



**USA BASKETBALL
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
GUIDEBOOK**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Basketball Development Pathway	7
Coaching the Game	11
Imparting Life Skills	13
Teaching Techniques	25
Player Development Curriculum	31
Long-Term Development Model	34
Progressive Coaching Method	37
Introductory Level	41
Foundational Level	83
Advanced Level	183
Performance Level	287

USA BASKETBALL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GUIDEBOOK

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INTRODUCTION





USA BASKETBALL. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT GUIDEBOOK



USA Basketball is a nonprofit organization and the national governing body for men's and women's basketball in the United States. As the recognized governing body for basketball in the United States by the *International Basketball Federation (FIBA)* and the *United States Olympic Committee (USOC)*, USA Basketball is responsible for the selection, training and fielding of USA teams that compete in FIBA sponsored international basketball competitions, as well as for some national competitions, and for the development of youth basketball initiatives that address player development, coach education and safety.

USA Basketball's **Youth Development Division** was formed in 2013 to promote, grow and elevate the game of basketball throughout the United States. As part of the initiative, the **USA Basketball Development Model** was created to help guide players, coaches, parents and administrators through the sport. The model includes many types of initiatives, tools, resources and offerings, all of which focus on the health and well-being of young people to enhance enjoyment, participation and development in the game.

USA Basketball is excited to present this guidebook as a resource for players, coaches, parents and administrators. Inside the guide is the **USA Basketball Player Development Curriculum**, a robust and progressive teaching and playing standard for all levels of the game. Whether you are a basketball novice or a veteran of the game, we hope that you will utilize this curriculum while guiding young people.

We urge you to continue your development in the game by visiting us at www.USAB.com to take advantage of all the resources and initiatives that USA Basketball Youth Development has to offer.



THE USA BASKETBALL DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY



The USA Basketball Development Pathway describes the road that we take in experiencing the game. The experiences that make up the pathway should be designed to promote “Basketball for Life”, which encourages everyone to continue on in the sport. Positive basketball experiences ensure that those who enjoy the game will continue to take part as players, and will also stay involved in the sport as coaches, trainers, administrators, fans, officials and referees.

START. Everyone starts the game in a different fashion. Some of us are first introduced to basketball in school, while some of us start as toddlers with a toy hoop in our home. In either case, this introduction sparks our interest in the sport.

EXPLORE. With initial interest comes exploration. Often, we are entered into our local basketball league or registered for instructional lessons as children. Also, we begin to play the sport with friends in our neighborhood or in pick-up games at school. Exploring opportunities to play basketball are vital to our continued interest.

LEARN. During the exploration phase and beyond, we learn a basic understanding of how to play. Basketball is often learned from parents or guardians, local coaches, and from those that we play with and against. Many players develop skills by emulating their peers or the athletes they watch at higher levels of play.

PARTICIPATE. The next stage is participation, where players take part in the sport at all levels. This includes continued structured play on local recreation teams, travel teams, club programs and school teams. Participation also includes non-structured play without coaching, such as pick-up games, playing in the driveway, or perhaps at an outdoor court.

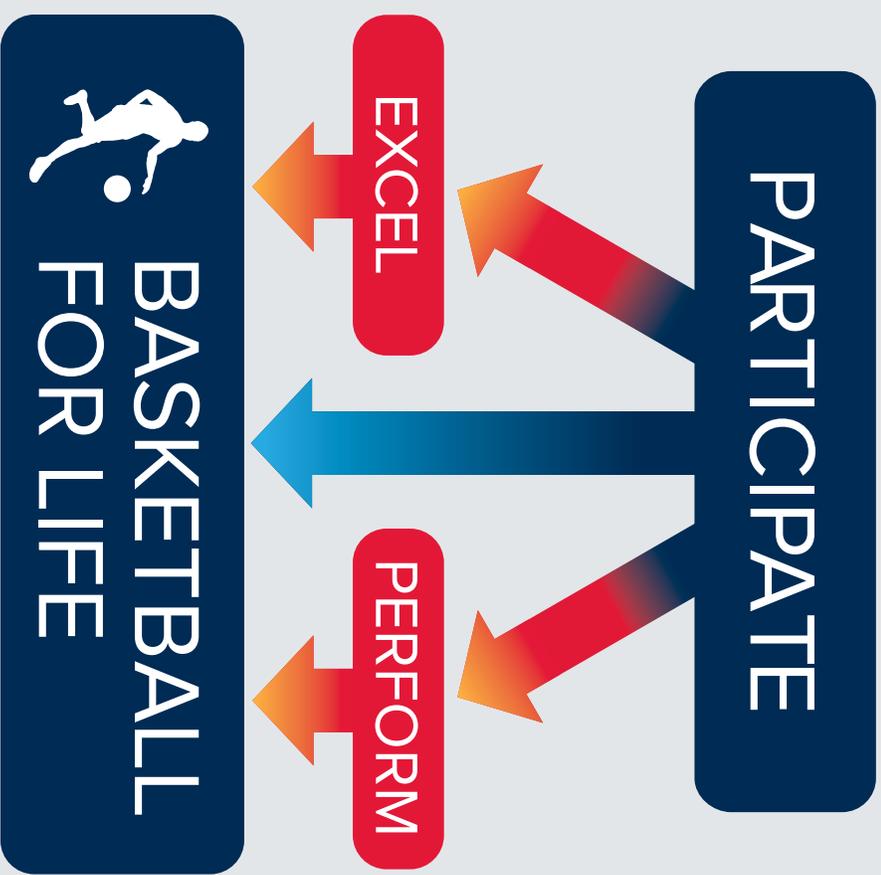


ADVANCE & PERFORM. Some of us will find that we will advance into higher levels of basketball. Through hard work, dedication and natural talent, we may perform basketball well enough to become very good high school players or college athletes at both the scholarship and non-scholarship levels.

ADVANCE & EXCEL. There are a small number of players that possess the attributes of talent, physical and mental ability, and extreme dedication who will go on to excel in the sport. These players move from the perform stage into the excel stage to play basketball professionally. An even smaller number of those players will be selected to play for their country's National Team.

BASKETBALL FOR LIFE. It is important to understand and accept that while some will advance to play basketball at higher levels, and some will simply continue to participate in the game, everyone will eventually enter the "Basketball for Life" stage. This stage includes continuing to play the game, but also includes those who continue to take part as coaches, trainers, administrators, fans, officials and referees.

USA Basketball's Development Pathway is a road map to enjoying the sport forever. Great experiences along the path will ensure growth of the individual, growth of the game, and the future of the sport.





FORGING THE GAME



There are many reasons why an individual has decided to become a basketball coach. Some of us are former players who are looking to give back or stay involved in the game. Some of us have children who play and we volunteer to coach their team. Others are asked to coach within their community to fill a need. There are also coaches, often referred to as trainers, who workout players in the off-season but don't coach them in games. Whatever your reason, coaching young players requires a high level of responsibility and maturity.

Coaching young players should be thrilling, exciting, rewarding and fun. To prepare yourself, take into consideration the following characteristics that make for a successful youth coach:

PATIENCE. Remember that you are coaching kids. Young people need teaching but they also need the opportunity and freedom to make mistakes. Your role as coach is to teach and then help your players learn from their mistakes. Rather than expecting your players to play flawlessly, allow them to demonstrate mistakes. This approach requires a substantial amount of patience but will maximize long-term player and team development.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY. Even at foundational levels of play, basketball games can become heated. It is your duty to act like a responsible adult under any circumstance. This means keeping your temper under control even when you know that you are right in a particular situation. Your dealings with players, officials, parents, scorekeepers and others are under a microscope as a leader, and it will require you to demonstrate restraint in all situations.

BASKETBALL KNOWLEDGE. As the coach of a team, group or individual, you will need to develop an understanding of fundamentals, rules and various strategies based on the level you are working with. Introductory levels of play will require only basic education but will also require a deeper sense of your impact on a

beginner's continued involvement in the sport. Advanced levels will require deeper basketball education as well as a more philosophical approach to coaching. This guidebook and our online resources at www.USAB.com will serve as a valuable resource to you as you develop as a coach.

TIME COMMITMENT. Games are certainly important, but being a good coach involves more than simply showing up for the game. To be effective you will need to organize and execute practices, provide fundamental skill instruction, decide on playing time, communicate frequently with players and parents, and much more. Coaching is a commitment of your time to the development of players both on and off the court. Make the full commitment to coaching, it will maximize the benefit to your players and make the experience more rewarding for you.

PRIORITIZE. Winning can be a healthy goal, but striving to win is where lessons are learned regardless of the final score. A truly effective coach will evaluate a team's level of play, will set attainable goals, and then will assess outcomes based on development rather than on wins or losses. Identify your players' values and establish your values as a coach, then use those values as guiding principles in prioritizing team and player goals. Perhaps you are coaching a recreation team and a goal is for everyone to play equal time, or maybe your coaching at the high school level and a goal is to win a state title. In either case, make the journey to achieve the goal a priority.



IMPARTING LIFE SKILLS



COACHABILITY

“Coachability describes someone who wants to be coached. This manifests itself as someone who likes being challenged, loves learning, strives for more and more and then works tirelessly at what they’re taught.” – Coach Geno Auremma

Being coachable and being teachable go hand in hand. Above all things, coaches are teachers, players are students, and basketball is the subject matter. Coaches want to feel that the players care about what they say. During training, practice and games, a coachable player will give the coach their undivided attention. Also, a player that is coachable will act on what the coach teaches.

There are four main traits that a player needs to possess to be considered coachable. When selecting a team, or deciding to coach a group of young people, you should look for these characteristics among each prospective player:

HUMILITY. A player that has humility accepts and admits that there are things they do not know, and cannot do, within the sport of basketball. Further, the player is willing to concede when they cannot accomplish a certain task alone, and are willing to allow the coach to help.

SENSE OF PURPOSE. A player who is willing to state their goals and demonstrate their motivation will typically be easier to reach through coaching.

SURRENDERING CONTROL. A player who can give up control to another, in this case a coach, is initially doing so without seeing results. For a player to make true change to improve their game, a journey into uncertainty will happen along the way. Once you have been verified as a credible and qualified teacher, a coachable player will be fully invested in the journey.

FAITH. Improvement or non-improvement as a player can only be determined after the player has been through the experience with you as the coach. A player that puts faith in you is forgoing the benefit of hindsight, understanding that sometimes things need to get worse before they get better.

At the same time that you are seeking or imparting these characteristics to your players, you should also encourage players and their parents to seek the same in a prospective coach.



COMMUNICATION

It has been proven that the vast majority of all communication is non-verbal. Your actions as a coach speak much louder than your words. Through posture, facial expressions, body language, gestures and tone, players and coaches send each other unspoken cues. It's important that you coach your players to say what they mean and mean what they say. This is extremely valuable as your players communicate amongst themselves and others.

Interactive communication is needed to effectively send and receive messages. There are many obstacles in the way of clear communication, and pushing through those obstacles is a challenge that you must overcome as a coach. Obstacles such as non-listeners, misinformation, and interpretation are barriers to interacting with your players and having them interact with each other. A major barrier in modern day communication is sarcasm. It is your duty as a coach to remove sarcasm from all communication in order to keep messaging clear and effective.

Here are six communication principles to impart to your players:

CARE. Communicators must have a genuine concern for other people, their development, and their needs.

CREDIBLE. Great communicators remain consistent, fair and competent. Their actions dictate how they are perceived and valued.

CONSTRUCTIVE. Communicators are consistently positive, full of energy and only see challenges as temporary obstacles.

CONNECT. Use every opportunity to communicate at the appropriate level, with simple and direct language to keep and hold someone's attention.

CONFIRM. Check back with the other person or group to ensure messaging is understood.

CONCENTRATE. Give opportunity for others to respond, listening intently to responses and feedback.

CONFIDENCE



Confidence is the players' belief in their ability to perform. Some players derive this confidence from possessing natural talent, and some acquire it from training and mastering skills. As a coach, it is imperative that you provide your players with enough confidence to drive their passion to advance in the sport.

Here are five ways to promote and instill confidence in the players you coach:

HELP PLAYERS COPE WITH FEAR OF FAILURE. Fear of failure is a natural trait that derives from a player's desire to succeed. The fear is based on the player's need for social acceptance and approval. Talk openly with players about their personal fears. Coach them to identify and openly discuss what scares them the most.

ASSIST IN SETTING EXPECTATIONS. It's great to have expectations, but when players set their own expectations too high they will lose confidence and, perhaps, interest in basketball. Assist your players in identifying reasonable expectations so they don't sabotage their experiences.

AID IN NAVIGATING DISTRACTIONS. The ability for a player to concentrate can become blocked by distractions. For that reason, help your players to focus on processes rather than outcomes. Emphasize the importance of living in each moment so as to minimize the distraction of outside forces. For example, teach your players to keep focus on a particular play instead of emphasizing how that play may win or lose the game.

SERVE AS YOUR PLAYERS' BIGGEST FAN. As a coach, you should teach and support your players throughout the confidence-building process. Help players erase doubts and beliefs that undermine their confidence. Demonstrate loudly to your players that you are behind them using positive reinforcement during both favorable and unfavorable situations.

HELP PLAYERS DEAL WITH SETBACKS. Mistakes, errors and poor judgment on the part of young people is inevitable, especially in sports. Helping your players cope with those setbacks instills composure in them. Teach your players to learn from, and then let go of, the past. Keep your players moving forward at all times.



HARD WORK & DISCIPLINE



Hard work and discipline compliment each other in basketball. A hard working player will often demonstrate a sense of self-discipline. Likewise, a disciplined player will typically appreciate the value of hard work in achieving goals. As a coach, you must set this tone by putting in extra effort and training yourself to uphold the same expectations you have for your players.

It is important to recognize that the definition of hard work for one player may not be the same as it is for another. For example, players with high stamina may perform the same sprinting drill as their teammates but may find the drill unchallenging. Encourage players to discipline themselves to do more when they are able. Conversely, it is equally as valuable for players who struggle with a drill to acknowledge that struggle and work with you to learn how they can improve. Train your players to accept situations that require hard work, and also train them to demonstrate discipline while performing that work.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership plays an important role in basketball, especially in team situations. A team can be made up of different levels of leaders both on and off the court. Ultimately, the coach will lead the group, however the coach will need to rely on others to lead at various points. Teaching your players and assistant coaches how to lead allows your coaching philosophy to spread consistently throughout the group.

There are multiple ways to select leaders, though as coaches you should recognize that leaders aren't always your best players. Players learn to lead from the experience of both leading and following. There is value in your players learning by emulating the best player, but there is equal value in players learning from those who have had the experience as followers. As a coach, make it a point to identify, train and appoint both types of leaders within your team or group. This will help to build trust in you as a coach amongst your players, parents and administrators.

As a leader yourself, it's important to gain the trust of those who follow you. Those who are unfamiliar with you as a person will be apprehensive to trust you as a leader, especially at first. Demonstrate to your players that, as their coach, you embrace initial skepticism and encourage them to do the same. Inform players from the start that you are under the microscope as their coach, and let them know that tomorrow it could be them under that same microscope. Finally, impart to your entire group that being under scrutiny doesn't have to be viewed as bad. We should encourage constructive feedback to better ourselves as coaches, players and as people.

RESPONSIBILITY



Coaching basketball provides a great opportunity to teach young players the value of responsibility. Responsibility involves making choices and then accepting the results of the choices that were made. Often, young people allow circumstances to dictate poor choices. Players will often minimize or ignore their power to choose so that they can satisfy short-term wants and needs.

For example, a player may miss a practice or training session when a perceived better opportunity presents itself in the moment, such as playing video games with friends. This doesn't necessarily mean the player doesn't want to improve, but in that moment the player casts aside their long-term goals in basketball to fulfill a short-term desire, which in this case was playing video games instead of practicing. As a coach, it is your duty to consider a player's long-term growth and impart true responsibility in your players in order to produce long-term results.

To teach responsibility in your players, take these steps:

- Develop and adhere to consistent consequences for every player you coach. Apply grace to situations that warrant it, but do so equally for all players.
- Reward positive behavior as often as you correct negative actions. If you only recognize negative behavior, a player will respond negatively and you will impede the long-term growth of the player and the team.
- Model responsible behavior by acknowledging your own choices and how they may impact the player or group.

A responsible player has more of an ability to decide between right and wrong than an irresponsible player. Insist that all players you coach own their responsibilities so that they can make informed decisions when faced with choices.

SPORTSMANSHIP FOR FAIR PLAY

Young players should treat teammates, coaches, opponents and officials the same way that they would like to be treated – fairly and with respect. Coping with winning and losing is a major part of sportsmanship in basketball. Ideally, young people first learn about how to deal with challenges that arise from a modeled behavior by their parents or guardians. However, as a coach, it's up to you to reinforce the appropriate behavior for winning and losing, as well as during individual situations.

Rarely does a player enter a game or contest exhibiting poor sportsmanship. Typically, an unfavorable situation arises within an activity that prompts the player to act unruly. Prepare your players for these moments ahead of time by simulating challenging situations in training or practice sessions. For example, have an assistant coach purposely make a wrong out-of-bounds call while officiating a scrimmage. Then, explain to the complaining players that calls like that will happen frequently over the course of basketball. Emphasize to all that acting unruly and complaining about a call is a backward action, and that it takes important focus away from the next play.

