 3 has cut through, 4 can look to face up their opponent and attack the rim if they have an advantage.

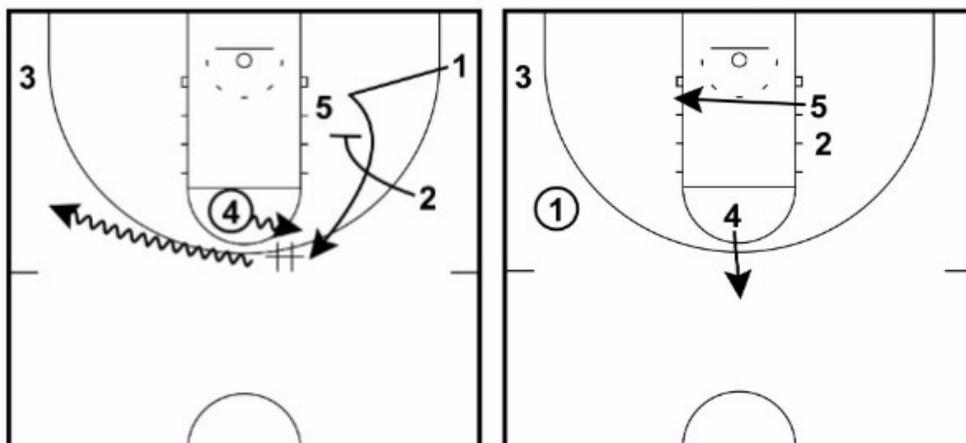
As soon as the pass is made to 4, 1 sets up their defender by walking towards the key and then cuts to the top off a down screen from 2.

If the immediate shot off the down screen is open, 4 passes to 1 for the shot.



If not, 1 will perform a dribble weave with 4 and receive the basketball off a quick dribble pitch or a hand-off. This is a great opportunity to curl and attack the rim, pull up for a midrange shot, or drive the basketball and finish or pass to 3 or 5 for easy scoring opportunities.

If there's no attacking opportunity, 1 can dribble to the trigger spot on the wing and the players can set up the triangle offense to be run again.



b. The Two-Man Game

The two-man game is often referred to as 'pinch post series' to many coaches.

There are many, many variations out of this two-man setup that can lead to many great scoring opportunities.

My recommendation is to select 2 or 3 of the variations provided below that best suit the personnel on your team and give you a variety of options.

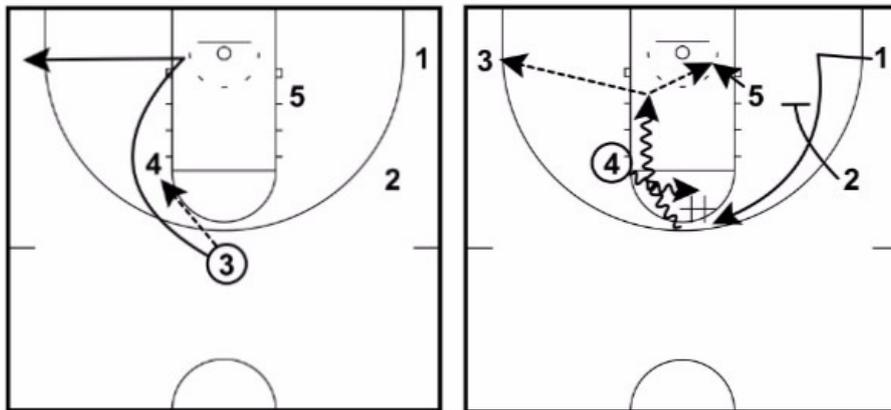
Option #1 – High Post Cut

The first option is for 3 to make a pass inside to 4 who has stepped up the high post.

After making the pass, the 3 will immediately cut off the high post looking for the quick bounce pass or hand-off leading to a layup. If 3 doesn't receive the pass, they clear out to the corner.

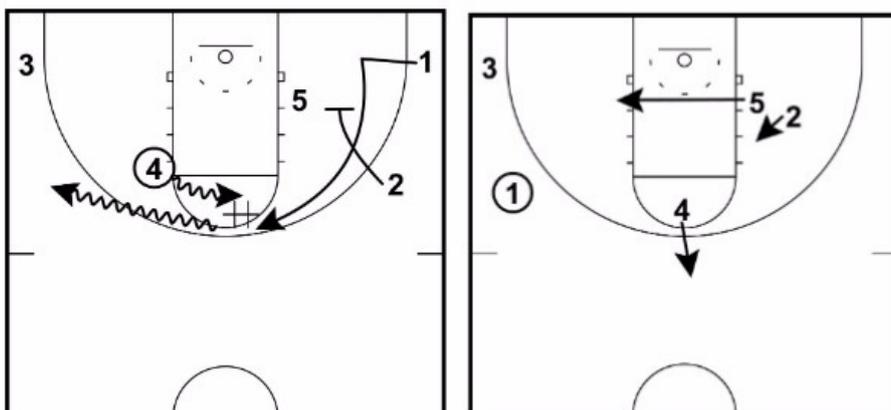
From here, 4 can face up and attack the basket if they have an advantage against their opponent.

If they don't have an advantage, 4 completes a hand-off or dribble weave with 1 who will be cutting around up the top off a down screen from 2.



This will often lead to 1 getting an open midrange or three-point shot, a drive in for an open layup, or a pass to either 3 or 5 on the drive to the hoop.

If attacking isn't an option, 1 dribbles out to the trigger spot and the players all adjust positions to get to the start of the triangle offense once again.

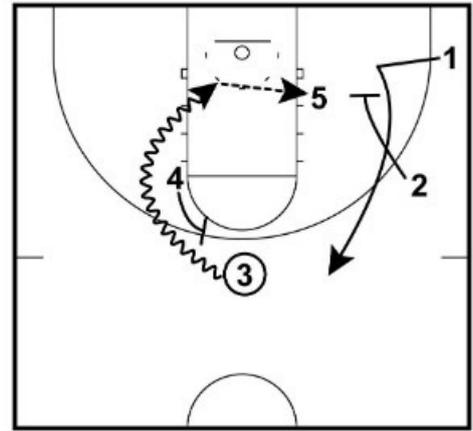


Option #2 – On-Ball Screen

The next option you have out of pinch post is an on-ball screen.

As the pick-and-roll is one of my most effective offensive weapons in basketball, this option is one I highly recommend is used by all teams at the youth and high school level.

4 steps up and sets an immediate on-ball screen when 3 catches the basketball. Since the entire side of the floor will be open, this is a great opportunity for a midrange pull-up or a drive to the rim.



After screening, 4 stays at the top of the key as safety since 5's already in the key and it would become too congested to make a pass and finish around the rim.

If the weak side post defender helps across, it will lead to a bounce pass and layup for 5.

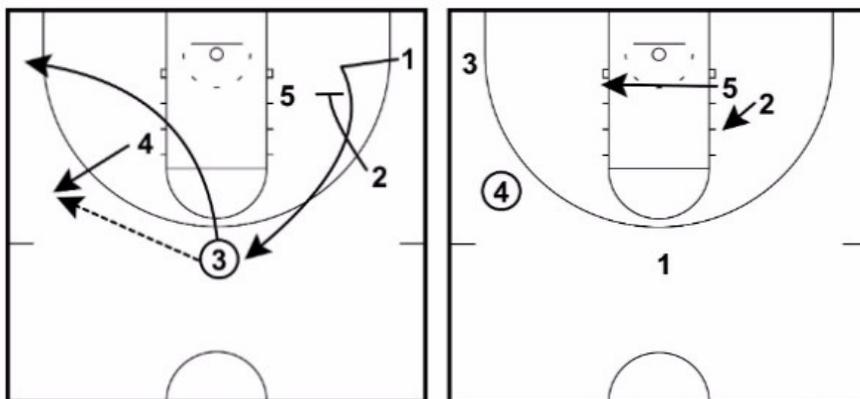
2 sets the down screen for 1 to cut to the top of the key to keep the defenders on the weak side occupied.

Option #3 – Post Pop Reset

Note: This is the same sequence as weak side entry.

This pinch post variation allows the players to set back up to the initial formation and run the offense again.

This can be a good option for teams who don't play in a league with a shot clock and there's a less-skilled player in the opposite position.