Do not tolerate regressive thinking by your players, and do not exhibit regressive thinking in your coaching style. Players will mirror the behavior of their coach as their leader. Set the example for your team by controlling your own emotions toward officials, parents, your own players as well as your opponents. Don't allow unfavorable situations to permit you, your assistant coaches or your players to cause discredit to your team.

TEAMWORK



“To me, teamwork is the beauty of our sport, where you have five acting as one. You become selfless.”

– Coach Mike Krzyzewski

Teamwork is the essential part of basketball success. Every player and coach has a specific role to play in accomplishing team goals. Although it may seem as if one player scored the basket, that basket was made possible by planning, coordinating, and cooperating to get that player the ball. As a coach you develop people to work well with others, but you also need to ensure that every player understands their particular role in that process. When everyone focuses on performing within their role then everyone achieves more.

Teaching the value of teamwork and becoming an effective member of a team is an important first step to developing leadership skills. For impressionable youth, the development of these skills is critical. Young people that lack a team experience have limited exposure to positive and proactive support systems in basketball. Affording young people experiences through which they learn to rely on themselves and on others is an important factor in the development of a productive mentality.

As a coach, encourage each of the following habits in all players:

- Cooperation.
- Contributing with ideas, suggestions, and effort.
- Communication (giving and receiving).
- A sense of responsibility.
- Respect and toleration for different opinions, customs, and individual preferences.

Teach your players that “we over me” is what most often leads to “us over them,” in team sport competitions. Encourage your players to be selfless and supportive teammates in both losing and winning efforts.



TEACHING TECHNIQUES



BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Behavior Management is the focus on maintaining order and behavior with a group or an individual. As a basketball coach or administrator, you will find an infinite amount of personalities, behaviors, and mentalities on your team, in your camp or clinic, and throughout your organization. Without effective behavior management techniques, it is impossible to keep athletes focused on training, practices, games, or other team activities. By keeping athletes engaged, you will find that group activities can be effective and efficient.

The key to effective behavior management is to develop clear and concise expectations for each and every member of the group. Try to include your athletes and parents in this development process as much as possible while still maintaining your authority as the leader. It is very important that everyone in the program is involved in upholding the set expectations. Also, the group should discuss and agree upon the repercussions for not maintaining expectations. Any player, coach, parent or staff member who fails to behave accordingly should be held accountable for their actions. The decided course of action must be performed by the coach as the leader in order for the message to resonate throughout the program.

By establishing clear and concise expectations in your organization, and by following up with appropriate action when those expectations aren't met, you will instill a sense of personal responsibility in others for their behavior. This will set a consistent tone and help alleviate challenges that arise within your program.

BUILDING SELF-COMPASSION



Having compassion for oneself is no different than having compassion for others. Just like recognizing and acknowledging when someone else is going through a difficult circumstance, self-compassion is the ability to recognize and accept your own difficult circumstances. As defined by researcher Kristin Neff, self-compassion is made up of three main components: mindfulness of your own thoughts, a sense of common humanity, and treating yourself kindly. Applied to coaching, self-compassion involves giving young players opportunities to learn how to deal with their emotions.

Things will not always go the way your players would like them to. Use these five techniques to instill self-compassion in your players so that they can understand the good and bad moments in basketball, as well in life:

- Take time to teach players the truth that, no matter what they try to control, life will always be made up of highs and lows. Getting them to accept this reality sets the foundation for dealing with issues that arise.
- Listen to your players emphatically to help them label what they are feeling. For example: "It sounds like you are feeling aggravated." "Did the situation make you angry?" Young people need to trust that you are hearing them.
- Honestly critique the player's behavior within a situation, but don't criticize the player's overall character. For example: "That situation caused us to lose possession of the ball, you can do better than that." is far more effective than saying, "You never listen."
- Speak to a player's past behavior but shape the future of the behavior with action. An example would be discussing the ramifications of a past turnover, and then next practice working extensively on technique to prevent future mistakes.
- Model self-compassion by showing your own composure to your players when faced with unfavorable situations. Coaches with self-compassion are better liked, have higher standards and present a greater work ethic to those that follow them.

CRITIQUE VS. CRITICISM

It is important that all coaches understand the differences between the terms Critique and Criticism. A critique is an evaluation or an assessment of a particular skill. An example of a critique would be assessing how effectively a player can use their strong- and weak-hand during a lay-up drill. Criticism is expressing disapproval of someone based on a mistake that they have made. An example of criticism would be simply telling a right-handed player that they are awful at left-handed lay-ups. Knowing the difference in these terms is crucial in teaching and evaluating players in youth basketball.

While coaching young people, it is essential to consider the psyche of the players that you are coaching. It has been proven at all levels that players are more likely to build long-term confidence in their game after receiving positive feedback as opposed to negative feedback. For the sake of the lesson, let's say that Michael just completed a basic lay-up drill session. During the drill, Michael makes 15 right-handed lay-ups and only 2 left-handed lay-ups.

An example of critiquing would be communicating to Michael that you have noticed he did extremely well on his right-handed lay-ups and that, with proper practice, his left-hand will perform just as well. The comment would confidently motivate Michael into training for the long-term on his left-hand lay-ups. An example of criticism would be telling Michael that his left-handed lay-ups are useless and that he's wasting his time in trying them. This comment can only produce poor results for Michael, his progress as a player, and for you as his coach.

It is important that, as coaches, we strive to critique athletes instead of criticize them. The method used to provide feedback to players will instill long-term confidence to excel on and off the court, and stay active in the game.

ESTABLISHING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR



One of the largest challenges coaches face is establishing positive behavior within the team. Whether it is personality conflicts, playing time, parental concerns, or win/loss records, it is difficult for coaches to maintain a positive culture in the program. In order to establish a culture that promotes positive behavior, you must establish clear and concise expectations on behavior from day one. All coaches, players, and personnel must be involved in the process of establishing guidelines for the team, and develop the repercussions if said rules were violated. It is important that you maintain a positive attitude with the team, and players should be recognized for demonstrating positive behavior. By having clear and concise expectations, involving the players in the process, and commending positive behavior, you will produce a positive atmosphere for your team.

GOAL SETTING

As a coach, it is important to require that each player set personal goals for themselves. The team or group must also establish a set of goals to accomplish throughout their time together. Goal setting is choosing the skills and concepts that a player or a team wishes to accomplish throughout a set period of time. By setting attainable goals, the team will have a focus and motivation on the areas in which they need to improve upon. This provides everyone with a series of finish lines to cross. Once the individual or team has achieved the goal they can build upon these skills to set more rigorous goals.

In order to implement goals, coaches must facilitate discussion with the team or group and the individual. There are three steps that should go into goal setting:

- While it may seem obvious, insist that players discuss why they chose the established goal(s). For example, while watching film, a team realized that they do not rebound well. The team decides to focus on rebounding to improve on a deficiency. Remind players of the reasoning while working toward the goal.
- The player or the team must identify the actions they will take to achieve this goal. For example, the team decides they will make a concentrated effort to box out an opponent on every shot attempt.
- Focus players on what they would like to achieve in a specified amount of time. For example, during drill work, set a requirement that the team must secure 3 rebounds in a row before moving to the next drill.

By following each of the steps, players will grow, teams will grow together, and growth will take place in areas other than wins and losses. As coaches, we must continue to encourage all players and teams to set realistic goals and make constant plans to achieve those goals.



USA BASKETBALL PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM



INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

The USA Basketball **Player Development Curriculum** has been established to guide players, and the people that coach them, through a level-appropriate system of basketball development. Using scientific guiding principles developed by coach educators Istvan Balyi and Richard Way, and found in their book *Long-Term Athlete Development* (2013), USA Basketball has designed a practical, functional and sequential development model to properly impart the game to a player.

The **Player Development Curriculum** consists of four levels of development: **Introductory**, **Foundational**, **Advanced** and **Performance**. Each level takes the player through progressive development techniques based on their mastery of basketball and movement skills as opposed to their age, grade in school or physical attributes. This mastery of skills approach allows the player to develop physical literacy, learn basketball vocabulary and acquire the movement confidence needed to optimize their basketball potential.

As explained in the sections that follow, the **Player Development Curriculum** incorporates seven stages of long-term athlete development – *Active Start*, *Fundamentals*, *Learning to Train*, *Training to Train*, *Training to Compete*, *Training to Win* and *Basketball for Life*. Although the curriculum removes age from the skill learning process, the long-term model provides age recommendations to demonstrate scientifically-proven learning capabilities. USA Basketball incorporated these age recommendations in creating the curriculum levels to show how the levels translate to real learning environments.

Through the long-term athlete development model, the **Player Development Curriculum** addresses the topic of proper practice/ training-to-competition ratios. USA Basketball has defined competition as the act of competing against another team, or imparting team strategies to prepare to compete against another team. Practice

or training is defined as all activity related to a player's individual skill development. Based on these definitions, the following is a summary of USA Basketball's stance on practice/training-to-competition throughout the four levels:



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL:

Learn fundamental movement skills and build overall motor skills. Participation once or twice per week in basketball but daily participation in other sport activity is essential for further excellence. Group skill competitions recommended throughout the level. Introduction to team principles/concepts **ONLY**, avoid actual 5x5 competition until fundamentals are further developed.

FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL:

Learn all fundamental and basic basketball-specific skills, establish building blocks for overall basketball skills. 70% of time is spent on individual fundamental training and only 30% of the time is spent on actual game competition. Teach position concepts, but **DO NOT** assign player positions at any point in the level. Divide actual competition between special games (1x1, 2x2, 3x3, skill games) and 5x5 play, trying not to focus on actual 5x5 competition until later in the level.

ADVANCED LEVEL:

Build the aerobic base, build strength towards the end of the level and further develop overall basketball skills. Build the “engine” and consolidate basketball skills. Early in the level, 60% of the time is spent on individual training and 40% is spent on competition including 5x5 play, special games (1x1, 2x2, 3x3, skill games) as well as team-oriented practices. Later in the level, depending on mastery of skills, the switch can be made to a 50:50 training to competition ratio and positions can be assigned.

PERFORMANCE LEVEL:

Maximize fitness and competition preparation as well as individual and position-specific skills. Optimize the “engine” of skills and performance. Training to competition ratio in this phase shifts to 25:75, understanding that the competition percentage includes team-oriented practices and other competition-specific preparations.

USA BASKETBALL

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

(Concepts developed by coach educator Istvan Balyi and have been adapted by USA Basketball)

The stages that follow serve as building blocks for the four levels of development in the USA Basketball Player Development Curriculum, which follows later in the guide. Each stage is incorporated into the appropriate level, and that level is identified in parentheses. In some instances, levels incorporate multiple stages to account for the various types of players throughout a program.

As you review, it's important to note that USA Basketball considers competition as the act of competing against another team, or imparting team strategies to prepare to compete against another team. Conversely, USA Basketball considers training to include all activity related to a player's technical skill development. Therefore, the recommended training to competition ratios listed throughout the guide reflect those considerations.

STAGE 1: ACTIVE START

(Found in USAB Introductory Level)

Approximate Age: 0-6 years old

OBJECTIVES: Starting at infancy, provide opportunities for children to be physically active each day within a safe, fun environment. Physical activity through play is an essential part of a child's development. Activity should incorporate fundamental movement skills throughout the four environments that lead to maximizing a child's physical potential:

*In the water: Swimming
On the ground: Basketball (dribbling)
In the air: Gymnastics
On ice and snow: Sliding (skiing, skating)*

STAGE 2: FUNDAMENTALS

*(Found in Introductory & Foundational Levels)
Approximate Age: 6-9 years old*

OBJECTIVES: Learn all fundamental movement skills (build overall motor skills). Participation once or twice per week in basketball, but daily participation in other sport activity is essential for further excellence. Special game competitions recommended throughout the phase. Introduction to 5 x 5 principles/concepts only in late phase, avoiding actual 5 x 5 competition until fundamentals are further developed.

STAGE 3: LEARNING TO TRAIN

*(Found in Foundational Level)
Approximate Age: 8-12 years old*

OBJECTIVES: Learn all fundamental and basic basketball-specific skills (build overall sports skills). A 70:30 training to competition ratio is recommended. Divide actual competition between special games and 5 x 5 play, trying not to focus on 5 x 5 competition until later in the phase.

STAGE 4: TRAINING TO TRAIN

*(Found in Advanced Level)
Approximate Age: 12-15 years old*

Objectives: Build the aerobic base, build strength towards the end of the stage and further develop basketball skills (build the "engine" and consolidate basketball skills). Recommend 60:40 training to competition ratio. The 40% competition ratio includes 5 x 5 competition, special game competition, as well as team-oriented practices.



STAGE 5: TRAINING TO COMPETE

(Found in Advanced & Performance Levels)
Approximate Age: 14-17 years old

OBJECTIVES: Optimize fitness preparation as well as basketball, individual and position-specific skills (continue to maximize the “engine” of skills and performance). The training to competition ratio now changes to 50:50. 50% of available time is devoted to the development of player technical/tactical skills and fitness improvements, with the other 50% devoted to 5 x 5 competition and team-oriented practices.

STAGE 6: TRAINING TO WIN

(Found in Performance Level)
Approximate Age: 17+

Objectives: Maximize fitness preparation as well as basketball, individual and position-specific skills (goal is to optimize the “engine” of skills and performance). Training to competition ratio in this phase shifts to 25:75, understanding that the competition percentage includes team-oriented practices.

STAGE 7: BASKETBALL FOR LIFE:

The Retirement/Retention Stage (Found in All Levels)

OBJECTIVES: Retain athletes for recreational play, coaching, administration, officiating, and other basketball related activities.

APPLYING THE PROGRESSIVE GOALING METHOD TO BASKETBALL



WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE COACHING?

Progressive Coaching is the teaching philosophy that focuses on engaging students individually as well as engaging groups in an activity. In the case of basketball, teaching occurs with individual athletes as well as teams in basketball related activity. The philosophy behind **Progressive Coaching** is to challenge and engage each player individually in order to achieve the best results. If the philosophy is applied to every player, coaches will see marked improvement in players as well as the entire team. It is important that the goals for each player are challenging, attainable, and allow the athlete to keep building on a particular skill.

To best implement **Progressive Coaching** with your team, you must first understand the strengths and weaknesses of each of your players individually. Once this baseline measurement is set, you will be able to set goals with each player and develop a plan to help the player reach his or her goal. Understanding the goals of each player will also help in developing drills for a practice.

Equally important to individual goals is the establishment of team goals to give the group something to collectively strive towards. Ensure that the goals are attainable, and challenge your team to build toward goals each and every practice and game. For example, at the beginning of the season, a team goal may be to run an efficient fast break after a rebound. Build to this goal by first mastering how to secure a rebound, how to pivot, and then how to outlet pass the ball. Keep your training process-driven by ensuring that your players are mastering each step before taking the next one.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

There are many different components to the game of basketball. In the Player Development Curriculum, USA Basketball separates skills into eight categories including **Ball Handling & Dribbling, Footwork & Body Control, Passing & Receiving, Rebounding, Screening, Shooting, Team Defensive Concepts & Team Offensive Concepts**. Each player in a group will have their strengths and weaknesses, and rarely will all players be on the same level in all skill categories. Also, there are many different levels of teams that you may find yourself coaching. Recreation programs, school teams, travel teams, college programs and even professional teams are all comprised of players learning at different levels. Both the level of basketball and each player's skill set determines how you will coach and manage your group throughout a season.

As a coach, the first task is to evaluate each one of your players as well as your team as a whole. The best way to accomplish this is to establish and document a baseline of skills. This measures what your players can or cannot currently do on the basketball court. Again, measurements will vary depending on the level of play. Once you have established a baseline, you can begin to set goals for your players and team. Based on this information, you can begin to establish a proper training plan for the season.

EXAMPLE:

Today, I begin my first day coaching a group of eight year olds through a local recreation league. Many of the players have never played on teams other than in physical education class at school. I must first evaluate the level of my players before designing drills. The first skill that I am going to assess is triple threat. I am looking to see if players know how to stand in the triple threat position.

After completing the stance drill, I see that 80% of my players are in the proper triple threat stance. I feel that I can move on to a different drill that builds on these fundamentals instead of working on a skill that the players already know how to do. At the same time, I will need to set aside extra time or assign an assistant coach to work with the other 20% of players to teach them the proper stance. (see diagram next page)



DECISION MAKING:

There are several different decisions a coach must make while developing players in basketball. For example, "How many drills should the team do before I know they understand a specific skill?", "What do I do if a player is too good for the drills I am doing?", "What do I do if a player does not have the fundamentals required to complete the drills I am asking them to do?". USA Basketball offers up a few recommendations.

HOW MANY DRILLS SHOULD THE TEAM DO BEFORE I KNOW THEY UNDERSTAND A SPECIFIC DRILL?

There are many different elements that should be considered. The first consideration is based on the level of the team. For example, a high school team may spend less time on triple threat than a middle school basketball team. A high school team may use one or two of these drills to reinforce fundamentals, but then will move to more difficult skills quickly. Conversely, middle school coaches may start on skills that they find to be too advanced for the team but could revert back to teach the fundamentals of that particular skill.

The *Player Development Curriculum* offers several sample drills for each skill to ensure that players have understanding of the particular skill. Ultimately, the coach will decide the type and amount of drills that are necessary before moving on to the next skill. For example, in the illustration below, the coach has decided to complete all three "Triple Threat Skill" drills and only two "Stationary Dribble Skill" drills before moving on. (see diagram next page)



DIFFERENTIATION:

As a coach, you will see that players range in their abilities in different aspects of the game. Differentiation is simply modifying a skill or a drill in order to challenge or meet the needs of your players and team. For example, you may have a player that is demonstrating skills above or below the majority of the group. While planning training, it is important to offer different drills within each skill that both challenge and enhance the skills of each player. This may be done at practices through individual stations, or perhaps it requires extra training outside of the group environment, such as after practices or within private training.

Often, coaches realize that the level of team may be inappropriate for a player. You may find yourself coaching a player that is too far below or too far above the skill set of the group. As a coach faced with either type of player, and after exhausting your options to develop that player, it may be necessary to recommend that the player join a program that can better enhance development. For example, this could involve recommending a more basic level program for a skill-deficient player, or suggesting a more competitive program for the player that is advanced in their skills.



USA BASKETBALL, PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL BALL HANDLING & DRIBBLING



GENERAL OVERVIEW: Ball-handling and dribbling are of paramount importance. These two skills allow the basketball to be advanced legally throughout the court of play. At the Introductory Level, ball-handling and dribbling take on the most basic form, allowing players to become familiar with the basketball.

SKILL 1

HOW TO HOLD A BASKETBALL

- Teach young players to hold the basketball with two hands, one on each side of the basketball.
- Players should spread their fingers, with their thumbs pointed up at waist level.
- Give young players a sense of confidence handling the basketball.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slight knee bend.
- Strong grip on each side of basketball.
- Head up.
- Spread fingers, thumbs up.



SKILL 2

FAMILIARITY WITH THE BASKETBALL



- In this skill, the player will become acquainted with the basketball by moving it from hand to hand, controlling it through all movements.
- It is important to ensure that the player is confident handling the basketball while remaining stationary.
- Once players become consistent with this movement, they can begin to move the basketball with greater speed from hand to hand.
- Have the player create a popping sound with the basketball against the hand as speed increases.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slight knee bend.
- Control of basketball from hand to hand.
- Head up.
- Spread fingers, thumbs up.



SKILL 3

TRIPLE-THREAT POSITION

Players who have become acquainted with the basketball are able to hold and move the basketball correctly. As soon as this occurs at the Introductory Level, it is important to introduce the concept of proper basketball positioning. This particular position is known as the “triple-threat” stance, which got its name from the idea that when players first receive the basketball, they are a “threat” in three different ways on the court: dribbling, passing, and shooting. Every aspect of basketball, from an offensive standpoint, centers around this stance.

- This skill can be taught as a group where each player has a basketball.
- Following an explanation and demonstration by the coach, players can hold the triple-threat position while coaches make proper adjustments to the stance.

SKILL 4

STATIONARY BALL-HANDLING: THE FIRST DRIBBLE

At this level, dribbling the basketball for the first time can be an exciting moment. Teaching proper technique from the beginning is a critical element to instilling confidence in the player. Confidence determines a player’s desire to continue playing the game.

- To teach the proper technique of dribbling, players will start in the triple-threat position, with the basketball placed at the waist, on the side of the player’s shooting hand.
- The basketball should be dribbled in a controlled manner, rather than “slapped” at.
- The hand will push through the basketball with wrist movement (similar to a follow-through in shooting).
- Once the basketball returns from the ground to waist level, the player’s hand will stop the basketball and begin the process of pushing downward through the basketball again.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Balanced basketball position.
- Basketball at waist level of shooting hand.
- Hands positioned properly to shoot (“T” formation).
- Foot on same side of shooting hand positioned slightly in front of other foot.
- Head up.



- At this level, players should begin working on the nondominant hand as well.
- Coaches can instruct players to dribble a certain number of times, then catch the basketball in a triple-threat position, keeping track of how many times this is completed properly. Challenge players to do better than their own previous “record” each time. Fun, individual games such as these will keep the players engaged and enjoying the process.
- Later in the level, as players improve, they should be encouraged to use their finger pads to control the basketball while dribbling. This is an important concept to introduce, as the way that the basketball rests in the hands is consistent for ball-handling, dribbling, passing, receiving, and shooting. Once the technique is learned, it is important for players to learn how to control the dribble so that it stays at or below the waist level, while they keep their heads up.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Balanced basketball position throughout the entire process of the dribble.
- Controlled dribbling (no slapping!).
- Hand pushes through the basketball, downward wrist movement.
- Use both hands equally.
- Later in level: use finger pads to control basketball.
- Later in level: dribble no higher than waist level.
- Later in level: head up.

SKILL 5

DRIBBLING TO ADVANCE THE BASKETBALL

This is the first step in learning how to advance the basketball up the floor using the dribble. It is recommended to begin the process while walking, progressing to a jog, and finishing with a sprint.

DRILL: DRIBBLING IN A LINEAR PATH

Begin by teaching players how to dribble in a linear path. To make sure players are traveling in a straight line, coaches may use the painted lines on a gymnasium floor.



- Coaches will have players start in a triple-threat position, with the basketball placed at the waist, on the side of the player’s shooting hand.
- Players should begin walking in a straight line while dribbling the basketball with their shooting hand.
- Players will need to adjust their hand positioning so that it is placed slightly behind the top of the basketball to account for the forward motion. If players keep their hands directly on top of the basketball, the basketball will not travel with them.
- The hand placement will be different based on the speed the player is traveling. Exploration will help players become familiar and comfortable with proper hand placement as they progress.
- Encourage players to dribble with their heads up by having players call out the number of fingers a coach is holding up at the other end of the floor. Further, players should be encouraged to keep the basketball at or below waist level while dribbling.
- The same dribbling concepts taught previously should be reinforced in this drill.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Controlled dribbling (no slapping).
- Hand placement on basketball.
- Hand pushes through the basketball; downward wrist movement.
- Use both hands equally.
- Dribble no higher than the waist.
- Head up.

DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

GENERAL OVERVIEW: At this level, due to the physical and psychological development of young players, teaching defense on the basketball is neither applicable nor recommended. Place emphasis on gaining confidence with the basketball, rather than defending it. For reference, however, the defensive stance is first introduced to this level in the section entitled Footwork and Body Control.



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL FOOTWORK AND BODY CONTROL



GENERAL OVERVIEW: Footwork and body control are important at all skill levels, but should be emphasized especially at this level for the younger player. Footwork and body control are the foundation for all skills taught in basketball.

SKILL 1

STOPPING AND LANDING

Coaches should teach players to stop and land with good basketball position for proper balance. The knees should be slightly bent, the head should be up, the hands should be above the waist, and the head should balance at a midpoint between the knees.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slight knee bend.
- Feet wider than the shoulders.
- Head up.



SKILL 2

PIVOTING

This skill teaches pivoting for the young player.

- To make a pivot, pick one foot that will not move forward or backward; it will only spin. This foot is now 'planted' and becomes the pivot foot.
- The other foot can move so that the body may swivel and turn accordingly.

SKILL 3

RUNNING, PIVOTING, AND BODY CONTROL

Here, the young player will become acquainted with running properly, stopping and landing, and learning how to pivot. In this skill, do not be concerned with the direction of the pivot.

- The stopping and landing position from Skill 1 above is necessary to perform the pivot.
- Make the pivot with one foot turning, and push off with the other foot so the body turns 180 degrees.
- After the pivot, players should begin to run in a direction specified by the coach. When running, players' arms should be bent such that the forearm and the upper arm form a 90-degree angle. Remind players that the faster the arms move, the faster the player runs.
- Coaches should select a spot on the floor as a target for the players. Once they reach that spot, instruct them to perform a jump stop while maintaining good balance.
- Make sure players use proper form through the duration of the run.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slight knee bend.
- Feet wider than the shoulders.
- Head up.
- Pivot on one foot turning the body 180 degrees.
- Arms at a 90-degree angle.
- Jump stop with good balance.



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

GENERAL OVERVIEW: At this level, due to the physical and psychological development of young players, only stance and initial movement of the body are introduced. Additionally, no offensive players are used; the only focus should be on the footwork and body control needed on defense.

SKILL 1

PROPER STANCE



The proper defensive stance should be introduced at this level. This will give the young defender the ability to move in all directions.

- A player's feet should be set wider than the shoulders.
- The hands should be above waist level.
- The chin should be up, and the head should be positioned above the knees and not leaning forward.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Back should be straight, chin up.
- Toes pointed straight.
- Hands above the waist.
- Slight knee bend.



SKILL 2

INTRODUCING INITIAL LATERAL MOVEMENT

Introducing movement to the young defensive player should be a slow process, making sure the footwork is executed correctly. Emphasizing the proper basketball stance or position is essential to ensure that movement can be done quickly and with body control.

- Remind players to use the stance described in Skill 1 above.
- Once in the proper stance, instruct players to move in a particular direction. Since this is defensive movement, make sure players are sliding, not crossing their feet or running sideways.
- Encourage players to move the foot nearest to the direction they are sliding first, and then push off with the other foot. Their feet should not come together after completing the slide.
- Feet should be pointed in the direction of the slide.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Hands above the waist.
- Slight knee bend.
- Point the foot in the direction of the slide.
- Push with the opposite foot.
- Do not bring feet together after the slide.



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL PASSING AND RECEIVING



OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES: PASSING

GENERAL OVERVIEW: *Passing and receiving are important abilities to develop. As with ball-handling and dribbling, these two skills allow the basketball to be advanced legally throughout the court of play. At the Introductory Level, passing and receiving take on the most basic form.*

SKILL 1

BOUNCE PASS TO COACH

Once the player learns how to hold the basketball properly (see Introductory Ball Handling and Dribbling), the player can begin learning how to pass the basketball.

DRILL 1: TWO-HAND BOUNCE PASS

- Begin with the player standing in relatively close proximity to the target until the player is comfortable with the skill.
- Standing with a slight bend in the knee (or in triple-threat position), hold the basketball at waist level with two hands, one on each side of the basketball. The thumbs should be pointed upward.
- Taking a step toward the target, which can be either a coach or a wall (not a teammate initially), the player will push through the basketball with both hands equally.
- Encourage players to step into the pass with one foot, while keeping the pivot foot stationary. They should end with their thumbs pointing to the ground. Some refer to this motion as emptying a bottle of water.



- The basketball should bounce three-quarters of the distance between the passer and the target, but do not instruct players about this initially.
- Rather, select a spot or line on the floor in front of the players that, when hit with the basketball, will cause it to bounce up to the target successfully.
- Instruct players to try to hit the chosen spot or line with the basketball until they are comfortable enough to gauge an appropriate distance for themselves.
- Emphasizing that players pass from waist level and push through the basketball is crucial, as many beginners will try to pass the basketball from over the head.
- Hold the position at the end of the pass, holding the follow-through (similar to shooting).

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Slight knee bend.
- Thumbs up to thumbs down (empty bottle of water).
- Step into pass toward target.
- Push through pass from waist level.
- Hit line on floor, three-quarters of the distance to the target.
- Hold follow-through.

DRILL 2: TWO-HAND CHEST PASS

Initial player positioning is similar to the positioning described above.

- The player should begin with a slight bend in the knee, holding the basketball at waist level with two hands, one on each side of the basketball, and the thumbs pointing upward.
- The player will then take a step toward the coach or target, push through the basketball with both hands equally, and pass the basketball in the air to the target.
- The thumbs will end downward, creating a backspin on the basketball in flight.
- Encourage players to step into the pass with one foot, while keeping the pivot foot stationary.

- Once a pass is completed, players' hands should be pointing directly at their target.
- As players improve, encourage them to pass the basketball through the target, creating a straight line in the trajectory, rather than a lob.
- Begin close in distance to create good habits and technique from the start.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Slight knee bend.
- Thumbs up to thumbs down (empty bottle of water).
- Step into pass toward receiver.
- Push through the pass from waist level.
- Straight trajectory, no lob.
- Hold follow-through.

SKILL 2

BOUNCE PASS TO TEAMMATE

As players improve, they will start to use proper passing techniques on a consistent basis. Once this happens, players can begin learning to make bounce passes to a teammate, instead of just to a coach or a wall.

DRILL 1: TWO-HAND BOUNCE PASS

- The player passing the basketball should begin in triple-threat position, facing a teammate, and should complete the two-hand bounce pass introduced above with the teammate as the target.
- The teammate receiving the basketball should provide a two-hand target around waist level for the pass to arrive.
- This player should catch the basketball on a two-foot jump stop, and immediately establish a triple-threat position.
- Players will then switch passing and receiving roles.
- At this point, players can also begin to communicate with one another, calling for the basketball and vocalizing to whom the basketball is being passed.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Triple-threat position to start and finish.
- Step into pass, toward receiver.
- Push pass from waist level (strong passes as skill is learned).
- Proper follow-through, toward line on floor.
- Receiver provides two-hand target, catches on jump stop.



DRILL 2: ONE-HAND BOUNCE PASS

Once players become comfortable with the two-hand bounce pass, advance to a one-hand bounce pass.

- The general fundamentals remain the same with the triple-threat position, momentum, and footwork stepping toward the target.
- Hand positioning on the basketball will be slightly different. The hand completing the pass will relocate from the side of the basketball to directly behind the basketball, with the wrist flexed backward, creating a T-formation with the thumbs.
- The opposite hand, or guide hand, will remain on the side of the basketball for control.
- Players will step forward and push through the basketball with the hand behind the basketball, pushing four fingers toward the floor, pointing the fingers directly at the floor during the follow-through.
- Encourage players to use both hands to pass, while stepping into the pass with one foot, keeping the pivot foot stationary.
- Players receiving the basketball should maintain the same fundamentals described above.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Triple-threat position to start and finish.
- Step into pass, toward receiver.
- Push pass from waist level (strong passes as skill is learned).
- Proper follow-through, toward line on floor.
- Receiver provides two-hand target, catches on jump stop.



SKILL 3

CHEST PASS TO TEAMMATE



As players improve, they can begin learning to make chest passes to a teammate.

DRILL 1: TWO-HAND CHEST PASS

The mechanics of the two-hand chest pass are similar to those of the two-hand bounce pass described above.

- Begin in triple-threat position, facing a teammate, with appropriate distance between the two. This allows for a successful chest pass to be completed with two hands while maintaining proper technique.
- Again, the teammate receiving the basketball should provide a two-hand target around waist level for the pass to arrive. This player should catch the basketball on a two-foot jump stop, and immediately establish triple-threat position.
- Encourage communication between the two players.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Triple-threat position to start and finish.
- Step into pass, toward receiver.
- Push pass from waist level (strong passes as skill is learned, no lobs).
- Proper follow-through, toward teammate.
- Receiver provide two-hand target, catch on jump stop.



DRILL 2: ONE-HAND CHEST PASS

As for the one-hand chest pass, the main difference from the two-hand chest pass is hand placement on the basketball.

- The hand that is making the pass will shift directly behind the basketball, flexing the wrist backward, with the guide hand remaining on the side, creating a T-formation with the thumbs.
- While stepping toward the target, push through the basketball, snapping the wrist to create a follow-through pointed directly at the teammate.

- Encourage players to make strong passes without lobs when first learning to pass. Especially at this young age, develop players to use both hands equally, stepping into the pass with one foot while keeping the pivot foot stationary.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Triple-threat position to start and finish.
- Step into pass, toward receiver.
- Push pass from waist level (strong passes as skill is learned, no lobs).
- Proper follow-through, toward teammate.
- Receiver provide two-hand target, catch on jump stop.



OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES: RECEIVING

SKILL 1

INDIVIDUAL RECEIVING

Players should be taught to catch the basketball with their hands, rather than to corral it with their chest and arms. The younger players' instinct will be to corral the basketball, rather than extend their hands to catch it. It is important to correct this behavior before a bad habit or improper technique is formed.

DRILL 1: CATCH OWN DRIBBLE

- To begin the process, have players dribble the basketball, working on catching the basketball at the peak of the dribble.
- Players should work on catching the basketball with two hands, one on each side of the basketball.
- Once the basketball is caught, players' heads should be up, and they should be positioned as discussed in "Skill 1 — How to Hold a Basketball" of the section entitled Ball Handling and Dribbling, included in this level.
- Encourage players to control the basketball (hold it instead of immediately dribbling again) with the catch. They should use a strong grip, keeping their fingers spread and their thumbs up.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Reinforce positioning from "How to Hold a Basketball."
- Catch with two hands at peak of dribble.
- Control basketball on catch (strong grip, spread fingers, thumbs up).



DRILL 2: CATCH OWN PASS OFF WALL

Once players become comfortable catching their own dribble, have them catch a return pass off of the wall.