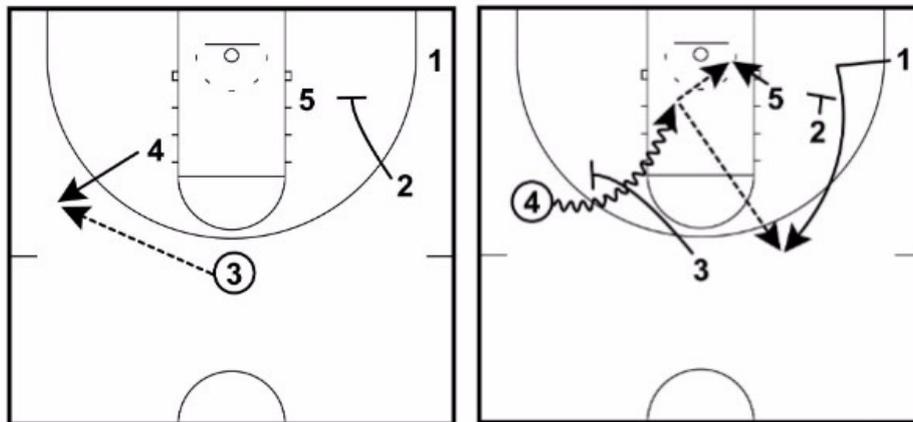
4 steps out and receives the pass from the top of the key.

3 immediately cuts to the ball-side corner and 1 will fill the position at the top of the key after cutting off 1's down screen.

5 slides across the key and establishes position in the low post while 2 fills opposite.

Option #4 – Post Pop On-Ball Screen

If you have a player in the opposite position with the ability to dribble the basketball and create for others, the 'post pop on-ball screen' can be a very effective variation.



This involves 4 stepping out and receiving the pass from 3 at the top of the key.

Instead of cutting through to the ball-side corner, 3 immediately sets an on-ball screen for 4 to attack the rim.

1 will cut to the top of the key off the down screen from 2 which provides a passing option as well as a bounce pass to 5 if their defender steps across to help on the drive.

Option #5 – Dribble to Wing

The next variation is a good option if you've got a highly skilled and high-IQ player at the 1 position.

Instead of making the pass into the high post, 3 dribbles straight to the trigger spot on the wing.

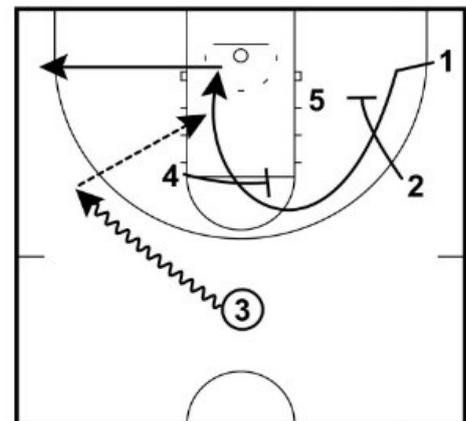
This signals for 4 to set a screen at the top for 1 who will be curling around the top of the key off 2's down screen.

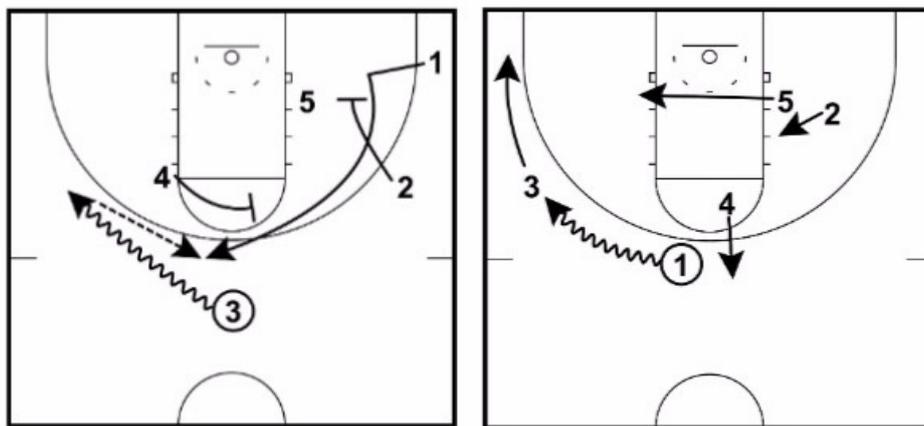
If 1's defender trails the screen, 1 can curl and cut to the basket looking for the pass and open layup. If they don't receive the basketball, 1 will clear out to the corner.

If 1's defender goes under the screen, 1 can step back and receive the pass for the outside shot.

If 1 receives the pass and the shot isn't open, they will dribble to the wing and push 3 down to the corner position while they fill the trigger spot.

5 slides across and establishes low post position, 4 steps out and fills the top of the key, and 2 moves to the weak side mid-post area so that the team is back in position to start the offense again.





Conclusion

There is a mindset among the basketball community that the triangle offense is too complicated for any non-professional team to run.

I disagree with this and hope that this article shows you that while it can be complicated with many actions and counters, it can also be executed simply and effectively with fewer offensive options.

If you think your team has what it takes and you're willing to commit long-term to teaching it and practicing with your players, I highly recommend implementing the triangle offense.

Two Unbelievably Simple Steps to Becoming a Great Shooter

 basketballforcoaches.com/two-steps-great-shooter/



First off, let's get this myth out of the way: There are no secrets to becoming a great shooter. It's not mind-blowingly complex. There's no secret that only the all-time great shooters know about. There's not a special drill you can do every time you step into the gym that will make you a knock-down three point shooter.

In fact, becoming a great shooter isn't very hard at all... but it is time consuming and will take a consistent commitment.

If there is a secret to becoming a great shooter, it's this: You must be willing to put the work in. No exceptions.

My Shooting Sessions Story

I have the privilege of running a one hour shooting session with a select group of young players every week. It's great fun, they're great kids, but there's one massive problem I have with nearly every single one of them the first time they show up at the first shooting session...

They think they're going to magically turn into fantastic shooters during our one hour session each week... They definitely will not. And that's the first thing I tell them at the very start of the first training.

Here's something similar to the advice I give players before I run shooting sessions...

“You’re not going to become a great shooter here. The reason your here is because I’m going to help you master the fundamentals of shooting a basketball. If you want to become a great shooter one day, you must shoot the ball correctly.

Again, you don’t become a great shooter here. You learn how to shoot here.

Where you’re going to become a great shooter is in your own time. By yourself in the early mornings in an empty gym. In your backyard every day after school. You’ve got to be willing put in the time every single day and put up enough shots. You can’t expect to magically turn into a great shooter in only an hour a week. I can help you with what to do during the time you practice, but only you can make sure you’re getting enough shots up every day, every week, every month, and every year, to become a great shooter.”

If you pay close attention to that speech, you’ll find that there are only two important steps to become a great shooter. Here they are...

1. Master the Mechanics – Coaches Responsibility

The first step to becoming a great shooter is to master the mechanics of the basketball shot. It’s the coaches responsibility to help the player perfect their technique.

Having great mechanics on your basketball shot is important for two main reasons;

- a. A shot with good technique is much easier to improve.
- b. Shooting flaws are very difficult to correct once they become an ingrained habit in the player.

There have been great shooters without great shooting mechanics... but it’s a lot harder to become great. It takes a lot more repetitions.

2. Lots of Smart Repetitions – Players Responsibility

The second and final step is to shoot a lot (I repeat: a lot) of smart repetitions. This is where the player has to take over and become accountable for becoming a great shooter. Players can’t rely on coaches to be with them every time they’re shooting.

Notice how I deliberately include the word ‘smart’ in that sentence. If your players are at the gym chucking up three’s without much attention to what they’re doing, no matter how many repetitions that put up they’re never going to become great shooters. It takes deliberate, well thought out practice.

It means going to the gym with a plan of what you’re going to do. Going to the gym and tracking your shots (like the worlds best shooter does) so that you know if you’re getting better and you always have a goal to shoot for. Going to the gym and practicing the shots that you take in games.

Steph Curry, who I consider to currently be the greatest in-game shooter on the planet, makes 500 shots per day in the summer and makes 200 to 350 shooter per day during the season. That’s not heaps.

I’m not telling players they need to get in the gym and make 1000 shots every day. What I

recommend to players differs greatly depending on their goals and age. But one thing's for sure, they must be game shots, from game spots, at game speed

Conclusion

That's the only two steps you need to become a great shooter. Crazy, isn't it? People make become a great shooter seem more complex than it needs to be. All it really requires is the right mechanics and consistent effort.

There is only so much we coaches can do. Once the mechanics of the shot are learnt it falls into the hands of the player to be accountable for developing their shot in their own time.

So here are the only two steps you need to remember...

- 1. Master the Mechanics – Coaches Responsibility**
- 2. Lots of Repetitions – Players Responsibility**

They're not hard, but they do require the player to make a big commitment to getting better. It's the price every shooter must pay to go from good to great.

Question for coaches: How many shots do you believe players that want to become great shooters should be making each day?

Let me know in the comments.

– Coach Mac

What is AAU Basketball? (Including Pros and Cons)

 basketballforcoaches.com/what-is-aau-basketball/



AAU basketball is a highly debated topic.

Exactly what is AAU basketball and whether kids should participate is a question I receive often from parents.

With all the scandals that have surfaced involving college coaches, AAU coaches, runners, agents, advisors, shoe company executives, and the players and the families themselves, there are a lot of questions that need to be answered.

In this blog post I'll do my best to describe what is AAU basketball, who can participate, when the season is, and also the pros and cons of playing.

Let's start off with the basics...

Table of Contents

What Does AAU Stand For?

AAU stands for Amateur Athletic Union, and according to their website, they have been in existence since 1888.

What is AAU Basketball?

The Amateur Athletic Union is a youth sports organization.

To put it simply - groups of players get together and form independent teams that compete in AAU tournaments against other teams.

Since it was first created, the goal of AAU has been to advance the development of youth sports and physical fitness programs.

Originally, the focus of AAU was on the development of Olympic athletes with only the best of the best players competing...

But since 1970, it has deviated to the growth of youth sports at the fundamental level.

It is stated clearly in their vision statement: "To offer amateur athletes and volunteers opportunities to develop to their highest level through a national and local network of sporting events."

Who Can Play AAU Basketball?

AAU Basketball is an option for boys and girls.

For boys, they can start playing in the 7 and under age group and can compete up until the 12th grade or 19 and under division.

For girls, they can start playing when they are in the 2nd grade and can compete up until the 12th grade or 19 and under division.

When is the AAU Basketball Season?

The main stretch of AAU basketball runs from February until July; immediately following the end of the high school basketball season.

Although there are still many tournaments played throughout the entire year (including during the high school season).

Every age group is offered the opportunity to qualify and compete in the national championship tournaments.

These tournaments are what help AAU stand out from the rest of the grassroots basketball scene.



A Brief History of AAU Basketball (and where it went wrong)

AAU basketball gained popularity in the 1980s when Sonny Vaccaro and Phil Knight came together with the goal of spreading the youth basketball movement.

By signing AAU coaches and college coaches to shoe contracts, they ensured specific AAU programs and major basketball programs would be wearing their shoes.

Eventually, it became less about the basketball and more about the big shoe companies competing over the best players in the country.

AAU basketball clubs focused on receiving sponsorships from big shoe companies, like Nike and Adidas, with the goal of attracting elite high school talent.

The hope was that by getting these players to compete for a Nike or Adidas sponsored AAU team, they would stick with the company who sponsored their AAU team when it came time for them to sign a shoe contract.

This led to less focus by the coaches on the development of the players during the summer basketball months and more attention on shoe contracts, rankings, and the marketing brand image of the players and clubs.

A lot of talented youth players got swept up in this corruption.

Some were overhyped as youths and never panned out, others lost eligibility to play in high school or college because of dealings with advisors who provided the player and his family with large sums of money.

Other players like Kobe Bryant and LeBron James dealt with the early success as teenagers and catapulted it into legendary basketball careers without allowing the scandalous tendencies of summer basketball to impeded their progress.

While AAU basketball programs aren't the only clubs affected by the major shoe companies, the organization has taken the brunt of the blame for the inconsistencies that are a part of the high school and college basketball landscape.

Public Criticism of AAU Basketball

There have been several high-profile coaches and players voice their dislike for AAU basketball.

Here's are some examples:

Steve Kerr:

“Even if today’s players are incredibly gifted, they grow up in a basketball environment that can only be called counterproductive. AAU basketball has replaced high school ball as the dominant form of development in the teen years. I coached my son’s AAU team for three years; it’s a genuinely weird subculture. Like everywhere else, you have good coaches and bad coaches, or strong programs and weak ones, but what troubled me was how much winning is devalued in the AAU structure. Teams play game after game after game, sometimes winning or losing four times in one day. Very rarely do teams ever hold a practice. Some programs fly in top players from out of state for a single weekend to join their team. Certain players play for one team in the morning and another one in the afternoon. If mom and dad aren’t happy with their son’s playing time, they switch club teams and stick him on a different one the following week. The process of growing as a team basketball player — learning how to become part of a whole, how to fit into something bigger than oneself — becomes completely lost within the AAU fabric.”

Kobe Bryant:

“AAU basketball. Horrible, It’s stupid. It doesn’t teach our kids how to play the game at all so you wind up having players that are big and they bring it up and they do all this fancy crap and they don’t know how to post. They don’t know the fundamentals of the game. It’s stupid.”

Gregg Popovich:

“Ever since AAU became the de facto leader in 'preparing kids', it’s been all downhill.”

Charles Barkley:

“This new generation, they all stick together, they all play together, they’re all AAU babies,” Barkley said Wednesday on “Mike & Mike”, as transcribed by USA Today. “Any type of criticism directed toward them, they consider it hate. Even if it’s a fair criticism, they consider it hate. So no, it does not bother me what the new generation thinks, to be honest with you. I know they all stick together, so that’s just part of it, too.”

Moving on - here are the main positives and negatives of AAU basketball in my opinion...



Positives of AAU Basketball

Despite all the criticism AAU has received, there are two main benefits...

1. Compete against the best competition

In order to reach your potential as a basketball player, you need to be competing against the best teams and players.

AAU basketball helps achieve this.

It gives players the opportunity to play against better competition they couldn't find if they decided to stay at home and play in local leagues.

Being able to compete against top-level talent forces players to raise their game and also exposes their weaknesses and shows players what they need to work on.

2. Opportunities for kids to get scholarships

For players with elite level talent, playing AAU basketball to get scholarship opportunities isn't exactly necessary...

But there have been many relatively unknown players who have been discovered at AAU tournaments and then offered a scholarship.

The truth is...

AAU basketball provides players with a great chance to showcase their skills against elite competition in front of hundreds of coaches.

For players who don't have college coaches flying to their home town from all over the country to see their elite skills, this can be a big opportunity to miss out on.

Negatives of AAU Basketball

There are more than two negatives, but these are the two most important...

(These are true far more often than not... but there are definitely exceptions which I'll talk about later in the article.)

1. Winning is much more important than development

One of the things I find most troubling is that many coaches are neglecting teaching the basic principles of fundamental basketball.

In fact, there are some teams who don't run practices at all.

One of the reasons for this is because an AAU team will attempt to recruit the best talent possible, even if the players live far away from each other.

While families are more than happy to make the trip for a tournament, setting up team practices is incredibly difficult.

And when they do get together, with 3 - 4 games a day during tournaments, there is little time for coaches to work on skills with their team.

To add to this point, coaches will see very little apart from full court presses and zone defense during tournaments.

Both of these harm youth development but definitely lead to winning more basketball games.

2. Poor coaching

AAU basketball is littered with poor coaching.

Much of this has to do with the fact that anyone can start an AAU team and appoint themselves the head coach.

There are no certifications coaches need or criteria to be met as long as they can recruit a team who are willing to pay for the team to participate.

During many AAU tournaments, you'll be forced to witness coaches screaming obscenities at their players instead of teaching them the game.

I have no problem with coaches being tough on their players and holding them accountable, but it appears some coaches will yell with little purpose to make their players better.

In fact, most of the time it seems like they're only yelling to draw attention to themselves.

Well, Should My Child Play AAU Basketball?

This is the question everyone wants answered.

Here's my opinion:

Despite all the negatives that come with AAU basketball, there are definitely players who can benefit from participating.

BUT...

You must find the right team.

If you can find the right program, AAU basketball can be a great development opportunity and a rewarding experience.

If you end up in a poor program, AAU basketball will be a horrible experience in many different ways.

Here are a few things to look out for when selecting an AAU team:

Good Coaching - You want to find a coach who understands the game, has good relationships with all players, and is focused on teaching them how to play basketball the right way.

Team Basketball - Make sure you find a team that promotes and plays team basketball. This will often depend on the basketball philosophy of the adult who is coaching the team.

Parents and Players - Will you and your child enjoy playing and hanging around with the players and parents on the team?

Games vs Practices - You must select an AAU team that has scheduled team practices at least once a week (preferably two). Don't join a team who only gets together on tournament weekends.

Conclusion

Exactly what is AAU basketball and deciding whether your child should participate is difficult to work out...

On one hand, there are many horrible parents and coaches who make a mockery of the sport, too much involvement from shoe companies, and not enough importance on developing good people...

But on the other hand, players can compete against the best of the best and have a bigger opportunity to get noticed by a coach who may offer them a scholarship in the future.