- Players should complete the initial pass against the wall so that they control the velocity of the basketball, making the experience less intimidating to start.
- Begin with the player making a two-hand bounce pass against the wall, sending the basketball back toward the player.
- The basketball will bounce once first, then the player can work on catching the basketball.
- When learning to catch a pass, players should create a "W" with their hands; the middle point of the "W" is formed with the thumbs. The "W" will encourage players to position their hands closer together, while also gaining an understanding that the hands are positioned behind the basketball in order to stop its momentum.
- Once the player gains confidence with this skill, the player may advance to making a two-hand chest pass against the wall. This will send a stronger bounce pass back to the player.
- Continue working with players to ensure they are using the "W" to catch and receive the basketball with control.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Reinforce positioning from "How to Hold a Basketball."
- Catch with two hands.
- Control basketball on catch (strong grip, spread fingers, thumbs up).
- Make a "W" with hands, spread fingers.



SKILL 2

CATCH PASS FROM COACH

DRILL 1: CATCH BOUNCE PASS

- Begin by having the player in a balanced stance with a slight knee bend, with hands up creating a “W” at chest level, ready to receive the basketball.
- The coach will then deliver a two-hand bounce pass to the player, putting the basketball as close to the player’s “W” target as possible.
- Work with players to receive the basketball with both hands, controlling it on the catch, and immediately establishing a triple-threat position.
- As players gain confidence, coaches can vary the velocity and the location of the pass, requiring players to move their hands to catch the basketball.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slight knee bend.
- Create “W” target with hands.
- Catch with two hands.
- Control basketball on catch.
- Triple-threat position after catch.



- After the player becomes comfortable catching a bounce pass, the player may advance to receiving a chest pass from the coach.
- Once the basic skill is learned, vary the speed and location of the passes to continue challenging the player.
- Be diligent about making sure players keep the basketball at waist level, away from their faces.

DRILL 2: CATCH CHEST PASS

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slight knee bend.
- Create “W” target with hands.
- Catch with two hands at waist level.
- Control basketball on catch.
- Triple-threat position after catch.



SKILL 3

CATCH BOUNCE PASS AND CHEST PASS FROM TEAMMATE

After players become comfortable catching passes from a coach, they may begin working with a teammate to continue developing passing and receiving skills.

- The teammate receiving the basketball should provide a two-hand “W” target for the pass at waist level. This player should catch the basketball on a two-foot jump stop, and immediately establish a triple-threat position.
- As the skill is learned, players can begin to vary the tempo used to pass back and forth to one another.
- Further, teammates can begin communicating to each other as they pass and receive the basketball.
- Finally, coaches should work with players to move their bodies in front of the basketball if it is passed outside of the frame of the body. This is the beginning stage of teaching players to move to meet a pass, and these are great habits to begin developing at a young stage.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slight knee bend.
- Create “W” target with hands.
- Catch with two hands.
- Control basketball on catch.
- Triple-threat position after catch.
- Later in level: varying tempo.
- Later in level: player communication.
- Later in level: move to meet pass.



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

GENERAL OVERVIEW: At this level, due to the physical and psychological development of young players, defending the pass is neither applicable nor recommended. Place an emphasis on building players' confidence with the basics of passing and receiving the basketball before introducing defense.



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL REBOUNDING



GENERAL OVERVIEW: Rebounding — both offensive and defensive — is an important aspect of basketball that should be taught. However, this is not to be done at the Introductory Level. At this early stage, players must begin by simply learning how to grab the basketball with both hands. Therefore, coaches should focus on teaching the fundamental skills that assist with this, such as body control, running, stopping, and jumping.

SKILL 1

SNATCHING THE BASKETBALL

Teach young players to jump and grab, or snatch, the basketball with both hands. At this level, this is the main skill to develop in the younger players.

- Players should extend both arms fully above their heads and grab the basketball with both hands, pulling it toward them in a hard, downward motion.
- The basketball should be brought down to chin level, with players' elbows out to protect the basketball.
- Players should be instructed to snatch the basketball from a standing-jump position, and then from a one-step-and-jump position.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Knees bent for maximum height on jump.
- Full extension of arms.
- Both hands on the basketball.
- Snatch basketball to the chin.
- Head and chin up as basketball is snatched.



DEFENDING THE REBOUNDER

GENERAL OVERVIEW: At this level, due to the physical and psychological development of young players, defending the pass is neither applicable nor recommended. Place an emphasis on building players' confidence with the basics of passing and receiving the basketball before introducing defense.



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL SHOOTING



GENERAL OVERVIEW: Shooting is a necessary *fundamental to learn, as the objective of the game is to score the basketball. This may be the most important level for the proper development of a player's shooting mechanics. If improper habits are formed early in a player's development, they can be more difficult to correct later on. As a result, it is critical to emphasize proper shooting techniques at this stage, regardless of a player's strength or size.*

SKILL 1

BASIC SHOOTING MECHANICS

SUMMARY: A basketball is not used in this skill to ensure strong habits are created prior to introducing one. The concepts below can be practiced in a group, facing an instructor, or circled around the three-point arc on a basketball floor. To teach the mechanics of shooting, it can be helpful to use the acronym, B.E.E.F., which stands for balance, elbow, eyes, and follow-through.

BALANCE

- To begin, feet should be comfortably set at or just wider than shoulder width apart. If feet are placed more narrowly, the player will likely be off-balance.
- Toes should be facing forward, toward the basket or the instructor, with the same foot as the shooting hand positioned just ahead of the other foot.
- The proper distance “ahead” can be ensured by having players bring their feet together. The toe of the back foot should fit comfortably in the indentation of the arch of the front foot. Make sure players move their feet back to shoulder width apart after this foot alignment is determined.

- There should be a slight bend at the knee; the back should be straight, and the head should be over or slightly ahead of the rear end. If the head is too far forward, the player will not be properly balanced.
- Shoulders should be parallel, or “square” to the basket or instructor.
- All of these elements combined will allow the shooter to be on balance. Coaches can slightly nudge the shoulders of players to test their balance while in this stance.

ELBOW

- At the initial stage of the shot, the elbow of the shooting arm should be next to the side of the player where the basketball will eventually be held in the “shooter’s pocket.” The elbow should not be out to the side at this stage because it will not allow for a smooth lift through the process of the shot.
- As the player begins the shooting process by raising the arm, the elbow should remain in alignment with the toe and knee of the shooting hand. The elbow will be in a “U,” not “V” shape as the shooting hand is lifted.
- It is important to stress that the elbow should remain vertical. If the elbow is allowed to “chicken wing” outward, the shot will be more of a push. Once a basketball is introduced later, this improper technique would cause a flat trajectory as the basketball goes through the air, rather than an arched one.

EYES

- Although this skill does not involve using a basketball, it is important to instruct players as if it did, in order to prepare them for future lessons. When players use a basketball in later skills, many will want to watch its flight through the air. This is not ideal, as it can impact the mechanics of the shot and leave the basketball short.
- Once the shooting motion begins, players’ eyes should be focused and locked on the rim of the basketball hoop. There is much discussion on whether the best focal point is the front, middle, or back of the rim, but the exact location is not the most important — the consistency is. Once players pick a place on which to focus, they should look at the same place for every shot.

- Emphasize that players should keep their eyes on the spot that they select for a few seconds after completing the shooting motion. This is a key habit to form without a basketball because once one is introduced, players will already be accustomed to focusing on their selected spot from the time the shooting motion begins, until the basketball goes through the hoop.



FOLLOW-THROUGH

- The follow-through may be the most important element in learning to shoot the basketball. Consistency is the key for all elements of the shot, but especially for the follow-through. As the “basketball” is in flight, instruct players to hold a strong and proper follow-through position for a few seconds to allow the “basketball” to reach the rim.
- As for technical placement of the shooting arm, the elbow should end just in front of the ear to create the correct amount of arc on the shot, and the wrist should snap forward and down, which will create a backspin once a basketball is used. The backspin is important, as it will give the basketball a chance to bounce on the rim, resulting in what many call a “shooter’s roll.”
- When the wrist is snapped for the follow-through, a player’s first four fingers should end up pointing toward the floor. The middle finger will be the last finger that touches the basketball during the follow-through process. For players who learn from visual cues, it may help to have them pretend they are standing on their tiptoes trying to grab a cookie out of a jar above their head.
- Young players should freeze in this position, as if they are posing for a picture for a few seconds after the shooting motion ends to let the “basketball” hit the rim. At this point, the shot is finished.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Focus on details of mechanics without a basketball.
- Use B.E.E.F. concepts.
- Create good habits from the beginning by breaking down each element.



SHOOTING FROM A POSITION ON THE KNEES

A basketball should be introduced at this point in the level, but players will not be working with a basketball hoop quite yet.

DRILL 1: ON ONE KNEE, SHOOTING TO SELF WITH ONE HAND

- To begin developing a comfort level with the mechanics of the shot, isolate the upper body by having players start on their knees with a basketball. Begin teaching the form with the shooting hand only, as the guide hand can be challenging at this age due to the strength and size of young players.
- Start with the player on one knee, with a straight back, and squared to a target. The knee that players put their weight on should be the one opposite their shooting hand. In other words, players who shoot with their right hand should kneel on their left, with the right knee out in front of them. Coaches should watch players carefully to ensure they are not rocking in any direction throughout this exercise.
- In this position, players will hold the basketball out in front of them at waist level, with the shooting hand underneath the basketball and the guide hand behind the back. The basketball should be placed on the pads of the fingers, allowing a little bit of light to show between the basketball and the thumb.
- Once players have the appropriate grip, instruct them to move the basketball from the waist up to shoulder level, turning the wrist in the process so their fingers end up pointing backward. This helps players work on movement control and teaches the importance of using finger pads.
- The elbow should now be in a “U” shape, parallel to the knee of the shooting hand, with the wrist cocked backward. Make sure players maintain correct basketball positioning, so that a trace of light can be seen through the basketball. Pause briefly at this position to make any corrections before allowing players to begin the upward shooting motion.
- At the end of the shooting motion, the elbow should be placed slightly ahead of the ear and the middle finger should guide the follow-through, ending with four fingers pointed toward the floor as if grabbing a cookie out of a jar above the head.

- The eyes should remain on the target until the basketball hits the ground. Ideally, if the follow-through creates the correct backspin, the basketball will spin back to the shooter after bouncing off of the ground so that the shooter can grab the basketball without having to move.
- Coaches should be aware that players just learning this skill will not be accurate with the trajectory of the basketball. Ensure players do not hit themselves in the head, as many times the basketball will travel directly upward.

DRILL 2: ON ONE KNEE, SHOOTING TO SELF WITH TWO HANDS

- As players become comfortable with one hand, they can begin using two hands by incorporating the guide hand. The “guide hand” should remain just that, a guide.
- At this level, players have a tendency to want to shoot with two hands, pushing the basketball rather than shooting it. The guide hand should be placed on the side of the basketball, creating a wide spread out “T” with the thumbs on the basketball.
- Have the players repeat the exercise above, adding the guide hand. This hand will remain on the side of the basketball to assist with control as the player raises the basketball from the waist to the head.
- At this point, the guide hand will stop and allow the shooting hand to complete the follow-through. However, the guide hand is part of the follow-through and should remain around head-level until the basketball hits the ground. It is important to encourage the proper use of the guide hand prior to shooting on a basket to avoid creating bad habits.
- Once players use their guide hand properly from one knee, instruct them to begin on both knees, seated with their rear end on their heels. From this position, they should perform the same arm movements, and rise from the seated position to a kneeling, upright position as they shoot the basketball. This will help simulate the motion of the shot from a standing position.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Focus on details of mechanics.
- Control basketball when raising from waist to head level.
- Ensure proper technique using one hand before moving to two.



SKILL 3

SHOOTING FROM A STANDING POSITION

DRILL 1: SHOOTING TO SELF WITH ONE HAND

- The feet should be properly spaced and balanced as discussed in Skill 1 above, and the shoulders should remain squared toward a target.
- Players should hold the basketball at the waist with the shooting hand under the basketball. Begin the same process as detailed above, ending with a solid follow-through.
- Introduce the use of the legs in conjunction with the upper body at this point. Initially, players should not jump; instead, they should rise slightly onto the balls of their feet.
- Using the legs will result in a stronger shot, and allow there to be more of an arc in the basketball's trajectory through the air than when players are on their knees.
- As players improve, provide an exact location on the wall directly in front of them that they should try to hit with consistency; pointing backward. This helps players work on movement control and teaches the importance of using finger pads.

DRILL 2: SHOOTING TO SELF WITH TWO HANDS

- Once the player becomes comfortable with one hand, begin using both hands. Again, focus on the guide hand being just a guide.
- As players improve, challenge them to have the basketball hit the same spot on the floor, creating consistency in the shot.
- An appropriate backspin will cause the basketball to bounce directly back to the player without having to move to catch it.

- As this skill involves both hands on the basketball, coaches should feel free to combine it with other skills, such as Receiving. For example, as the basketball travels back toward the player after a shot attempt, encourage the player to receive the basketball on a two foot hop, placing the basketball in the shooting pocket in a triple-threat position. From there, continue with another two-hand shot attempt.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Focus on details of mechanics from beginning to end.
- Legs should work in conjunction with upper body.
- Create solid comfort level with one hand before moving to two.



DRILL 3: SHOOTING AGAINST A WALL WITH ONE HAND

- Next, have players begin shooting the basketball toward a target. Initially, use a wall for this purpose.
- Instruct players to stand approximately five feet away, facing the wall. Make sure they are squared to the wall and in a balanced stance. Players should use the same motion learned above to shoot the basketball to themselves.
- Coaches should be aware that once targets are introduced, players often focus on hitting the target at the expense of proper technique. Take care to reinforce correct mechanics at this stage.
- One of the more important mechanics is the follow-through. Remind players that the elbow should be just in front of the ear, creating the appropriate arched path as the basketball goes through the air.
- As players improve, provide an exact location on the wall directly in front of them that they should try to hit with consistency.

DRILL 4: SHOOTING AGAINST A WALL WITH TWO HANDS

- Once the player becomes comfortable with one hand, begin using both hands. Again, focus on the guide hand being just a guide.

- As players improve, challenge them to have the basketball hit the same spot on the floor, creating consistency in the shot.
- An appropriate backspin will cause the basketball to bounce directly back to the player without having to move to catch it.
- As this skill involves both hands on the basketball, coaches should feel free to combine it with other skills, such as Receiving. For example, as the basketball travels back toward the player after a shot attempt, encourage the player to receive the basketball on a two foot hop, placing the basketball in the shooting pocket in a triple-threat position. From there, continue with another two-hand shot attempt.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Focus on details of mechanics from beginning to end.
- Focus on proper follow-through.
- Encourage consistency as comfort level progresses.



SKILL 4

SHOOTING FROM A POSITION ON THE GROUND

This skill is recommended if a player struggles with the mechanics of the follow-through. When a player is laying on the ground, it isolates the shooting arm and allows the player to focus solely on this aspect of the shot.

- Instruct the player to lay on the ground, facing up. A coach or instructor should stand above the player.



- The basketball should be placed on the pads of the player's fingers and held above the head with the shooting hand, only. The arm should be slightly bent, creating a "U" with the elbow. Make sure players keep the elbow tucked into the side of the body. From this position, have the player begin the shooting motion. The wrist should snap, resulting in four fingers pointed toward the floor. The basketball should travel straight up toward the coach and return to the hand.
- With this vantage point, the player can easily see the rotation of the basketball, making sure backspin has been created.
- Once the player becomes comfortable with one hand, begin using both hands. Again, focus on the guide hand being just a guide.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Basketball placement on finger pads.
- "U" created by elbow.
- Snap wrist, four fingers to the floor.
- Backspin.



SKILL 5

SHOOTING ON A BASKETBALL HOOP

Once the player has established a solid set of mechanics for a shot, the basketball hoop may be introduced. At first, it may be beneficial to use a hoop that is lower than a standard basketball hoop, especially if the player does not have the strength or size to shoot properly on a ten-foot basket.

DRILL 1: SHOOTING ON A BASKETBALL HOOP WITH ONE HAND

- Using only the shooting arm, begin working through the mechanics detailed in drills above.
- The goal should continue to be creating good habits, not compromising form to make a basket.
- Encourage players to keep their eyes focused on the same spot on the rim for each shot attempt.

- Emphasize that the middle finger of the shooting hand should be the last finger to touch the basketball during the follow-through.
- Hold the follow-through until the basketball hits the ground. At this level, encourage and reinforce proper mechanics, rather than the number of made shots.

DRILL 1: SHOOTING ON A BASKETBALL HOOP WITH ONE HAND

- Once the player becomes comfortable with one hand, begin using both hands. Continue reminding players that the guide hand is just a guide.
- Further, make sure players use their upper and lower bodies together. This will be important later in the growth of the shooter to create range on the shot.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Focus on details of mechanics from beginning to end.
- Encourage proper mechanics rather than made shots.
- Upper & lower body working together.