Whether you will have a good or bad experience will come down to selecting the right AAU club.

At the end of the day, the USA is still clearly developing the best basketball players on the planet...

And many of these players grow up participating in AAU.

While there are many negatives, the opinion that AAU basketball is killing the development of basketball players is a bit over the top.

What Part of the Rim to Aim at When Shooting a Basketball

 basketballforcoaches.com/part-of-the-rim-to-aim-at/



Have you ever wondered if there was a ‘correct’ spot on the rim that players should aim for when shooting a basketball?

I know I have... many times.

Admittedly, I’ve always been an *“aim at whatever feels most comfortable for you”* coach. But recently, I’ve been questioning whether that’s a good enough answer...

I questioned whether I was doing the players I was coaching a disservice by giving an answer that I wasn’t 100% sure I wholeheartedly believed in.

This question seems to be widespread judging by the many emails I receive from both coaches and players asking me the same question... *“what part of the rim should be focused on while shooting?”*

It seems we’re all a little confused about this question.

So I searched... books, websites, podcasts, twitter polls (I’ll get to that later), and I couldn’t find a definitive answer that resonated with me.

The next step was to get the opinions of those I trust in the basketball coaching community.

I asked the opinions of 18 experts by sending them an email asking this simple question...

Which part of the ring should players focus on when they shoot the basketball?

Here are the responses I received back...

“Which part of the ring should players focus on when they shoot the basketball?”

Bryan Burrell – New Age Elite Sports

I believe shooters should always focus on the ring that's in the middle.

Whether a shooter views the rim from the top of the key, wing, etc, there will always be a ring that's placed in the middle of the rim that can be used as a target.

In my opinion, if you work on following-through correctly every time you'll always give yourself a chance to make shots consistently.



Casey Dudek – CITK Hoops

I teach players to try to SWISH every shot and that the center of the rim is your target.

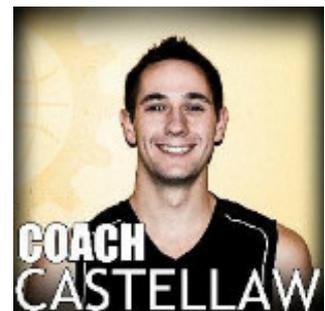
This narrows your focus and even if you miss your target slightly (short, long, left or right) it still has a chance to go in.



Collin Castellaw – Shot Mechanics

I think when it comes to targeting on your shot, it really depends on your comfortability. Some players like to aim at the front rim, some at the back of the rim, and some in the soft area over the rim.

I have both known and worked with many great shooters that use all of these methods. Like anything in shooting, sometimes there is no absolute one way to get the best results. One specific targeting system might work for one player and be terrible for another.



With that being said there is one technique I have seen a ton of success with. Targeting the “Dimond Tip.”

This the area on the back of the net where the small diamonds connect to the bigger ones.

This can be super effective because if you to hit your target exactly it will result in a swish. With the front iron or back iron method, a perfect shot can still result in a miss. I feel it also gets better results then aiming for the soft area over the rim because there is still a specific target to shoot for.



Damin Altizer – DRIVEN Training

Before answering the question, I did a quick poll on social media asking...

“What have you been taught as far as where to look when shooting?”

Of nearly 200 responses, 46% said back of the rim, 34% said front of the rim, and 20% said center of the basket — Clearly, the split on what’s being taught is significant!



For me, in training, it all comes down to consistent repetition creating instinctual reaction. As a shooter, the most important thing is said consistency and instinctual reaction rather than conscious thought.

If, when getting into the shot, a player is questioning, “Am I looking at the right spot on the rim?” chances are, they’re not a very good shooter.

Youth baseball pitchers aren’t taught to try and hit a stitch in the catcher’s glove, they’re taught to hit their spots by playing catch with the catcher; same goes for youth football QBs and WRs.

Minds aren’t strained when the thinking aspect is removed and it becomes simply playing the game. Shooting is much of the same. You score points by putting the ball in the basket; not by hitting the front of the rim, not by hitting the back of the rim.

In having players focus on consistently finding the basket as opposed to focusing on a tiny spot we make the game simple, and, in turn, have them reacting and shooting instinctually instead of deeply analyzing every aspect of their shot as they’re shooting.

The game of basketball is a thinking man’s game where, if you’re thinking, you’re probably not gaming. It’s about feel, flow, and rhythm; breaking it down to individual components, shooting is exactly the same.

Darrell Johnson – Cross Over Hoops

I teach players to focus on the nearest part of the rim until the ball goes through or makes contact with the rim.

I know there are several different theories on this particular topic and many great shooters, including Steph Curry, commonly watch the flight of the ball, but I think focusing on the target, the rim, is the most effective.



When shooting darts, would you watch the path of the dart, or focus on the triple twenty or bullseye on the dart board? The answer is obvious, you would focus on the dart board.

It's the same concept when shooting a basketball, focus on your target.

Dave Love – The Love of the Game

One of the most important aspects of shooting is one of the most simple... where are you aiming? There are a lot of different ideas out there, but I firmly believe in one.

I encourage players to find the farthest part of the rim from them no matter where they are standing on the floor, or the back of the rim.



The reason is simple... we know we are going to get tired as we play. So if there is that guarantee that we are going to lose energy, I want to aim for the longer target and leave room to miss short.

You also want to make sure you are finding a physical target, rather than the “middle of the hoop.” Without a physical target, your eyes aren't focussing on anything tangible and, therefore, can't measure the distance accurately because they have no reference point.

In addition, I try to get the players I work with at the NBA level to lock in on as small a targets as they can, as early in their shot as possible. If you can find a small target then you give yourself a lot of wiggle room, where as if you aim for the for “the hoop” in general then you have a small margin for error before you get disastrous results.

The target I suggest is the furthest coil that attaches the net to the rim.

Lastly, don't overlook the idea of trying to find that target as early in your shot, or shot preparation as possible. Don't locate your target in the middle or end of your shot when you could have found it earlier.

John Leonzo – John Leonzo Basketball

I believe and teach that players should aim for the back half of the basket. I am a huge advocate that every ball go up and over the rim and I hate it when shooters miss short.

Short shots have no chance of going in, but a shot that is up and over the rim has the possibility to fall, even if there was an error on the shot.

If a player is going to make an error, I would like that error to count for 2 points.

Good shooters are never left, right, or short. Good shooters shoot straight shots that go up and over the rim.

Aiming for the back half of the rim gives the shooter the best chance to never be short. The majority of shots are missed short and that is why I teach to aim for the back half of the basket.



Jordan Delp – Pure Sweat Basketball

More important than the spot on the rim a player focuses on when shooting is the consistency with which he or she is able to lock onto that spot.

Whether a player is comfortable focusing on the front, back, or middle of the rim, be sure to stress to them the importance of finding that spot every time.

When I work on this with my players, we try to focus on the middle of the hoop. While a bit more ambiguous than the front or back of the rim, it allows players to stay consistent wherever they are shooting from (top, wing, corner, etc.) because that spot never changes.

Further, focusing on the middle of the hoop can help a player make shots even when they are slightly off their mark, as there is more room for error than with a shot targeted at the front or back of the rim. Aim small, miss small!



Kevin Mitchell – Pure Sweat Basketball

My recommendation would be to aim for the middle of the rim and imagine the basketball halfway down prior to the shot attempt.

As a skills coach and former player, I tried the recommended methods of aiming for the front or back of the rim but would end up short or long with many shot attempts.

What I teach through our concepts with Pure Sweat Basketball is if you aim for the front of the rim and the ball hits the front of the rim, you have accomplished your goal. If you aim for the back of the rim and the ball hits the back of the



rim, you have accomplished your goal.

If you aim for the middle of the rim and the shot attempt is long or short, the basketball still has an opportunity of going in because the player is targeting the middle of the rim.

The important thing is shot mechanics, squaring up properly and balance through the shot attempt.

Mihai Raducanu – No Limit Performance

That is a great question and just like footwork, there are no right or wrong ways. A player should be given all the options in order for them to choose what works for them.

There are different ways of teaching what to focus on and some have proven more successful for certain players or teachers than others.

I tell those that I teach to look at whatever they would like as long as they are focused on something.

Recent and past research has shown that the longer we focus on a target the higher our chances are of hitting it. It doesn't matter what you focus on as long as you understand what you need to do with the ball in order to get in the hoop.

Your shot is based on your rhythm and follow-through. Elbow above the eyebrow and five fingers pointing down.

You can look at the front of the rim and focus on getting the ball over the front of it.

You can look at the back of the rim and focus on getting the ball just in front of it.

You can look in the middle and focus at getting the ball in that specific spot.

However you choose to focus is irrelevant, just do it and practice your rhythm with various footwork off the catch and dribble.

Constant repetition of consistently well-performed movement will create a smooth shot.

Mike Costello – Pure Sweat Basketball

I always tell my players to pick whatever makes them comfortable, but to "aim small, miss small" don't just look at the "front" or "back" of the rim.

They need to pick out a specific loop or part of the net and aim for that every time.

If I absolutely had to pick, I would say aim at the back side loop holding the net up or a piece of the net on the backside.



That way you know that you have to get the ball up over the front and should never miss short if you hit your target. And if you do shoot short, it should still have a chance to go in.

Mike Lee – Thrive3

None of them.

I was taught look at the front, the back, every way you can look at it, but every time I tried to do this as a player it made me think way too much and affected the rhythm on my shot.

I've asked several players this and I've never heard a great shooter that we work with tell me they actually focus on anything. And, when I say great shooters, I mean light out hitting threes on national tv in the Final 4. They just shoot the ball.

I think you get to a certain level and it's just a feel that you have.

If I had to give an answer to a beginner, I'd say the middle of the rim. I'm not sure why you'd aim for the front or back of the rim if you're trying to make the ball go through the hoop.



Randy Brown – CoachRB.com

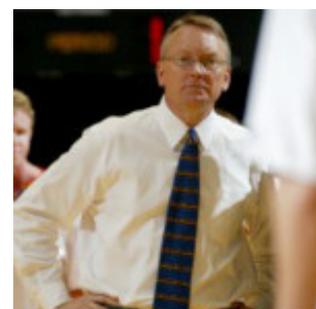
Shooting is based on proper fundamentals, balance, and practice. A solid foundation to shooting the ball is a start, but the most important element is quality repetition.

By quality, I mean shooting thousands of shots with the same fundamentals that you were taught.

Hopefully, you were taught to shoot the ball the right way. If so, you will be a very effective shooter.

The topic of where to aim is overblown in my opinion. My take is to select an area to aim for and make it part of your shooting identity.

Through repetition, you find comfort in your stroke and muscle memory will take care of the makes!



Ryan Razooky – Ryan Razooky Basketball

Players should focus on the middle of the hoop. That's where you're aiming to shoot. It also allows the most room for error.

I also like the loop in front to shoot over, but not the back of the rim. The back of the rim is hardly friendly.

Great shooters miss a majority of their shots short or long, not side to side.



Sam Allen – PGC Basketball

There are hundreds of things that coaches/trainers can teach athletes when it comes to shooting. For me, a specific aiming point on the rim or basket is not one of those.

If you study all the great shooters, both men and women that have played our great game, you will see a variety of different types of shots. We hope to give athletes a few things to focus on from a mechanical and technical standpoint and get really good at those. Things such as footwork, balance, follow-thru and the mental side to shooting.



The goal is obviously to make the shot and if we can get some of the technical fundamentals automated in their habits, this next step is most crucial.

That step is the work, the daily disciplined routines of getting up hundreds of shots to become a great shooter. Through this deliberate practice and training is where players will develop the “feel” and muscle memory of making shots.

So, I guess what I am saying is the aiming can come more from a feel that is developed through thousands of hours in the gym.

As a player who worked tirelessly on my shot, I found myself in my early training years aiming for the back of the rim so I wouldn't front rim my shots (I may have had a coach tell me this?).

As I became a more established player, I didn't have necessarily a target point.

All this to say, over the years when working with players, I have taught players who front-rim a lot of shots to aim for the back of the rim. That has not been a part of my/our recent teachings.

Shooting and this topic is a fascinating discussion. I am interested to hear some of the other responses you gather and learn from them.

To summarize my thoughts for a moment, I think the “less is more” approach can be helpful to developing shooters and the target point would seem to confuse that process a bit.

Scott Fields – CoachScottFields.com

I will start off with an analogy a hunter would appreciate...

When hunting big game with a rifle, you don't just aim at the entire area which is the entire deer, elk or moose. You don't just point the rifle in the direction of the animal and pull the trigger. You pick out the vitals.

You slow down, focus, and raise the rifle and rest the butt of gun on shoulder and line up the rear sight, and place the bead between the rear sight and put bead on vitals, the heart or lungs. You aim at those vitals.



Not the entire animal. Relax and squeeze the trigger. With practice and repetition, you will find success.

The backboard and rim are also an entire area. You don't just push the shot towards the backboard and hope. The front of the rim, from whatever angle you are shooting from, is your target... or vitals from previous analogy.

Unless you are shooting from a 45 degree angle and then your target is the top corner of the square.

Example: To simplify and clarify, while shooting a free throw, straight in front of rim, the target is the front of the rim. While shooting from baseline, target is side of the rim. Eye the front of the rim from where you are positioned. Demonstrate this and show on court, or use diagrams. Eye your target, front of the rim, not the back of the rim, eyelet for net, or net, or backboard.

When shooting you must eye your target, and your index finger or middle finger will reach over the front of the rim on your goose neck follow through. The finger will reach over the front of the rim.

On the 45-degree angle bank shot, that same index finger or middle finger will hit that top corner of the square on the side you are shooting from.

Coaches: Video your shooters and athletes. This is a teaching point. Freeze the video at point of release. If the middle finger drifts right, off of your target, your shot will go right. The further the shot, the more the shot will drift. If the middle finger is left, shot will drift left as explained before.

From 18' to 21' the drift can be significant. Your room for margin of error will increase the more the distance. A good follow through with finger pointing to target and release point can salvage poor mechanics. If you don't hit your target, you will not make your shot.

For younger athletes and shooters, I give this analogy...

It is like going in for the kiss. The lips are the target, if you kiss on the chin, temple, nose, or forehead, your boyfriend or girlfriend will think you are crazy if you don't hit your target which is the lips. Same for shooting hoops...

If you hit the top of the backboard, side of the backboard, or air ball, people will think you are crazy.

Eye your target, hit your target, your percentage of shots made will increase. This is, and should, be taught in progression.

I know this is specific and detailed, but I wanted to give you not only the target, but why the target.

Tommy Hulihan – Tommy Hulihan Basketball

I think this is different for each player and don't think there is necessarily a right/wrong place to look.

As a player, I looked right over the front of the rim. As a coach, I usually ask a player what he/she looks at and as long as they are looking at a specific area I think that's fine.



I am most comfortable with “over the front of the rim” for a couple of reasons.

First and most importantly, I think a player can quickly “find” it compared to the “middle of the basket” or “loop” etc.. I think by looking right over the front of the rim the player will not shoot it short.

I feel that is more timing of release than where you are looking.

I feel by visually “finding” your target sooner a player will shoot a higher percentage thus that is why I prefer looking right over the front of the rim.

Wesley Kosel – HoopsChalkTalk.com

When it comes to shooting, I usually start by asking the player where he or she looks when shooting the basketball.

The player usually says something like “at the rim” or a specific location on the rim.

The advice I give is to find a spot on the rim that you are comfortable with. For me, it is the back of the rim. However, for others, it may be the middle or front of the rim.



I have not bought into the back of the rim being the best and only option, but it is the best option for me.

Young players shooting the basketball should get repetitions with as many shots as possible and experiment with different looks at the rim. Once the player has gotten enough repetitions, he/she will have a good sense of what his/her preference is for looking at the rim.

The key from that point is to consistently look at that same spot from then on. The best shooters all have very specific routines and techniques.

Twitter Poll Results

When I received the answer from Damin Altizer and read that he conducted a Twitter poll, I thought it was a fantastic idea and decided to run my own too!

I tweeted out this question...

“What part of the rim have you been taught to look at when shooting?”

And gave three options to pick from.

1. Front of the rim
2. Back of the rim
3. Middle of the rim

Here are the results...

Coaches and Players: What part of the rim have you been taught to look at when shooting?

— Coach Mac (@BballCoachMac) [December 11, 2015](#)

Out of the 265 people that voted, it was nearly completely even between front of the rim and back of the rim, with a few that focus on the middle.

This means that, when shooting, 44% of players are aiming for a target that's 18 inches away from the target that another 43% of players are aiming for. That's crazy.

Couple of quick notes...

1. *I should have included not focusing on anything specific as an option for the Twitter poll.*
2. *I probably should have said 'middle of the hoop' instead of 'middle of the rim' as some people may get confused and assume that's the same as 'front of the rim'.*

So... What's the Answer?

You've now made it to the end of the article...

You've read the opinions of 18 basketball experts, you've seen the results of a poll that was answered by over 250 players and coaches...