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL TEAM DEFENSIVE CONCEPTS



GENERAL OVERVIEW: *Once your players understand and can properly execute the individual defensive skills, the coach can begin organizing them together into defensive team concepts. The primary defensive objective in basketball is to stop the opponent from scoring. At this level, we are concerned with proper stance and the ability to guard one offensive player.*

SKILL 1

UNDERSTAND DEFENDING ONE OFFENSIVE PLAYER

- This level will stress the importance of just guarding or defending one offensive player with and without the ball
- The help side defensive concept is not introduced at this level as the young player needs to develop on ball defense in a one on one situation
- Start out with the defender working to be in a position between the offensive player and the basket in a one on one situation.
- Start the offensive player at the top of the key without the basketball. Rule for the offensive player is move and try to get to the baseline between the lane lines without getting touched by the defender.
- Progress to the coach who will dribble the ball from the top of the key to the basket with the defender in a good stance staying in front of the coach
- The drill then can be done 2 on 2 or 3 on 3 where each of the offensive players have a ball starting at a spot on the court. One offensive player starts his dribble to the basket with the defender staying between the ball and the basket. The next offensive player will start on coaches command.

- Extend the drills to full court - have the offensive player without the ball use v cuts starting at one baseline and go to the opposite baseline. The defender stays an arm length from the offensive player using drop steps when the offensive player changes direction.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- When playing the one on one tag game, the defender should keep his distance with the offensive player in front until he decides to make a tag.
- The defender needs to keep a good stance when trying to stay in front of the offensive player.
- The defender should keep one foot ahead of the other foot when in a stance guarding the dribbler.
- The defender should try to keep the hand down to discourage the cross over dribble – same hand down as the top foot.
- Have the rule for the defender when playing the offensive player with the ball not reaching for the ball and keeping an arm's length distance.
- Eyes should be kept on the waist of the offensive player and not on the ball or the head of the offensive player
- The offensive player must stay on one third of the court when moving with v cuts the full length of the court.



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL TEAM OFFENSIVE CONCEPTS



GENERAL OVERVIEW: *Once players understand and can execute the individual skills explained in this level, coaches may begin providing instruction on offensive tactics. The primary objective on offense, scoring, is achieved most easily when the basketball is moved effectively between the players on the court. At this level, coaches should focus on teaching players how to be aware of where their teammates are on the court during various offensive scenarios.*

SKILL 1

PROPER FLOOR AND PLAYER AWARENESS

The most important concept when coordinating an offensive attack is to maintain balance on the court. To do this, it is crucial that players learn how to be aware of where their teammates are around them.

- At this level, start with three players standing inside the lane.
- On command, the players must spread out on the half court line, making sure they are aware of where their teammates are located. As players improve, increase the number on the court to four, and then to five players at a time.
- The progression for proper floor and player awareness is to have the players switch places with a teammate on command by the coach.
- Once the players are spread out on the half court, the coach will pass the basketball to one player and the players must be able to pass the basketball to their teammates easily if they are properly spread out.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- The players must be 12 feet apart from each other which is the width of the foul lane.
- Have the players throw air passes to each other and then bounce passes while they are in the proper floor positions.
- When the players switch positions on the court, the player who just passed should communicate the change of position with the teammate by a raised hand or by calling change.
- The coach can call out a certain number of passes and then the player who has the basketball will shoot.



RECOGNIZING SPOTS ON THE FLOOR

SKILL 2

- Once the players are aware of where their teammates are located, the coach can teach the areas each player is located on the half court – baseline, wing, high post, low post, top of key.
- Set a basketball down in each of the five areas on the floor – baseline, wing, top of key, low post, high post. Starting at the baseline with five players, each player runs to an area and stands next to the basketball. Repeat until all players have had a chance to run to all spots.
- Next, using the same starting process, the coach will call out certain areas of the court and players must run to fill those spots. The player will pick up the basketball and get into triple threat position. For this part of the drill players will not shoot the ball. Coaches should start by calling out one spot and then work up to calling out all five spots in succession.
- The same drill can start at half court with five lines. In this variation, the front player in each line will fill in one of the areas on the floor when prompted by the coach.
- For this drill, the player will sprint to the area called, pick up the basketball, and shoot it. It would be best to use an additional coach to serve as a rebounder to keep the drill moving.

- A final variation of the drill at this level would incorporate passing. Once prompted, the first player in each of the five lines would sprint to an area but not pick up the basketball. The coach would then call out one of the spots. The player in that spot would pick up the ball and get into triple threat position. The coach would then call out a spot for that player to pass the basketball to. The player who receives the pass would then take a shot.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Insist that players remain in the spot and not in-between spots.
- Remind all players to get into triple threat position, facing the basket at all times.



INBOUNDING THE BASKETBALL

SKILL 3

- When inbounding the basketball at this level, the passer must make a pass to the player moving to the basketball. At this level, players moving away from the basketball should not be passed to.
- To avoid crowding, the players should have balanced spacing. Encourage two players moving to the basketball and two players moving away from the basketball.
- Emphasize movement by having players move and exchange places with a player in another area. This encourages teamwork and spacing to become an open receiver for the passer.
- Teach the passer to use a prompt to start the motion of the other players. Slapping the ball or shouting “go” are great cues to start.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Slap the ball or shout “go” to start motion.
- Keep proper spacing, avoid crowding.
- Receiving players must come to the ball.
- All players should have hands ready to receive.



SKILL 4

SPACING

- It is important for young players to understand that spacing on the court is important for team basketball.
- Coaches may begin teaching this concept to players at the Introductory Level by using markers (cones or discs) placed on the court. The markers should be spread out and spaced approximately 12 to 15 feet apart. Instruct players to sprint to a marker on command.
- Continue the drill with the players sprinting to a new marker on command of the coach.
- For variation, give players a marker and start them lined up at the baseline. The first player in line will place the marker anywhere on the court and stand by it. The next player in line will space their marker about 12 to 15 feet from the first marker. Follow until all players are completed.
- To show the importance of spacing have players pass a ball to the nearest teammate. Next, have players try to pass a ball to a teammate much further away. Highlight that shorter passes are easier, and longer passes are more difficult.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Demonstrate to players a 12 to 15 foot distance.
- Encourage sprinting to spots.
- Emphasize short passes, discourage long passes.



SKILL 5

TRANSITION FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE

- At this level, transition from defense to offense is about proper spacing and knowing the spots on the floor.
- Place cones at the top of the key at both end to mark off 5 distinct areas of the court – 2 outside lanes, 2 inside lanes and the middle lane. 4 cones should be set up to show the five lanes.

- Start players in five lines at one end of the court.

Without the basketball, and on command of the coach, have the first player in each line sprint to the opposite baseline while remaining in their lane.

- Once completed, the players should rotate lines so that each player gets a turn running through each lane.

The drill is complete when all the players have run each of the lanes.

- Next, perform the same drill but add basketballs. The middle lane dribbles the basketball while the outside two lanes pass a basketball back and forth while sprinting in their lanes.

- Next, have the middle lane pass the basketball back and forth with the inside lane players while sprinting down the court. At the same time, the outside two players will dribble a basketball.

- Progress the drill with three players inside the middle lane running in a circle with their hands ready. The coach will pass the basketball to one of the players. This player will then dribble the basketball in the middle lane while the other two players sprint the outside two lanes to the other end. If appropriate, the sequence can end with a pass for a layup.

- Continue this drill using five players. One of the inside two player will sprint to the low post area and the other will sprint to the high post area. The dribbler should make a pass to the outside lane player who will then pass to one of the post players up ahead of the sequence.

- The last phase in this transition should be the middle player dribbling to the top of the key while the other 4 run in their lanes. Allow the dribbler to make a choice on who to pass to
- Progress the drill until all players have had the opportunity to play all of the lanes.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Always keep players without the ball slightly ahead of the ball.
- Encourage all players to sprint with hands ready and eyes on the ball.
- Keep proper spacing between players
- Emphasize short accurate passes, discourage long passes and excessive dribbling.
- Rotate players through each lane multiple times, disregarding positions, height or ability.





USA BASKETBALL, PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL



FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL BALL HANDLING & DRIBBLING



GENERAL OVERVIEW: Ball-handling and dribbling are of paramount importance. These two skills allow the basketball to be advanced legally throughout the court of play. At the Foundational Level, ball-handling and dribbling will develop such that players may engage in two-on-two, three-on-three, four-on-four, and eventually five-on-five basketball.

SKILL 1

TRIPLE-THREAT POSITION WITH A TEAMMATE

As a warm-up, this is a good way to continue building on overall ball-handling skills. Coaches will partner players up, lining them across the lane lines as illustrated in the below diagram.

- Players will begin in the triple-threat position.
- Remind players that the shooting foot should be slightly ahead of the other, and stand in a balanced basketball position.
- The basketball should be held just above the waist, resting in the finger pads rather than on the palm of the hand; fingers should be spread out.
- The thumbs should form a large, spread out, “T.” Players’ heads should be up, looking at the teammate standing across from them.

From this triple-threat position, coaches will have players execute all three options from the stance: dribbling, passing, and shooting.

- For passing and shooting, the players will utilize their partner.
- For ball-handling, emphasize the importance of using finger pads and controlling the basketball through every bounce.



- Coaches can start encouraging players to pound the basketball into the floor to ensure a solid feel of the basketball and gain confidence in the dribble.
- Players can begin creating the habit of protecting the basketball from an imaginary defender by front pivoting 90 degrees toward their partner and placing an arm bar at chest level for protection.
- Coaches can also have players dribble the basketball at varying heights to improve control. This will help increase the use and strength of finger pads and wrist action through the dribble.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Balanced basketball position.
- Finger pad control.
- Wrist movements.
- Pound basketball.
- Arm bar for protection.
- Carry over principles from passing and shooting.



SKILL 2

STATIONARY BALL-HANDLING

Stationary ball-handling without a dribble is an efficient and fun way to help players increase their level of comfort when moving the basketball. Although many of the drills below are never executed in the game, they are still necessary to develop a player's confidence when handling the basketball under duress. Below are a few examples:

DRILL 1: STRAIGHT ARM TAPS

This works on finger pad control and arm strength through ball-handling.

- Players will start by tapping the basketball as closely and quickly as possible from one hand to the next, straight out in front of them at chest level. This should be repeated over and over.
- Instruct players to use finger pads and wrist motion to make the basketball move back and forth successfully without dropping it.

- Players should have straight elbows while performing this drill, which isolated the fingers and wrists.
- After players have worked on the skill straight in front of them, have the player adjust the basketball above their head, completing the same motion. Then move the basketball to the waist.
- Coaches can be creative moving the basketball position throughout the skill.
- Players will notice the importance of hand positioning in order to complete the drill at the different locations to ensure the basketball does not fall to the ground.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Finger pad control.
- Wrist action.
- Elbows remain straight throughout all locations.
- Head up.
- Slight knee bend.



DRILL 2: AROUND THE BODY

This drill begins in an elongated stance with a slight knee bend. Using the finger pads to control the basketball is important. Coaches will also want to encourage players to keep their body still, rather than moving in a circular motion mimicking the path of the basketball.

- Players will rotate the basketball around the waist from hand to hand clockwise, not allowing the basketball to fall to the ground.
- Once players have worked on the clockwise motion, switch to counterclockwise.
- Players can then move onto performing the drill around the head and knees. Depending on ability, players may move the basketball around one knee, or both knees together.
- Coaches can create a pattern of movement, as well.
- As players continue to improve, encourage them to perform the drill with increased speed, taking care to keep their heads up.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Finger pad control.
- Slight knee bend.
- Head up.
- Learn mechanics first, speed second.
- Body still.



DRILL 3: AROUND THE KNEES

A coach can modify the drill above by instructing players to work the basketball in a circular motion around the knees, while moving their legs in and out of position. The basketball itself does not deviate from the circular path.

- Players will be slightly bent over for this drill, but remind them to keep their heads up. They should also avoid moving their upper bodies. Many times during this drill, players move their backs in a “bobbing” manner. This should be discouraged.
- The footwork will begin with both feet together on one spot; let’s call this spot “home base.” After the basketball travels around both legs together, the player will move the right foot straight backward. The basketball will then travel around the left knee only, which is still located on home base.
- Next, the player will move the right foot back to home base and complete a circle around both knees. After completing the circle, the player will move the left foot backward and away from home base, allowing the player to move the basketball around the right knee, only. Upon completion, the player will bring the left foot back to home base.
- The drill continues in this fashion alternating circles with the basketball around both knees, then one knee, then both knees again, followed by the other knee and so on.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- The legs move, not the basketball.
- Head up.
- No bobbing motion with body.
- Finger pad control.
- Learn skill first, speed second.



DRILL 4: FIGURE-8

With the player in a position similar to a defensive stance, the player will circle the basketball through and around the knees in order to make a figure-8 path with the basketball.



- To begin, teach the figure-8 by going through the “front door.” The first motion with the basketball should go through the middle of the legs from the front of the body to the back.
- Once the player has learned this, coaches can reverse the direction and go through the “back door.” This motion is a bit more challenging due to the player having to cup the basketball on the backside to perform the drill correctly.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Finger pad control.
- Head up.
- No bobbing motion with body.
- Learn skill first, speed second.



DRILL 5: EGGBEATER

This will help increase general hand speed, coordination, and timing with the basketball.

- Instruct players to begin in a defensive stance.
- Place the basketball between the legs at the knees. The knees should not touch the basketball. Instead, the basketball should be held with the right hand in front of the body and the left hand behind the body.
- Next, the player will gently toss the basketball up between the legs and quickly switch the positioning of the hands and catch the basketball. If completed properly, the basketball is now being held between the legs by the left hand in front and the right hand behind the body. The basketball should not be allowed to hit the ground.
- The drill continues with the constant switching of the hands, while not allowing the basketball to hit the ground.

DRILL 6: FRONT-TO-BACK

The front-to-back skill is the same concept, but requires different hand placement.

- Players will be in the same stance with the basketball between the legs. This time, however, both hands will hold the basketball in front of the body.
- To execute this drill, players will gently toss the basketball up between the legs and catch it with both hands behind the legs before it hits the ground.
- The basketball will move from front to back slightly with the hands following. Again, the objective is to quickly move the hands and catch the basketball without allowing it to touch the ground.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Balanced defensive stance.
- Head up.
- Finger pad control.
- Quick hand movements.
- Toss the basketball slightly upward to allow time for switching.
- No bobbing motion with body.

SKILL 3

STATIONARY BALL-HANDLING; ADD A DRIBBLE

Stationary ball-handling without a dribble is another efficient and fun way to help players increase their level of comfort when moving the basketball. Again, although many of the drills below are never executed in the game, they are still necessary to develop a player's confidence when handling the basketball under duress. Below are a few examples:

DRILL 1: WALL DRIBBLING

Dribbling the basketball against a wall is a great way to help develop basketball control, body strength, and confidence using the finger pads.



- Here, players line up directly in front of a wall and dribble the basketball as quickly as possible up to shoulder height.
- Coaches can have the players move slowly in both lateral directions, controlling the basketball with motion.
- Lastly, the coach can have players draw shapes with their dribble and ultimately improve to the point where they are signing their names in cursive on the wall. It is a fun way to develop confidence handling the basketball.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Keep elbow directly under wrist.
- Finger pad and wrist motion.
- Placing of hand on basketball to assure basketball does not fall to ground.
- Quick, hard, controlled dribbles.
- On movement, basketball should stay close to wall.

DRILL 2: RHYTHM DRIBBLE

This skill is called the “rhythm dribble” because of the rhythm that can be heard when completed properly.

- Instruct the player to begin in the same starting position as the eggbeater: in a defensive stance with the right hand in front and left hand behind.
- Player will then drop the basketball allowing it to bounce one time while switching hands.
- After the switch, the left hand should be in front and the right hand will be behind.
- Next, the player will move the basketball in a full circular motion starting with a backward motion from right to left, without the basketball traveling through the front door.
- Once the basketball comes back to the starting point with the right hand in front and the left hand behind, the player will start the drill again.
- Switch directions once the drill is learned.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Establishing the rhythm of the skill.
- Control of basketball.
- Body control, no bobbing motion.
- Head up.
- Learn drill first, then work for speed.



DRILL 3: FIGURE-8 DRIBBLE

To begin, the player should start in a balanced defensive stance.

- The player will begin the figure-8 motion, as discussed above, using a dribble this time.
- Using a dribble, it is easiest to begin teaching that the player move the basketball through the back of the legs (“the back door”), rather than through the front door.
- Coaches can dictate the number of dribbles to be used to complete the figure-8 motion, ranging from four dribbles to as many as the player can possibly get in.
- Once the player gets comfortable with the dribble figure 8 through the back door, have the player switch directions to the front door.
- For players who excel at the figure-8 with two hands, coaches can challenge the player to complete the same motion with only one hand. It is easiest to again teach this skill by first going through the back door, then changing to the front door.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Controlled dribble – close to legs for efficiency.
- Finger pad control & wrist movements – especially if low maximum dribbles.
- Head up.
- Body control through movement (no bobbing).



DRILL 4: SINGLE-ARM PENDULUM DRIBBLE: FRONT AND SIDE

The goal is for the basketball to travel from knee to knee at a minimum, in front of the body. The hand should completely turnover

in order to catch and change the direction of the dribble.