And you're still probably wondering when this article is going to get to the part where I tell you EXACTLY where to tell your players to aim for on the rim so that they swish every shot.

Well, unfortunately, that's not going to happen. In my opinion, there isn't a correct spot on the rim to aim for.

As you can see above, there are many coaches that have had success with many different methods.

I encourage you to do two things...

1. Reread the expert posts above. Most of them know more about shooting than I ever will. If one of their opinions resonates with you, consider adopting their principles. Check out their website and learn more about their thoughts on shooting.

2. Let your players experiment and decide. Allow your players to experiment with a variety of methods and then encourage them to pick the one that feels the most comfortable to them.

This is the method I use.

As coaches, I believe it's our responsibility to introduce our players to the different options they have and then allow them to choose the one that they feel the most comfortable with.

Why You Need to Teach More Than Basketball – The Sad Reality

 basketballforcoaches.com/teach-more-than-basketball/

I want you to do something for me... Don't worry, it's not hard. I want you to give me the next 3 minutes of your time while you read this post. That's all.

After that you can continue on your merry way. But for the next 3 minutes, I'm asking for your complete attention. Because I think what you're about to read is going to be crucial to the lives of many future young men and women.

In this article I'm going to give you some facts that will show you why you need to teach your players more than basketball and the things you should also be teaching them.



Dreams of Playing Professionally

Every high school athlete dreams of playing in the NBA or WNBA one day. It's a huge goal, and a goal that many athletes dedicate their whole childhood and teenage years trying to achieve.

It's not my intention to shatter any dreams. I'm definitely not telling you to tell your players that it's impossible and they should forget about it. I preach to my players "never let anyone tell you that you can't do something" as much as the next coach. And I don't plan on stopping that.

But here's the problem: **too many players are putting their dreams of playing NBA or WNBA far ahead of their education.** And it definitely shouldn't be this way. There needs to be a healthy balance between the two.

Coaches, parents, and players need to realize how much the players are missing out on by dedicating all those hours to making it professional one day. Because it's a lot.

Imagine if these players put as much effort into their education as they do into their basketball... we'd be developing brainiacs everywhere!

Because reality is, and it pains me to say it (seriously. It's tearing me up inside writing these words), nearly every single one of our players have very, very, very little hope of succeeding in their goal to play in the NBA or WNBA.

Let me give you the statistics...

Reality Check – The Facts and Figures

Here's the facts...

3% of high school basketball players will play college basketball.

That number doesn't seem too bad does it? But let's look at the percentage of high school players that eventually make it to the NBA or WNBA.

According to the NCAA, 0.02 to 0.03 percent of high school players end up in the NBA or WNBA. That means out of every 10,000 high school basketball players, only 2 or 3 will ever get a chance to prove themselves in the NBA or WNBA.

Let that sink in... 2 or 3 players out of 10,000...

So the big question is... How are you influencing the futures of the 9,998 players didn't make it?

If you're wondering where I got this information from, you can check out [this source](#).

What This Means for Coaches

For coaches this means two things...

1. We need to stress the importance of education.

As I said earlier in the article, too many players are giving their education the back seat to chase the near impossible task of playing NBA or WNBA in the future.

As annoying as players find it when coaches nag about education, we must do our best to ensure that they're staying on top of their homework and are doing well in school.

2. We need to teach more than basketball skills.

Too many coaches have a win-at-all-costs mentality. What do your players really gain by winning all their games if they don't develop as people throughout the process? Not much.

Developing better people should be the number one goal for any coach when dealing with kids – Bobby Orr

We can benefit all players by helping them develop characteristics that they'll be able to use for the rest of their lives. Let me give you a few examples...

1. Teamwork
2. Time-management
3. Respect
4. Determination
5. Leadership
6. Accountability
7. Trust

And the list goes on and on...

Basketball is a fantastic avenue for players to develop these characteristics over time. And it's up to us coaches to help the players develop them.

Because when their basketball days are said and done, nearly all players are going to get much more use out of their education and character traits they developed through basketball than they will get out of the basketball skills they learned.

To finish off... you must remember two things. 1. Stress education. 2. Teach more than basketball.

Zone Defense is Terrible for Youth Basketball

 basketballforcoaches.com/zone-defense-youth-basketball/



A coach sent me an email last week that said this (summarized):

“Hi. This week we’re playing against a team that runs a tight 2-3 zone all game. They have much taller players than we do and they barely ever leave the key on defense. What should we do?”

Do you want to know what my reply was?

“Pray that your team makes outside shots.”

Obviously, that wasn’t my whole reply, but it was the overall thought of the email I sent back in response.

I wrote a post on [how to beat a 2-3 zone defense](#) not too long ago, but admittedly, a lot of the strategies require that the defense is stepping out and respecting the outside shot (I’ll talk about this a lot throughout the article).

If the defense plays close to the ring at all times and doesn’t challenge the shot (like most youth teams do), these strategies become incredibly hard to implement.

So I decided to create this post that shares with you why zone defense is effective in youth basketball, why coaches use it, how it’s hurting the game, and also to answer any arguments that coaches in favor of zone defense have.

I’ll mostly be referring to the [2-3 zone defense](#) for this article since that is by far the most popular zone to play at a youth basketball level.

Why Zone Defense is Effective in Youth Basketball

If there's one point I'm not going to argue in this article, it's this:

Zone defense is incredibly effective at a youth basketball level.

That is a 100% indisputable fact. Coaches use zone defense because it flat out works against young teams and players.

Here are the 2 main reasons why...

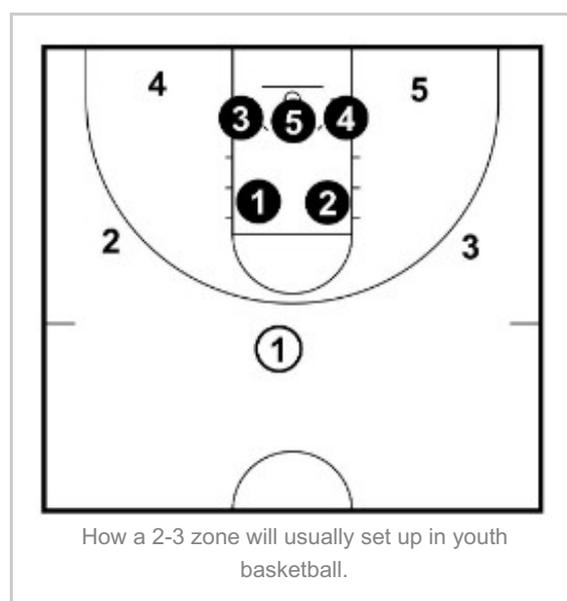
1. Players are forced to shoot from outside

We all know that most of the points scored in youth basketball come from layups and shots taken from close to the ring.

By implementing a zone defense, the defensive team packs the paint and takes away the driving lanes to the hoop.

What's option does this leave the offensive team with? *The outside shot.*

Therefore, since the offensive team can't get to the basket and take a good shot, you'll see a bunch of young players chucking up long-distance shots and praying they'll go in.



As I'm sure you can imagine, not many of these shot attempts are successful.

Most of these youth athletes are simply not physically developed enough to make outside shots consistently. They lack the strength required to shoot the basketball properly.

But since that's the only open shot they can get, they take them anyway.

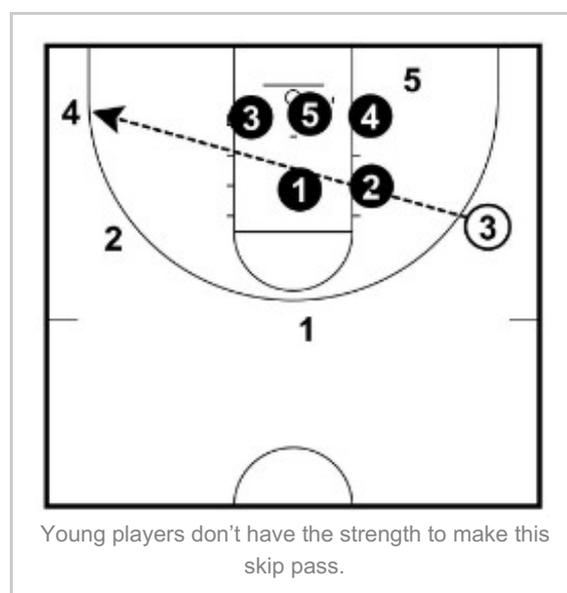
2. Players can't throw skip passes

To put it simply, a 'skip pass' is a pass made from one side of the court to the other 'skipping' other offensive players.