- Starting in a balanced comfortable defensive position, the player will dribble the basketball with one hand in the motion of a “V” in a pendulum type pattern.
- Encourage players to maintain a stable position below the waist, not allowing the knees to buckle in either direction with the movement of the basketball.
- To challenge the player even more, coaches can have players complete one pendulum swing and then cross over to the other hand. Players can continue this pattern, working on both hands and a crossover dribble at the same time.
- Increase speed as the drill progresses.



DRILL 5: SINGLE-ARM PENDULUM DRIBBLE: SIDE

Once the pendulum in front is learned, coaches can move to a pendulum dribble along the side of the body.

- Instruct the player to begin in a balanced comfortable defensive position.
- Perpendicular to the shoulder line, the player will dribble in a “V” formation. Ideally, the hip serves as the midpoint of the pendulum, swinging forward and backward.
- Hand should turn completely over to achieve the appropriate motion extending as far as possible front and back.
- A clean, straight line with the dribble is ideal. Players may use the lines painted on the floor as a guide.

DRILL 6: DOUBLE-ARM PENDULUM DRIBBLE

- After one hand is learned, challenge players to use two hands in the front, creating a crossover dribble.
- Players will make the same “V” motion with the basketball from hand to hand.
- As players improve, instruct them to pound the basketball under control with increased speeds.
- Further, coaches can progress players to make the same, hard dribbling “V” motion between their legs. Pivot so the chest is pointed directly at one of the knees to create the same angle of dribble. To switch directions, move the chest so it is pointed directly at the other knee.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Hard controlled dribble.
- Turn the hand over from movement to movement.
- Cover distance with the basketball.
- Control of the body throughout the motions.



DRILL 7: BEHIND-THE-BACK

To begin learning how to dribble the basketball behind the back, players should first begin by dribbling the basketball in a “V” motion, similar to a crossover, behind the body instead of in front. Ideally, the dribble will follow the exact shoulder line of the player.

- Coaches can use lines painted on a gymnasium floor to help achieve these types of dribble lines. As players improve, encourage them to keep their heads up.
- Rather than look at the basketball, instruct players to look at the shadow that the basketball casts on the floor.
- Once the drill is learned, begin working on pounding dribbles and increased speed.
- Once the “V” motion is learned, coaches can work on having the player wrap the basketball around the back. The player will take one dribble at the side of the body, and then wrap the basketball around the body, allowing it to bounce by the opposite hip.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- “V” motion with basketball.
- Body control.
- Head up.
- Clean lines with dribble motion.
- Slight knee bend.



SKILL 4

DRIBBLING ON THE MOVE

This is designed to teach players various types of dribbles that will advance the basketball while they are being defended. Learning to

handle the basketball is critical to every player’s development, regardless of position or size. Every player will need to dribble the basketball at some point! Below are a few examples:



DRILL 1: SPEED DRIBBLE

The speed dribble is used most often in the open court when transitioning from defense to offense. The objective of the speed dribble is to advance the basketball as quickly as possible, pushing the basketball out in front of the body.

- Begin by lining players up at one end of the court in a triple-threat position.
- On the whistle, have players advance the basketball straight up the floor in the dominant hand as quickly as possible to the other baseline, ending in a jump stop and triple-threat position.
- Coaches should encourage players to increase their speed while still controlling the basketball. Players will likely dribble the basketball by their shoulders the first time in an attempt to move quickly.
- Continue to encourage control and speed in a healthy combination, keeping the basketball a little above waist level.
- After players become comfortable with using the dominant hand, move to the use of the nondominant hand. Once that is comfortable, have players move up the floor in a straight line alternating hands.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Head up.
- Run in a straight line for efficiency.
- Dribble basketball no higher than just above the waist.
- Healthy balance of control and speed.
- Correct dribbling mechanics.



DRILL 2: CROSSOVER DRIBBLE

The crossover dribble can be used to simply change directions/sides of the floor, or to attack a defender.

- Again, players will start on the baseline in a triple-threat position.
- A player will take two dribbles to the right; cross over and head back to the left, creating a zigzag type motion.
- When crossing over, it is important to plant the outside foot in front of the body and push off with that foot in order to change directions.
- The opposite foot will cut in the new direction, most effectively near the defender's foot out in front.
- The body should be positioned low throughout the move to enable the player to explode out of the crossover.
- The crossover dribble itself should be low and tight to the body, not allowing the defender's hands to interfere with the dribble.
- Once players complete the crossover, instruct them to immediately get the basketball on the outside of the body to protect it from a defender.
- Encourage change of speed and change of direction for an efficient and effective crossover move. It is best to learn the skill without a defender present to gain confidence before performing the drill against a live defender.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Low dribble, tight to body on crossover.
- Plant outside foot to push off.
- Efficient footwork coming out of crossover.
- Change of speed, change of direction.
- Head up.



DRILL 3: RETREAT-CROSSOVER DRIBBLE

Once the crossover dribble is learned, coaches can introduce a retreat-crossover dribble. A retreat-crossover is used when players are in an uncomfortable situation, but still have a live dribble. A good example of this would be when a team traps the offensive player. The player will approach the trap; feel pressure, retreat through a backward dribble, then perform a crossover to escape the trap.

- For this drill, players will begin on the baseline in a triple-threat position.

- Players will take three dribbles to the right, plant on their back foot (right) with their left foot forward, protecting the basketball.
- Players will then slide directly backward (parallel with the sideline) and take two dribbles.
- Next, players will perform a crossover dribble heading back to the left, out of the imaginary trap.
- The concepts for the actual crossover dribble will carry over from above.
- Again, once the drill is learned, change of speed and change of direction are critical in developing an effective retreat crossover.



DRILL 4: HESITATION DRIBBLE

The hesitation dribble can be used in a variety of ways, most commonly and effectively used to freeze a defender for a second, creating an opportunity for the offensive player to get by the defender.

- Players can start on the baseline in a triple-threat position.
- Player will take three speed dribbles, in a straight line, using the dominant hand. Imagining a defender in front of the player, the player will hesitate, or pause for a second, raising or freezing the defender for a second.
- Following the hesitation, the player will explode forward out of the move, keeping the basketball in the dominant hand.
- It is most efficient for the player to use a direct step coming out of the move. For example, if the player were dribbling the basketball in the right hand, the step coming out of the move would be with the right foot. It is important to keep the hand on top of the basketball during the move to assure the player does not illegally carry the basketball.
- Coaches should be able to physically see a change in speed. The player should approach the move sprinting, pause, and then depart the move sprinting. There should be a clear, distinguished and concise change in speeds to be most effective.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Freeze defense.
- Changes of speed into, during and out of move – most important, explode out.
- Hand on top of the basketball.
- Come out of move in straight line, foot directly next to defenders.

DRILL 5: HUMAN CONE DRIBBLING

Human cone dribbling is a fun method of teaching players how to dribble with obstacle in front of them.

- Coaches will evenly space the human cones in a direct line the length of the basketball court.
- Begin with the human cones standing straight up and down, not moving or reaching at the ball-handler as they pass.
- The player with the basketball will begin working through the cones using a speed dribble, alternating hands, circling the last human cone, and then returning.
- The player will give the basketball to the next person in line with the entire line moving forward one spot, while the player that just finished will sprint to the last position in line and become a human cone.
- The next person in line will begin dribbling through the cones.
- Coaches can also set the human cones up in a zigzag pattern, allowing players to work on the crossover dribble and moves learned after this section.
- Further, once players become comfortable with this skill, coaches can have the human cones reach at the basketball as the player passes, teaching players to protect the basketball with their arm bar and body.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Reinforce concepts from previous dribbling skills.
- Protect basketball from human cones.
- Head up.
- Speed and efficiency once skill is learned.

SKILL 5

DRIBBLING ON THE MOVE



The following three moves are more advanced and are best introduced after a healthy comfort level is established with the above skills, to help alleviate frustration. All three of these drills can first be introduced with the player on the baseline in a triple-threat. Moving forward, in a zigzag motion, ending on the opposite baseline in a triple-threat position. The three drills can be used both to beat a defender off the dribble and protect the basketball when changing directions. A further description of the three drills are listed below:

DRILL 1: BEHIND THE BACK

To begin, it is recommended to teach the behind-the-back dribble on the move, in open court. The actual dribble will be executed just as taught above in the stationary ball-handling.

- Going into the move, the basketball will be dribbled next to the hip, wrapping it around the body, landing beside the opposite hip.
- A hard controlled dribble prior to the wrap around can make for an easier maneuver of the basketball behind the back, as it creates necessary momentum to complete the motion.
- Encourage the player to keep the body low entering into and exiting the move.
- Footwork can vary on the behind the back, but it is easiest to learn through a one-two step, rather than a hop.
- Once the basketball has worked its way to the other side of the body, encourage the players to protect the basketball by keeping it on the outside of and tight to the body.
- Once the skill is learned, continue to work on keeping the wrap around as low and tight to the body as possible.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Hard, controlled dribble leading into wrap.
- Wrap from one hip to other.
- Keep wrap close and tight to the body.
- Head up.
- Protect basketball coming out of move.
- Change of speed, change of direction.

DRILL 2: BETWEEN THE LEGS

Starting to the right, the player will take two speed drills and land on a jump stop. The shoulders should be perpendicular to the direction just traveled.

- To teach the move for the first time, have the player, once they have come to a jump stop, turn the shoulders to be parallel with the direction just traveled.
- The chest should now be pointed toward the front knee (left). The basketball will then be dribbled between the legs, from the front door to the back door, catching the basketball in the left hand behind the body.
- Keeping the front foot (left) planted, move the back foot (right) forward in the new direction.
- Encourage the player to keep the basketball on the outside of the body after the completion of the move in order to protect the basketball.
- Once the drill is learned, continue to encourage change of speed, change of direction and keeping the basketball low and tight for efficiency.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Come to jump stop prior to starting move.
- Quick, low and tight on the dribble between the legs.
- Low body positioning throughout the skill.
- Change of speed, change of direction.
- Head up.



DRILL 3: SPIN DRIBBLE

Similar to the between-the-legs dribble, the player will go into the spin-dribble by jump-stopping after two speed-dribbles, with the shoulders perpendicular to the direction just travelled.

- From this position, the player will dribble the basketball hard and controlled in front of the body, creating the necessary momentum leading into the spin.
- The player will then complete a 180-degree reverse pivot, quickly, with the front foot (left) being the pivot foot.



- Once the dribble leading into the spin is made, the basketball will somewhat be cupped in the player's hand, with the hand remaining on top of the basketball, at the waist level, close and tight to the body.
- From the start of the dribble until after the pivot, or spin, is complete, the basketball will remain in the same hand, switching once the player places it on the floor in front of the opposite hand.
- As soon as that happens, the player should ensure the basketball is on the outside of the body for protection.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Jump stop leading into spin-dribble.
- Hard, controlled dribble leading into spin.
- Quick, low pivot, creating the spin motion.
- Keep hand on top of the basketball through spin.
- Protect basketball coming out of spin with body.
- Change of speed, change of direction.
- Head up.



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

GENERAL OVERVIEW: At the Foundational Level, it is appropriate and necessary to begin developing skills for a player to successfully defend the basketball, better known as on-ball defense. On-ball defense is critical to learn both for personal success as well as within a player-to-player team defensive scheme. Below are several skills to begin introducing different mechanics and elements of on-ball defense.

SKILL 1

STATIONARY ON-BALL DEFENSIVE MECHANICS

First, coaches should work on mechanics and defensive positioning around the basketball before introducing a moving offense. This will allow the first-time defender to gain confidence and a general understanding of on-ball defense.



- Defending an offensive player after picking up the dribble and becoming “dead”:
- Defender should immediately “belly up” to the player, closing all space between them;
- Mirror basketball with the hands, trying to deflect the pass;
- Offense is at a disadvantage, so avoid fouling.
- In order to defend a shot players should keep the following in mind:
- When a shot is taken, contest it with the high hand;
- Immediately make contact with the offensive player, still allowing the player to land safely, to begin to box out;
- Turn to face the basket, maintaining contact on the box out;
- Keep the head and hands up in preparation for a rebound.

With the above in mind, the progression includes:

- Stance in reference to offensive player
- Defending jab step (player with live dribble)
- Defending jab step, then one dribble
- Defending jab step, then one dribble, then dead/shot
- Defending jab step, then two dribbles
- Defending jab step, then two dribbles, then dead/shot
- Defending jab step, one dribble one way, then one dribble the opposite direction, then dead/shot
- Defending any combination of the above through to dead/shot
- Coaches can progress through the above drills with various verbal or physical cues.
- Ensure that both directions are worked on and that all players work on defensive skills.
- Although it is best to focus only on defense to begin, coaches can eventually encourage offensive players to display proper footwork and basketball positioning.
- These are ways to continue raising the level of the drill through offense and defense, even though this is introduced primarily as a defensive skill.
- Encourage players to develop the habit of communicating early while running these drills. You should hear terms, such as, “ball,” “dead,” and “shot” through the course of these drills.

- To begin, players will organize in groups of two, with one basketball between them.
- Feel free to spread groups throughout the gymnasium.
- Coaches will then progress through a series of steps with the players, focusing on the details of footwork, hand placement, and fundamentals of the defensive stance throughout the skill.
- The proper stance entails the following:
 - Sit rear end back and low;
 - Straight back with head and chin up;
 - Toes pointed straight ahead;
 - Hands placed above the waist;
 - Slight knee bend;
 - Arms length from player;
 - Eyes on offensive players waist.
- To execute the footwork for a defending jab with a live offensive player:
 - Player will react with a drop step to respect the offensive player jab;
 - Stay low through the drop step, maintain the proper stance;
 - Keep eyes on offensive player’s waist;
 - Keep active hand high on the side of the jab or basketball while keeping the active; hand low on the opposite side;
 - Maintain arms length distance;
 - If offensive player retreats, so does defensive player.
- The footwork for defending the dribble is as follows:
 - The initial step is the most critical in defending dribble;
 - Point foot in direction of slide, push opposite foot;
 - Do not bring feet together after slide (if a wooden stick is placed between the legs of defender, just shorter than shoulder width, the player should not break the stick)
 - Maintain arms length distance;
 - High active hand on side of dribble, low active hand on opposite side;
 - Stay low to begin, through dribble and after dribble;
 - Slide should be at an angle, not at a 180-degree angle allowing direct drive to offense.
- Defending a change-of-direction dribble
- Stay low changing direction;
- Big, urgent, push off of back foot when changing direction;
- Correct angles;
- Stay low the entire time;
- Switch hand positioning on direction change.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Stance.
- Stay active and low.
- Communication.



SKILL 2

STATIONARY ON-BALL DEFENSIVE MECHANICS

Closeouts are a critical habit to begin forming early on. They enable the player to defend a shooter and penetrator at the same time, through the use of good body control and positioning.

- For example, a defender is standing in a proper help-side position; the player they are defending quickly receives the basketball five feet away from the defender. The defender is in a situation where they will need to use a closeout in order to effectively defend the immediate shot, along with the possibility of the offensive player penetrating.
- Player will execute a closeout, by first sprinting three-quarters of the distance between the offensive player and original location.
- Sprinting this initial distance is critical as it is urgent the defender arrive at the offensive player as quickly as possible.
- The last quarter of the distance, the player will begin to quickly “chop” their feet in a controlled manner.
- The weight and head of the defender should be thrown backwards in order to control and slow the momentum created in the sprint.
- If the defender does not execute this part of the closeout, keeping their head down and momentum moving toward the offensive player, the defender will not have the ability to defend penetration upon arrival.
- In addition to throwing the head and weight backwards, the arms should also raise above the head, discouraging the offensive player from shooting; in addition to possibly deflecting a potential pass.

- The defender should also stay low in stance while approaching the offensive player allowing the defender the ability to slide laterally should the offensive player penetrate. It is important to remember the offensive player is live, and therefore has many options.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Sprint three-quarters of distance.
- Controlled chop at one-quarter distance.
- Weight, head back.
- High hands.
- Stay low in stance.
- Arms length distance.



DRILL 1: FOUR-ACROSS CLOSEOUTS

Players will begin by lining up in four lines across the baseline, the first four players standing in a defensive stance. Coaches will cue players to begin through a verbal or physical signal.

- Out of the defensive stance, players will sprint straight ahead to perform a closeout ending at the first free line extended, or floor marking provided by coach.
- After the closeout is performed, the player should end in a defensive stance. The next group will step up to the baseline and sit in a defensive stance.
- Coach will use the same cue letting the players know to work on the next closeout, now two rows of players will be going.
- Original group will perform closeout at half court, the second group will perform closeout at the first free throw line extended.
- Skill will be continued until all players make it to the opposite baseline, having executed four closeouts.

DRILL 2: LATERAL SLIDES

Once the above drills are learned, coaches can challenge players by including lateral slides, simulating an offensive player penetrating.

- As players are closing out, coaches can point or provide verbal cues for the players to slide laterally right or left.
- It is best to work on the efficiency of one slide before moving to several. Encourage players to push off of the back foot, point the lead foot and not cross feet. Reinforce concepts from above.
- Coaches can be creative in how the players move following the closeout, making players engage and react. After lateral slides become easier, coaches can also challenge the players to perform a drop step rather than a later slide, or a series of slides in combination.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Combine and reinforce emphasis from closeouts and slides above.
- No negative steps.
- Stay low.

Once players have learned the skill of closing out, coaches can focus on specific details to continue to challenge the player.

- For example, many players will take a negative step out of the defensive stance when asked to sprint forward. No different than a runner at a starting line for a race, the step backward takes away a valuable second and is not efficient desired footwork.
- Further, in order to create a more urgent first step, encourage players to split their arms on the first movement. This creates a positive momentum and immediate push in the desired direction.
- The body will not go anywhere without the arms, they are just as important as the footwork. Creating good habits from the beginning will only help the player progress successfully through the sport!

DRILL 3: THREE-POINT-LINE CLOSEOUTS

Once the above closeout drills have been developed, relocate the drill to a different locations on the basketball floor will allow players to develop an understanding of when and how to use closeouts in a live

game situation. There are an endless amount of ways to achieve this, but below is an example:

- Two offensive players will be positioned on the wings; coaches (or players) will be positioned at the top of the key.
- Two defensive players will stand at mid-line, feet touching (this takes away the potential of a negative step on the start), on the pass (using two basketballs), defensive players will sprint to their respective offensive players using a closeout.

A simple progression is as follows:

- Closeout to defensive stance
- Closeout to defending jab step
- Closeout to defending 1 dribble penetration baseline
- Closeout to defending 1 dribble penetration middle
- Closeout to defending 1 dribble penetration baseline/middle to shot/dead
- Closeout to defending 1 dribble one way, then 1 dribble different direction to shot/dead
- Closeout to any combination – controlled
- Closeout to any combination – live (later in level, limit offense to three dribbles)

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Control the body to gain confidence.
- Reinforce concepts from closeouts and slides above.
- Focus on footwork, no negative steps.
- Stay low.

SKILL 3

FULL-COURT ZIGZAG

Coaches can utilize the full-court zigzag skill to begin teaching players how to defend the basketball in the open court. It is recommended to begin working technique without offense before playing any type of simulated live-action in the full court. This skill has the potential to cause players to become frustrated when attempting to learn it, if not introduced properly.



DRILL 1: NO OFFENSE – ALL SLIDES

As mentioned, to begin, it is best to work on footwork in a controlled manner without offense.

- Players will utilize one-third of the court lengthwise, allowing more players to be actively engaged at the same time.
- Players will slide at a 45-degree angle, simulating the angles an offensive player would dribble.
- After three slides, the player would drop step and slide in the other direction.
- Motion should be repeated the entire length of the floor, working on developing a solid foundation for the general skill.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Stay low with head up.
- Push off back foot, point lead foot.
- 45-degree angle on drop steps.
- Do not cross feet, or bring feet together.
- No negative steps.
- Proper hand placement both directions.



DRILL 2: CONTROLLED OFFENSE

Similar in nature to the drill above, the defensive player will work on basketball defense against a controlled offensive player.

- Here, the offensive player will take three slow dribbles one way, and then change directions.
- The defensive player will work on all of the concepts listed above.
- Focus on staying low, moving at 45-degree angles on drop steps, maintaining proper hand placement, and staying an arm's length distance from the offensive player, etc.
- The drill should first be learned at a slower pace, without the offense attempting to beat the defensive player.
- Once the drill is picked up, the offensive player can pick up the pace.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Head on the basketball.
- Arms length distance.
- Eyes on waist of offensive player.
- Proper hand placement.
- Stay low.



DRILL 3: NO OFFENSE AND CONTROLLED – PLAYER IS BEAT OFF DRIBBLE

If a player gets beat off of the dribble, it is important to understand the footwork that should be used to catch up and reestablish proper positioning.

- This drill should first be accomplished without an offensive player, then progress to a controlled offensive player.
- Clearly, the quickest and most efficient way to catch up is to turn and sprint.
- However, the defensive player does not want to run directly next to the offensive player. Instead, the defender wants to pick a spot up ahead and beat the offensive player to that spot, mainly by using a better angle.
- Once the defensive player beats the offensive player to the spot, the defender will turn and immediately get into a defensive stance to stop the ball-handler.
- From this position, the defender will begin sliding laterally again.
- Coaches can simulate this action by instructing players where to pretend the offensive player beats the defensive player. When an offensive player is introduced, this instruction is not needed.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Once beat, cross over toward new direction and sprint.
- Split arms to create momentum.
- Pick spot ahead, create better angle and beat offense to spot.
- At spot, immediately turn and get in defensive stance to stop offense.
- Begin lateral slide, stay low.



DRILL 4: LIVE OFFENSE; NO SCORE

To simulate live-game action, coaches can allow offensive players to try to beat the defense to the other baseline, without allowing any shots.

- Instruct offensive players to try to beat the defense off the dribble.
- If successful, after two dribbles, offensive players can slow down and allow the defense to catch up and reset.
- From that position on the floor, the two players can play “live” again.
- As players improve, coaches can allow offensive players to beat the defensive player, if possible. This is a good way to challenge the players without scoring.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Combine and reinforce concepts from progression.
- Keep arm's length distance between offensive and defensive player.

DRILL 5: LIVE OFFENSE; SCORE

Once players are comfortable with the above drill on both sides of the basketball, it is appropriate to allow players to attempt to score at the end of the zigzag drill.

- Instruct players they must stay on their third of the basketball court until reaching half court; then they must stay on their half of the court.
- This instruction is important so players working on the other side of the floor do not collide with one another.
- Encourage defensive players to play through until the end of the drill, including a box out and securing the rebound.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Combine and reinforce concepts from previous drills.
- Play through until the end of the skill.
- Box out and secure rebound.





FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL

FOOTWORK AND BODY CONTROL

GENERAL OVERVIEW: Footwork and body control are important in all levels. At the Foundational Level, these two skills will be developed through drills performed at a tempo closer to that of an actual basketball game, which requires changes in direction to happen more quickly.

SKILL 1

PIVOTING

This skill advances a young player's ability to use proper footwork and body control when pivoting. It is important that players learn how to pivot correctly, as this is essential to a number of other skills, such as shooting and passing.

- Ensure that players are in good basketball position to start, with the chin up and the hands above the waist. Players should slightly bend their knees, and their feet should be at least shoulder-width apart.
- Make the pivot by planting one foot so that it will not move forward or backward; this is the pivot foot. The other foot can move so that the body may swivel and turn accordingly.
- Instruct players to spin on the ball of the planted foot when they are pivoting, and remain in good basketball position the entire time.
- Players may pivot 180 degrees in either direction. A "front pivot" is where the body turns forward, and a "reverse pivot" is where the body turns backward.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Maintain good basketball position.
- Keep the chin up.
- Pivot on one foot using a front or reverse pivot.



SKILL 2 BODY CONTROL WHEN CHANGING DIRECTION/SPEED

Players that are able to to change speed and direction will become more efficient in all aspects of their basketball games. Understanding how to vary speed and direction forms the basis for many other skills that players will learn at higher levels.

- Remind players to maintain proper basketball positioning when learning and practicing these skills, with the knees bent and the hands above the waist.
- In order to change direction, instruct players to push off of the foot opposite the direction they wish to travel. To travel to the right, push off of the left foot; to travel left, push off of the right. To travel backward, push off of the foot in front of the body; to travel forward, push off of the back foot.
- As players begin to travel in a new direction, they should turn their shoulders in the direction they wish to travel.
- To change direction efficiently, players must learn to push off of the appropriate foot quickly.
- It is important that players change speed when they change direction.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Proper basketball positioning.
- Push off the foot opposite the desired direction.
- Turn shoulders toward desired direction.
- Change speed when changing direction.



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES



GENERAL OVERVIEW: At this level, the focus is on defensive stance. There will also be instruction on body movement which will involve pivoting and performing drop steps while in the proper stance. To learn these skills, players will be engaged in defensive slide drills. Initially, drills will involve neither a player on offense nor a basketball, but as players become comfortable, that will change. Over time, the drills will include a player on offense, and eventually, a player with a basketball.

SKILL 1

PROPER STANCE

The proper defensive stance should be introduced at the Introductory Level with continued progression throughout this level.

- Feet should be wider than the shoulders, hands above the waist, with the chin up and the head in a position above the knees, though not leaning forward.
- This will give the player the ability to move in all directions and allow making the necessary pivots to become a good defender.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- The back should be straight with the chin up.
- Feet should be wider than the shoulders.
- Hands placed above the waist.
- Slight knee bend.



SKILL 2

360-DEGREE MOVEMENTS

When moving on defense, players should remain in the proper stance outlined in the Footwork and Body Control section of the Introductory Level, and should use footwork similar to that which is described in Skill 2 of Offensive Principles above.

- Defensive players should practice following the player on offense around the basketball court.
- Proper movement on defense requires the defender to “slide” in the same direction as the player on offense.
- In order to slide correctly, coaches should remind players of the footwork they learned in the Offensive Principles; they should be pushing off of the foot opposite the direction they wish to travel.
- Watch to make sure players are not bringing their feet together after sliding.
- It is important to consider spacing between offensive and defensive players at this level. Instruct defenders to stay within arms’ length of offensive players.
- To help a defender follow an offensive player around the basketball court, encourage the defender to look at the offensive player’s waist.
- When the offensive player changes direction, defenders should use a pivot to continue following the player on offense.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Proper defensive stance and footwork.
- Push off foot opposite desired direction of travel.
- Feet should not come together after slide.
- Pivot to change directions.



FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL PASSING AND RECEIVING



OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES: PASSING

GENERAL OVERVIEW: *Passing and receiving are important abilities to develop. As with ball-handling and dribbling, these two skills allow the basketball to be advanced legally throughout the court of play. At the Foundational Level, passing and receiving continues to work on efficiency and proficiency of the basics previously introduced, while also learning new skills and concepts that will be needed for game like situations progressing forward.*

SKILL 1

STATIONARY PASSING

In addition to the new drills listed below, players at this level should continue working on improving chest and bounce passes, with both hands and one hand. Passes should be crisp with high velocity and accuracy, leaving the hand quickly, hitting the receivers target with little movement needed. These two passes will be the foundation for all over passing skills learned, hence the importance of continuing to master the drills below.

Below are additional drills to begin introducing at this level, which initially can be taught with two teammates passing to one another, both stationary.

DRILL 1: WRAP-AROUND BOUNCE PASS

The wrap-around bounce pass is most commonly used by perimeter

players while executing a post entry pass. To begin teaching this type of pass, begin with the hand motion, exaggerating it to begin.

- With one hand, have the player rest the basketball on the finger pads with the palm facing upward.
- The player will then turn the hand over, 180 degrees, with the palm facing downward, passing the basketball on the bounce to the teammate.
- When beginning to learn this drill, have the player experiment with how the basketball bounces based on the spin the player puts on the basketball, as a result of the turning of the hand.
- Next, have the player add the guide hand, used only for control and protection into the pass.
- As the player gets comfortable with the guide hand and how the basketball spins back to the teammate, challenge the player to bounce the basketball outside of a painted line, that is just outside the direct line to the teammate, making the player use the spin to get the basketball back to the teammate.
- Further, a coach can stand directly in front of the player, making the player release the basketball outside of the body, again causing the player to use spin to execute the pass.
- As players improve, coaches can challenge passers to increase tempo, make crisp passes, and hit the target perfectly.

DRILL 2: WRAP-AROUND BOUNCE PASS (FOOTWORK)

Once the hand motion is learned, begin teaching the footwork and details of the pass, with a non-live defender standing in front for comprehension.

- From a triple-threat position, first begin teaching a direct jab.
- If the player is passing with the right hand, a direct right jab step would be used, placing the right foot directly next to the left foot of the defender.
- The player will adjust the basketball to be released as far away from the body as possible, keeping the basketball away from the defender.
- Release the basketball low, turning the hand over, spinning the bounce pass back into the teammates target. Hold the follow-through, pointing directly at the target.

- Keep the body low throughout the passing motion.
- The receiver will catch with two hands on a jump stop immediately establishing a triple-threat position.
- Further, coaches should encourage equal use of hands and feet in the footwork, eventually moving to a crossover jab step to make the pass.
- With the crossover, focus on how the player is able to protect the basketball with the body, utilizing to the proper footwork.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Triple-threat.
- Proper hand motion, creating proper spin back to teammate.
- Proper footwork.
- Stay low throughout pass.
- Follow-through.
- Receiver catch with two hands.



DRILL 3: OVERHEAD PASS

Overhead passes can be used in many situations, most commonly used to quickly skip the basketball across the court, against a zone defense or in the open court.

- Starting in a triple-threat position, the player will quickly bring the basketball above the head, with one hand placed on each side of the basketball, gripping it firmly with the elbows out.
- The player will use both hands equally to pass the basketball, while stepping toward the target.
- When making the pass, the hands should not travel back behind the head, as there may be a defender behind the player. Rather, the basketball should depart from just above the head, allowing for strength and a quick release.
- The hands should rotate through the basketball, following through with the thumbs rotating downward pointing directly at the target.
- Encourage the pass to be crisp, located just over the defense, without lobbing it.
- Continue to work on accuracy as the drill is practiced.
- The receiver should catch the basketball with two hands, on a two-foot jump stop establishing a triple-threat position.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Triple-threat.
- Basketball just above the head, not behind.
- Quick release.
- Thumbs up, thumbs down.
- Step toward target, follow through directly at target.
- Receiver catch with two hands, two-foot jump stop.

DRILL 4: FAKE PASS

Defenders are taught to mirror and react to the basketball, making pass fakes valuable to an offensive player. The idea is to use a pass fake to get a defender to react in one direction, opening up a passing lane in a different direction. When playing against pressure defenses, coaches often use the phrase, “fake a pass, to make a pass.”

- Staying with concepts of overhead passes learned above, have three teammates work together. This helps to provide a visual target for the passer when first learning to fake a pass.
- From a triple-threat position, the player with the basketball brings the basketball to just above the head and begins the motion of an overhead pass toward one of the teammates.
- The idea is to make the fake and general motion look realistic enough for a defender to react.
- Create momentum with the basketball moving forward, eyes on the target, pulling the basketball back to its original position.
- Once the fake is complete, step toward the other target and execute the pass.
- Coaches, have players execute all types of passes when learning pass fakes.
- If working on a fake bounce pass, the player should fake low, at the same height, as an actual pass would be executed. Further, have players execute pass fakes without a third teammate. For example, if trying to complete a post entry pass, a perimeter player might fake an overhead pass; then execute a bounce pass.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Realistic pass fakes.
- Eyes on target.
- Motion with basketball.
- Quick transition from fake to actual pass.

SKILL 2

PASSING WITH ONE PLAYER ON THE MOVE

In this scenario, it is imperative to pass the basketball to where the teammate is running, not to where they currently are.

- The pass must be made in front of the running teammate. The runner should not have to break a stride to catch the basketball. With experience, players will be able to gauge how far in front of each of their teammates the basketball needs to be thrown.
- Conversely, when passers are also moving, it is important that they take their own momentum into account, especially if the player receiving the basketball is stationary.
- The drills listed below present both scenarios.

DRILL 1: FOUR-CORNER PASSING

Using half of the basketball court, place four lines in each of the corners. Eventually players will be able to extend the lines to the actual corners on a basketball floor. However, at this level the lines will likely move closer together in order to successfully execute chest passes without compromising technique. There will be a need for two basketballs to complete the drill.

- To begin, explain to players they will only be in two lines throughout the course of the drill, the line they are currently standing in and the one diagonal from them.
- Explain that all players will be looking to their right when they run diagonally toward the other line.
- Once the drill has started, each player will receive the basketball, make a pass to the player cutting across the middle of the floor, after the pass the player cuts across the middle of the floor looking right, receives the basketball, then passes to the line running toward, filling in at the end of that line.

- Once the drill is picked up, switch directions to the left.
- This drill provides players opportunities to work on passing with all dynamics of stationary and moving targets, teaching players to understand momentum and the impact it has on passing.
- Encourage players to hit targets with accuracy, making crisp passes without breaking stride. Receivers should catch the basketball with two hands and communicate throughout the drill.
- Further, once the drill is learned, make sure players are making another pass immediately, rather than traveling with the basketball.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Crisp Passing.
- Hit player in stride, pass ahead of current location if in movement.
- Hit target.
- Receiver show target.
- Do not travel between catch and pass.



DRILL 2: FULL COURT PASSING LAYUPS

Again, focusing on combining stationary and players on the move, this drill progresses players to make appropriate passes within a shorter distance, making it more challenging. Coaches can also incorporate layups to integrate drill sets together.

- With players aligned as depicted in the diagram, players will complete three passes prior to the layup on one end of the floor.
- The players shooting the layups will continue to do so for the allotted amount of time.
- Once that time is up, have the stationary players become the players shooting the layups and vice versa.
- Players that make the pass leading to the layup, use a bounce pass with all other passes being chest passes.
- Continue to focus on players not traveling between the catch and the pass.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Crisp, accurate passes.
- Hit the target.
- Bounce pass leading to layup.
- Catch with two hands.
- Clean catch, transition to pass quickly.
- Reinforce points of emphasis from layup section.