When the offensive players aren't physically strong enough to make this pass, it allows the defense to flood one side of the court without needing to worry about shooters on the other side.

Doing this makes it even more difficult for the offensive team to find gaps in the defense to penetrate.

Now that you understand how it works, let's talk about why coaches use it...



Why Coaches Use Zone Defense

In my opinion, there are three main reasons why coaches implement a zone defense in youth basketball.

And, surprisingly for an article completely against zone defenses, they're not all terrible reasons.

Here they are...

1. To win basketball games

This is the number one reason why coaches use zone defense in my opinion. Because they want to win.

The reason for why coaches want to win can vary greatly. Some reasons nobler than others.

Here are a few of the reasons why coaches want to win:

1. To fuel their ego.
2. To keep their team competitive.
3. To gain recognition from others.
4. To keep players from leaving their team.
5. To keep the players and parents happy.

As you can see from that list, not all reasons are negative reasons.

2. To feel like they're impacting the game

I'll openly admit that I had this exact feeling when I first started coaching.

When your team runs a zone, you look like a much smarter coach simply because it takes advantage of the offensive team's major weaknesses.

Players look organized on the court, the zone is effective, the opposition struggles to score, etc.

It's incredibly easy to get caught up in appearing like you're a good coach when all you're really doing is putting every player in the limited area that the opposition can shoot from and instructing them to stand there.

If you run a man-to-man defense, the defense doesn't look as organized, it's much harder to play help defense, and the opposition will score easy baskets while your team gains more experience.

All coaches want to look like they're having an impact on the game, but it's important that we all keep in mind what's best for your team's long-term development.

3. To stay competitive

Whether they want to or not, some coaches do feel forced to use a zone defense just to stay competitive with the other teams in their league.

This reason I can understand and it's a decent argument in favor of playing zone defense.

I think we all agree that no youth basketball team should ever lose by any number close to 50 points.

Using a zone defense can turn a would-be blowout game that's embarrassing for the players, into a closer and more respectable game.

But if you are forced to resort to this zone strategy just to stay competitive, one thing is very clear...

Your team is playing against the wrong competition.

You shouldn't have to use a zone to be competitive. If your team does, you need to find a new league, improve the players on the team, or figure something else out to solve the issue.

Playing a zone defense isn't the best long-term answer to your troubles.

4 Reasons Why Zone Defense is Terrible for Youth Basketball

All coaches must remember that our focus should be on the futures of the athletes we coach.

I assure you that in a few years no one will care that you won the under 10's championship by implementing a zone defense and forcing the opponents to shoot from outside. No one.

The first three reasons I talk about are the same that Tyler describes in his article [here](#). I've added a fourth reason, but completely agree with the first three and wanted to share my thoughts on them also.

Here are the 4 main reasons why zone defense is terrible for youth basketball.

1. Zone defense creates poor defensive habits

Before all the pro-zone coaches jump at me with lines similar to:

"A good zone defense still teaches man-to-man principles!"

I'm not saying that there's nothing a player who runs a zone will learn from a zone that will assist their man-to-man defense. They still need to close out, still need to communicate, still need to play help defense, etc.

Please know that I understand that.

But there are many poor defensive habits that will also come with running a zone that players will also develop.

And let me be clear... these really are **habits**.

Ask any coach that receives the unenviable task of trying to convert a life-long zone player into a man-to-man defender. Some of these habits are really, really hard to break.

Tyler, whose basketball knowledge I respect a great deal, came up with this list of 15 poor defensive habits that a zone defense promotes...

1. *Lazy on-ball defense*
2. *Standing and watching off ball*
3. *Poor closeout technique*
4. *Little accountability*
5. *Lack of communication*
6. *Minimal defensive movement*
7. *Fewer opportunities to guard different positions and areas of the floor*
8. *Fewer opportunities to practice communication in defensive transition*
9. *Fewer opportunities to practice decision-making in defensive transition*
10. *Reduced accountability on box outs*
11. *Fewer decisions while playing help defense*
12. *Decreased defense-rotation repetitions*
13. *Fewer opportunities to learn what constitutes acceptable defensive risk-taking*
14. *Minimal opportunities to defend a screen*
15. *Fewer opportunities for bigger players to guard the ball.*

2. A zone defense hinders the offensive team's development, too

Quick note: If winning is your number one priority, this point will be incredibly hard for you to comprehend.

By running a zone defense in youth basketball, you're also doing a large disservice to the offensive team, too.

But is that something you should have to worry about? After all, your task is to stop the other team from scoring, not help them. Right?

Coaches have to understand that we're all in this together for the development of the players.

Do you really want an 8-year-old team chucking long-distance shots at the ring because they can't get any closer so that you can win an 8-year-old basketball game?

Because, unfortunately, that's the only thing a zone defense allows them to do.

Please don't think I'm saying that you should sit back and allow the other team to score... because I'm not at all.

But I do think that we need to give the offensive team a chance to make smart basketball plays and experience different offensive opportunities that a zone defense doesn't allow.

They won't get to practice moving the basketball while being pressured, their cuts are useless because the paint is flooded with 5 defenders, setting screens to get open is

pointless because the defense is leaving them open and waiting for them to shoot anyway, and there's plenty of other lost opportunities for offensive development.

Again, similar to the point on defensive habits, I understand that the players will still learn and grow against a zone... but they won't learn half as much that will prepare them for the future as they would if they were playing against a man-to-man defense.

3. Zone defense doesn't prepare players for the next level.

One of the most important tasks of a youth basketball coach is to prepare their players for the next level of basketball.

Here's a super important fact that has been echoed by many great coaches...

A player that is taught man-to-man defense when they're young will have a much easier transition to playing zone defense than a player who plays zone defense exclusively at a young age will have transitioning to a man-to-man defense when they're older.

So this comes down to a case of 'do you want your players to be better prepared for the future or do you want them to win now?'

Another thing you'll notice is that as the competition gets better and the players more skilled, the less zone defense you will see implemented.

This is because zone defense works great against young teams with no skill but struggles against players with a lot of basketball experience.

So to give your players the best chance of success at the next level, it's imperative that they're competent playing man-to-man defense.

4. Zone defense doesn't make basketball fun

This is probably the most disappointing reason of all...

By playing a zone defense, you rob the players of all the fun that basketball should be providing them.

Barely anyone is able to make a basket, both teams are throwing turnover after turnover, and every player is forced to throw up long-distance shots that have no hope of going in!

Does this sound like a fun game of basketball to you?

Because to me, it sounds horrible.

We need to give all players a chance to fall in love with the game of basketball like we all did when we were young.

10 Arguments Used by Coaches in Favor of Zone Defenses (and why they're wrong)

I've heard every argument in the book from coaches in favor of running zones. Some of them are legitimate, others I find to be ignorant nonsense.

Here I'm going to share my thoughts on some of the arguments coaches use that are in favor of using zone defense.

1. "The real issue isn't zone defense, it's that coaches need to teach better zone offense."

The first thing that coaches must understand about zone offense is that although not all shots taken out of a zone offense are three-pointers, zone offense relies on the defense respecting the three-point shot.

This is because if your team can't shoot the basketball from the outside (and most youth teams can't), then the defense won't extend out to respect the shot which will open up gaps in the zone.

Instead, all 5 defenders will stand back in the key and wait for you to miss the outside, uncontested shot.

This would be a decent argument at a higher level, but definitely not at the youth basketball level.

The coaches that preach that 'the issue is zone offense, not zone defense', will often give you the following two pieces of advice...

a. "Your team needs to learn how to move the basketball better!"

Most youth teams have no problem passing the basketball against a compact 2-3 zone. In fact, it's often too easy!

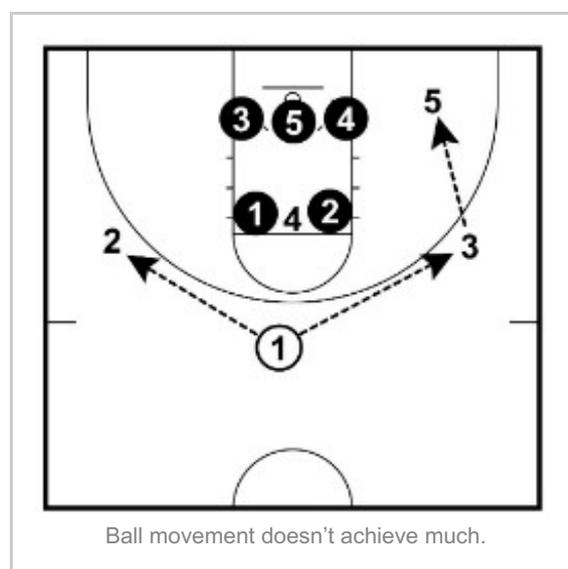
If the offensive player is at the three-point line to space the court, there's often no defender anywhere near them. All the defenders are still inside the key or a step or two out of it. But they're definitely not pressuring the basketball.

Why should they? The defense knows they'll miss the shot.

The defense doesn't particularly care how quickly or how well you move the basketball around the perimeter either. You can swing it from side to side 5 times and the only thing that's going to move on the defense is their heads while they watch.

They're going to stand back in the paint and wait until you shoot it so that they can get the rebound.

And there's no chance your fantastic ball movement is going to penetrate the zone since all 5 defenders are inside the key and can basically touch hands if they all put their arms out.



b. Try screening the zone. That always works!”

I’ve heard numerous people advise youth coaches that they should start screening the zone and I still can’t see how it would benefit the offense.

Maybe screening one of the top players to get an open shot on the wing would work, but the offense is definitely not going to get a layup out of it.

Down-screening one of their players and cutting outside isn’t going to achieve anything at all. The defense isn’t going to follow them and create a gap in the defense. They’re staying inside the key.



The offensive team isn’t having any trouble getting open anyway.

Once again, screening the zone relies on the offense being able to hit outside shots so that the defense is forced to chase and contest the outside shot.

2. “Playing a zone defense allows a team of less talent to not get dominated by 50 points.”

I talked about this previously in the article so I’ll make this quick...

This is the only decent argument in favor of playing a zone defense.

If your team is losing by such a wide margin every game, it won’t be long before the parents and players are sick of it and move along to another team.

And, unfortunately, it’s often the best players that go first.

If you are losing by a wide margin every game, you’d be far better off finding a new league or competition to participate in than you simply conceding to playing zone defense every game.

3. “Zone defense is just another tool. Young athletes need to learn all defensive schemes”

The problem with this argument is made obvious by this simple quote from the great Don Meyer.

“When you add, you must subtract” – Don Meyer

By teaching an extra defense to your players, you’re stealing time away from skill development or opportunities to work on other aspects of their game.

Do you really think implementing a zone defense is the best use of the limited time that you have with your players at practice each week?

Coaches already have barely any time at practice with their players.

4. “I don’t have enough time to teach man-to-man defense”

When teams don’t have any practice time, they often resort to using a zone defense.

I get it. It’s far easier to get a player to stand in one position close to the basket than it is to get them to stay between their player and the basket for an entire possession.

But if you don’t have time to teach them man-to-man defense now, when will they have time to learn it?

It’s imperative that we let players experience man-to-man defense as early as possible.

To me, this is a prime example of putting winning at a young age over future development.

It’s not difficult to instruct your players to stand next to one of the offensive players and stay between them and the basket.

Sure, they’ll get lost a couple of times and your team will give up a few easy baskets, but they’ll gradually gain more experience and improve their defense.

Once they’re getting a grasp of defending their own player, start introducing them to help defense.

Teaching your players these little concepts can all be done during games and in the huddles you have before and after games.

5. “I have a bad player and need to hide them in the zone”

I have a feeling a lot of coaches will cringe when reading this argument... I know I did when I first heard it.

How is hiding a poor defender in a zone going to help them with their man-to-man defense in the future?

This is a clear-cut case of a coach putting winning before development.

Allow the poor defender to gain more experience defending. That’s the only way they’re going to improve.

In fact, they’re probably a poor defender because their previous coach only ran a zone and didn’t focus on their future development too.

6. “A good zone defense still teaches man-to-man principles. Players still close out, players still have to help, etc”.

I discussed this topic earlier in the article but let’s quickly go over it again so that my thoughts on the topic are clear.

Zone defense does teach some man-to-man principles, that’s correct.

But, obviously, a man-to-man defense teaches those man-to-man principles a lot better than a zone defense does.

So while the zone defense isn't all bad, there's a far better alternative.

To me, this argument is used as an excuse to play zone defense when the coach wants to win.

7. “Teach your team to shoot the basketball better and then we wouldn't be able to play a zone.”

What a terrible argument this is.

Let's remember that many of the players either using or competing against the zone defense will be in their first couple of years playing basketball competitively.

How long does it take to become a consistent outside shooter? A few years at the very, very minimum.

How long does it take to implement a zone defense that stands in the key and barely moves? 1 – 2 minutes.

Let's also not forget that, depending on age, many players physically can't shoot the basketball consistently yet no matter how much practice they put in!

8. “My players probably won't play high school or college basketball anyway, so it doesn't matter.”

We've all heard those coaches that believe they can predict a players' future at 8 years old.

“They'll never be good enough. They're too short” or “See that kid, he's going to be a superstar in 10 years.”

How a coach can come to such confident conclusions when players still so young is beyond me.

Basketball is littered with stories of late-blooming players who went on to have amazing professional careers.

Michael Jordan failed to make his high school varsity team as a sophomore and is now known as the best basketball player who ever lived.

Hakeem Olajuwon didn't pick up a basketball until he was 15 years old and is now regarded as one of the greatest centers to ever play the game.

Tim Duncan made the transition from swimming to basketball in high school and is now arguably the greatest power forward of all time.

And there are plenty more similar stories.

No coach can predict which players are going to fall in love with the sport and work their tails off to improve. No coach can predict a player having a massive growth spurt in their later physical development.

Don't rule any player out!

9. “By learning how to play zone defense, the players learn ways to exploit it when they play against it in the future.”

As we've talked about many times in this article, zone defense in youth basketball isn't played the way a real zone defense should be played.

Defenders don't close out, defenders all shadow towards the basketball because they know a skip pass won't beat them, defenders don't leave the key, etc.

There's not much any player will learn about a good zone defense when it's run in youth basketball.

And this fact alone does not justify taking time away from other things the players could be working on instead.

10. “We run the system that best suits our players.”

Another classic case of a coach putting winning above development at an age when winning should never be the number one priority.

If your players can't play man-to-man defense at their current level, what chance are they going to have playing it at the next level?

Because remember, as players develop and reach higher levels of competition, they will play far more man-to-man defense.

We need to give all players the opportunity to experience man-to-man defense so that they're prepared when they get to the next level.

Hold up... don't you post articles on zones and presses all the time?

Yep!

Don't get me wrong, I love writing and talking about all different types of zone defense. I especially love breaking them down into simple guides that coaches can use to help their team.

But these guides must be used age-appropriately and I don't recommend them for any coach before the high school level.

I haven't done a great job of making this clear in the past and I will strive to do so much more diligently in the future.

Going forward, what should be done about zone defense in youth basketball?

Whatever happens surrounding this topic, one thing is for certain...

There must be a consistent, easy to understand rule.

I've seen too many leagues try and implement zones sparingly with guidelines like:

- A team can only use zone defense when they're losing by 10 points.
- A team can only use zone defense with 10 minutes to go in the second half.

I don't like these kinds of guidelines nor do I think they're best for youth basketball overall.

I agree wholeheartedly with Bob Bigelow's opinion in my article on improving youth basketball (I encourage you to go and read his entire thoughts).

It should be compulsory in all games before high school level for players to defend man-to-man half-court.

As stated in the article, Bob has asked over 1000 high school, college, and professional coaches the same question...

"At what basketball grade level should we start teaching/coaching defenses that are not man to man. In other words; zones, presses, traps, box and ones, triangle and two's, and any other variations our future Hall of Fame youth coaches can devise?"

The answer has been consistently (99%) – High school Junior Varsity... which is approximately 15-16 years old for readers who don't have kids in the American school system.

I completely agree, Bob.

Conclusion

I questioned whether the internet needed my opinion on the 'zone defense in youth basketball' topic since there are other fantastic articles on the same topic already published with much the same points.

Specifically [this post](#) by Tyler Coston and [this post](#) by Breakthrough Basketball.

The reason I felt compelled to do so is because:

- 1. I think there were a few vital points that were missing.**
- 2. I wanted all BFC readers to know my thoughts on the topic.**
- 3. I wanted to address the arguments made by coaches in favor of zone defense.**

If you do agree with the thoughts expressed in this post and are planning on becoming only a man-to-man coach (thank you), I encourage you to download this article and share it with other coaches, the parents on your team, and the players.

By doing so, everyone will understand your reasoning behind not playing zone defense and will also be reassured that you have their child's best interests at heart.

Admittedly, you're going to lose more games than you would if you ran a zone. That's something we all have to accept. But take comfort in knowing that in a few years, your players will be much better prepared to continue pursuing their basketball dreams.

And remember... As we always say at BFC: play to win, but understand winning is not the most important thing.