SKILL 3

PASSING WITH TWO PLAYERS ON THE MOVE

Understanding how to hit a moving target, while also moving, is an important skill to learn, as players will constantly be in this situation. The drills below will help players become comfortable with passing on the move.

DRILL 1: SIDE-CENTER-SIDE PASSING

Forming three lines on the baseline, have players move up the floor, three at a time, using the chest pass.

- The players will run in a straight line, staying even with one another, passing from the center to the side, back to center, over to the other side and back to the center.
- Players will continue this pattern the length of the floor.
- If the players are just learning the drill, it is best to only complete passing down to the opposite baseline.
- If the players are comfortable with the drill, add a layup on the opposite end, with the player in the middle jump-stopping at the free-throw line and making a bounce pass for the layup.
- Depending on the number of players involved, coaches can have the players return prior to the next group going, or simply have everyone complete the drill to the opposite end prior to returning. Encourage players to lead the teammate and not travel between catch and pass.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Crisp pass, no lobs.
- Hit target.
- Lead teammate, do not break stride.
- Do not travel between catch and pass.



DRILL 2: THREE PLAYER WEAVE

Beginning in three lines on the baseline, three players will move up the floor together, weaving and passing to get to the opposite baseline, or shoot a layup.

- With the basketball starting in the middle line, a chest pass will be made to one of the players on the wing.
- Once a pass is made, players should immediately follow their passes and run behind the player receiving the pass.
- Players receiving the basketball will pass across the floor to the opposite player, again, following their own pass behind the receiving player.
- The three players will work together in this pattern of passing and cutting up the entire length of the basketball court to the opposite end.
- Coaches can have players end at the opposite baseline, or continue back without a break in the pattern, this is especially fluid if used following a layup.
- Further, coaches can dictate how spread out the lines are, varying the length of passes being made, based on what is appropriate for the players.
- As discussed above, encourage players to make crisp passes, leading the teammate while the receiving teammate takes care not to travel between the catch and the pass.
- Further, ensure players are moving up the basketball floor together, as many players first learning this drill tend to drift in the wrong direction. Coaches may even walk behind the group, giving them a visual of how they should be moving up the floor.

DRILL 3: FIVE PLAYER WEAVE

The concept of a five-player weave is similar to that of a three-player weave, but allows more involvement at one time and leads to additional drill variations that can be introduced later on.



- For this drill, the three-player weave still occurs as described above. The difference is that once a pass is made, the player will follow the pass and travel to the outside, around two players, instead of just the one.
- The basketball is always thrown to the inside player, rather than the outside player. Again, all five players will pass and cut, working together to travel down the basketball court. The drill can end merely with passes, or a layup at the end can be added, with a jump stop and bounce pass to the shooter.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Crisp pass, no lobs.
- Hit target.
- Lead teammate, do not break stride.
- Do not travel between catch and pass.



SKILL 4

PASSING IN ADVANTAGE SITUATIONS

Once the actual skill of passing begins to develop, it is important to begin understanding angles and how to use other basketball skills, such as dribbling, to create better passing angles. These types of concepts can be learned within the context of advantage situations, as described below.

DRILL 1: TWO-ON-ONE

In general, from an offensive transition standpoint, if two players find themselves in a two-on-one advantage situation, the two players should immediately establish wide spacing, creating two lanes on the outside third of the floor.

- The player with the basketball should attack the basket on the dribble, until the defense commits to stop that player.
- If the defense never stops the basketball, the offensive player should shoot a layup.
- If the defensive player commits to stop the basketball, the player should make a bounce pass to the other player, who would then score the layup.

- In this case, attacking with the dribble and making the defender fully commit to the basketball, is what creates the passing lane to the teammate.
- If a player does not attack, it will allow the defender to essentially defend both players and make any type of passing between teammates a challenge.
- Ideally, in a two-on-one advantage situation, a layup should be taken with one or less passes made. This is a tall order for players just learning this drill, but it is the ultimate goal.

DRILL 2: HALF COURT TWO-ON-ONE

One way to introduce this drill is to have the players in a fairly controlled environment, starting with two lines at half court.

- One side starts with the basketball, begins dribbling at the defender, and then executes a two-on-one situation.
- To begin, the defender may be a coach, again controlling the environment to ensure the players understand the drill and how the use of the dribble impacts the passing angles.
- Once the drill is learned, add a teammate as the defender.
- Make sure to switch sides of the floor with the basketball to ensure players are dribbling and passing with both hands.

DRILL 3: FULL COURT TWO-ON-ONE

Starting similarly as the above drill, here, move the two lines to the baseline, with one defender on the opposite side.

- Players with the basketball will dribble the length of the floor in one lane, the other teammate will run wide in the other lane and together they will attack the defender and execute the two-on-one situation.
- Players that shoot the basketball (or turns it over) will become the defender with the next group of two players coming at them.
- Setting the drill up in this manner will only allow the players to complete the two-on-one at one end of the floor.

DRILL 4: FULL COURT TWO-ON-ONE BLITZ

This drill allows for continuity by adding outlets to both sides of the floor.

- The players will execute a two-on-one advantage situation.
- The defensive player will make an outlet pass to the player in line, then two players will fill their lanes heading to the other end of the floor to execute a two-on-one advantage situation against the defender.
- This drill is a great way to get more players involved at the same time.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Create spacing, fill lanes.
- Player with basketball attacks defense.
- Score layup in one pass.
- Pass should not break stride of teammate.
- Hit target.

DRILL 5: THREE-ON-TWO

Generally speaking, from an offensive transition standpoint, in a three-on-two advantage situation, the three players should immediately space the floor, two wide and one in the middle lane.

- It is best to have the basketball in the middle of the floor to begin, either by dribble or pass.
- Player spacing is an important element to allow for better passing angles.
- Typically, if the top defender stops the basketball, the first pass travels to one of the wings.
- The next pass is usually back to the top or to the opposite player for a layup, depending on how the defense reacts to the situation.
- Players will work toward making two or fewer passes to get a good shot attempt.
- Against a three-on-two, a layup or a short jump shot is considered a good shot.
- If more than two passes are made, the defense will have time to recover and the offense loses the advantage.
- Again, this is a tall order for players just learning how to pass the basketball against a three-on-two advantage situation, but it is something to work toward. It is important to continue to reinforce the value of spacing for effective passing.

DRILL 6: HALF COURT THREE-ON-TWO

When first introducing the drill and concepts of passing against in a three-on-two scenario, a half court setting can be a good starting point.

- The offense will work to execute against the two defenders, rotating into defense to keep the drill going.
- Gain confidence in the half court setting, and then move to a more realistic full court environment.

DRILL 7: FULL COURT THREE-ON-TWO BLITZ

Similar to the two-on-one blitz, the three-on-two blitz is continuous with the two outlet lines on each side of the floor. The three offensive players will work to score against the two defenders.

- Once the play is over, the two defensive players will outlet and progress up the floor, in respective lanes to execute against the two defenders on the opposite end.
- The drill will continue in this manner.
- Once players begin to pick up the drill, challenge the offensive players to get a quality shot in two passes or fewer
- Once a group is comfortable with that, coaches can put a shot clock on the player to help them simulate how quick they will need to execute this in a live-game situation.
- A 12 second shot clock is appropriate to begin, and should start from the time the basketball is secured by a defender.
- The shot clock can be decreased as the players improve.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Create spacing, fill lanes.
- Quality shot in two or less passes.
- Pass should not break stride of teammate, hit target leading to shot.
- Opportunity to incorporate pass fakes.



OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES: RECEIVING

SKILL 1

CATCH AS A THREAT

Especially at this level, it is important to instill in players that they must always pose a legitimate offensive threat once they catch the basketball.

- Too many times, players catch the basketball and place it over the head, standing straight up. A good defender will jam an offensive player that does this, taking away most offensive options.
- The offensive player should always keep defensive players guessing and reactive. As soon as the basketball is received, encourage players to get the basketball into the shooting pocket, in triple-threat, ready to make something happen.
- Reinforce this concept and create a positive habit with all offensive drills.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- On catch, immediately get basketball into shooting pocket.
- Catch to score.
- Triple-threat stance.
- Always look for offensive opportunities.
- Keep defense guessing.



CONCEPT: MEETING A PASS

When receiving the basketball, players should begin making a movement back toward the passer, especially when in the presence of a defender.

- Even the slightest movement back toward the basketball will not only save a potential turnover, but many times will draw a personal foul from an aggressive defender.

- Further, meeting a pass in the half court will many times help to create momentum, which can assist in squaring up to the basketball leading to a fluid and strong shot attempt. There are not many positives to catching the basketball flat footed as an offensive player.
- Again, this concept can and should be reinforced in all drill work, involving passing. It can be taught within the context of other drills, or a separate drill can be created to just work on meeting the pass.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Make a movement back toward the passer while basketball is in the air.
- Catch with two hands.
- Triple-threat position.



DRILL 1: IMPERFECT PASS

Ideally, when receiving the basketball, the player will always use two hands to complete the catch. However, if there is an errant pass or long rebound, it will require the player receiving the basketball to go get it, sometimes, only allowing the use of one hand.

- Player needs to be trained how to secure the basketball and bring it back into the body gaining control.
- The idea is to “block, grab, chin.”
- As the player leaves the position to go retrieve the basketball with one hand, the player will block the basketball stopping the momentum. Then, grab the basketball and bring it into the other hand. At this point, immediately chin the basketball, to secure it and gain control.
- Coaches should encourage players to grab the basketball with two hands, but when that is not possible, block, grab, chin.
- This drill is best introduced in passing lines, with the passer (or coach) making an errant pass, which forces the player to leave the positioning to go get it.
- Experiment with different locations, heights and velocity of the basketball to challenge the player. Mix up where the pass is being received to make the player decide if one or two hands is needed to properly receive the basketball.
- Always encourage players to immediately chin and/or get in a triple-threat position.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Always try to go get basketball with two hands first.
- Block, grab, chin.
- Secure, control possession.



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

SKILL 1

DENIAL POSITIONING AND FOOTWORK

DRILL 1: DENIAL POSITIONING AND CONCEPTS; NO MOVEMENT

In player-to-player defense, the whole premise of the defense begins with the player defending on the basketball. Any defensive player that is potentially one pass away from the basketball is in what is called a denial position. Essentially, the defender is denying the offensive player the opportunity to receive the basketball, through the correct positioning.

What does a denial position look like? For explanation purposes, the basketball is located at the top of the key while the other offensive player is on the right wing.

- Beginning with body position, a defender in a denial position will be in a defensive stance, with the backside of the body facing toward the basketball located at the top of the key.
- The right foot, in this case, would be high, near the three-point line and the left foot would be low.
- The right arm is fully extended straight out to the side, with the thumb pointed downward and the palm facing the basketball.
- Positioning of the hand in the passing lane is important if a pass is actually made, in order to deflect the basketball and get the steal.

- In order to see both the basketball and the offensive player denying, the chin will rest on the right shoulder.
- The left arm will form an arm bar in order to make contact with the offensive player at the appropriate time.
- Lastly, it is good practice to begin the process of communication between teammates. In this case, the player should verbalize, “deny” to the teammates on the floor.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Defensive stance, backside toward basketball.
- High side arm fully extended.
- Thumb down, palm toward basketball.
- Chin on shoulder.
- Communicate “deny.”



DRILL 2: DENYING V-CUT; PERIMETER

Building on the concepts introduced above, defending a perimeter V-cut brings the denial to life. When adding offensive movement it is important the denial defender slides the feet, same concept as on-ball defense. The angle of the backside is different in that it is facing the offensive player with the basketball, rather than the hoop, but the mechanics of the slides are the exact same. It is also important to make contact with the offensive player, using the arm bar; the closer they are to the block.

- The player receiving the basketball this close to the basket is at much greater risk to score than catching the basketball at the three-point line, making the physical contact important at the block.
- As the offensive player cuts to the wing, the defensive player will move “up the line,” creating an imaginary triangle with the path of the offensive and defensive players, as depicted in the diagram.
- The term “up the line” is referring to the imaginary line that is drawn between the two offensive players should a pass be made.
- To move “up the line” will require the defensive player to physically move up that line toward the offensive player with the basketball.



- This is important for a few reasons. One reason is it makes it more difficult for an offensive player to make a backdoor cut by getting into the body of the defender and pushing off.
- It also makes the floor look smaller to the offensive player with the basketball as there is less room to dribble penetrate if the defender takes some of that spacing away.
- Lastly, if the offensive player does decide to penetrate, the denial defender is already one to two steps closer to pinch the gap should the need arise.
- To begin introducing these concepts to the players, work on the footwork and positioning first, against a controlled offensive player.
- Make simple cuts and get the hang of it before going live with the drill. Reinforce contact on the block and space, or up the line, at the wing position.
- Once players start to understand the basics, change the positioning to deny at the top of the key or at the baseline.
- Make sure players work both sides of the floor to be comfortable with both hands and feet up.
- At this level, do not worry too much with backdoor cuts against the denial, simply reinforce hand in the passing lane, not foot.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Defensive stance, backside toward basketball.
- High side arm fully extended.
- Thumb down, palm toward basketball.
- Chin on shoulder.
- Contact at block, up the line at the wing.
- Hand in passing lane, not foot.
- Communicate “deny.”



SKILL 2

TRANSITIONING: ON-BALL/DENIAL

In most every possession, a defensive player will play on the basketball, denial and help side multiple times. Yes, learning all of these skills is critical to any players success. However, the ability to quickly and efficiently transition from each skill set may be just as

important, if not more important due to the fluidity of the game. Thus, the transitions should be trained just as the actual drills are.

The important concept to introduce is to always jump to the basketball with the ultimate goal of being established in the proper position (on-ball, deny, or help) by the time the offensive player catches the basketball. This requires a bit of anticipation and a commitment to moving on the flight of the basketball.

CONCEPT: ON-BALL DEFENSE TO DENIAL

Both of the drills below can be accomplished working with two players, one on offense and one on defense, passing to a coach, jumping to the basketball and establishing the correct position. Progress the drills to get four players involved. Coaches can place the lines all over the floor to work on footwork at different locations.

DRILL 1: PASS LOW TO HIGH; WING TO TOP OF KEY

- With a player to player defense that forces the basketball handler toward the baseline, it is easier to transition from on-ball defense to denial on a pass from low to high because the feet are essentially already in position, all the player has to do is jump up the line on the flight of the basketball.

DRILL 2: PASS HIGH TO LOW; WING TO BASELINE

- With a player to player defense that forces the basketball handler toward the baseline, it is far more challenging to transition from on-ball defense to denial on a pass from high to low because of the positioning of the feet prior to the pass.
- On the flight of the basketball, if the on-ball defender does not immediately and on the flight of the pass jump to the basketball, nearly completing a 180-degree turn, the offensive player will be able to face cut the defender following the pass.
- The chance of a face cut illustrates the importance and urgent need to jumping toward the basketball on the flight of the pass. This is an important habit to create from the beginning.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Jump to the basketball on the flight of the basketball.
- Urgent movements on flight of basketball.
- Up the line.
- Proper denial stance on catch.



CONCEPT: DENIAL TO ON-BALL DEFENSE

Both of the drills below can be accomplished working with two players, one on offense and one on defense, passing to a coach, closing to the basketball and establishing the correct position whether the pass comes from high or low, to having four players involved. Coaches can place the lines all over the floor to work on footwork at different locations.

DRILL 3: PASS LOW TO HIGH; BASELINE TO WING

- If the pass travels from low to high, transitioning from denial to on-ball defense is more challenging because of the principle to force the ball-handler back toward the baseline.
- Again, on the flight of the basketball, the player will complete a near 180-degree turn, closing out on the top foot of the offensive player, pushing the player back toward the baseline not allowing middle.
- It is important to establish a bit of spacing, depending on the offensive strengths, as the offensive player has a live dribble on the catch.

DRILL 4: PASS HIGH TO LOW; WING TO BASELINE

- If the pass travels from high to low, transitioning from denial to on-ball defense is much easier because of the positioning of the feet up the line.
- The defensive player will close the distance toward the offensive player, staying on the top foot and maintaining the appropriate space for a live ball-handler.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Jump to the basketball on the flight of the basketball.
- Urgent movements on flight of basketball.
- Close to top foot, prepared for live ball-handler.
- Proper stance on catch forward or backward; this is the pivot foot. The other foot can move so that the body may swivel and turn accordingly.
- Instruct players to spin on the ball of the planted foot when they are pivoting, and remain in good basketball position the entire time.
- Players may pivot 180 degrees in either direction. A “front pivot” is where the body turns forward, and a “reverse pivot” is where the body turns backward.



FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL

REBOUNDING



OFFENSIVE REBOUNDING

GENERAL OVERVIEW: Most often, possession of the basketball comes as a result of securing a rebound after a missed shot attempt. Therefore, rebounding — whether offensive or defensive — is an important aspect of basketball to teach. This level will develop a player’s ability to snatch the basketball with both hands, which was taught in the Introductory Level. In addition, players will begin learning what to do with the basketball once it is secured.

SKILL 1

AFTER REBOUND, SCORE OR PASS

This drill teaches players what to do with the basketball once it is secured on an offensive rebound.

- Coaches should remind players on a frequent basis to rebound the basketball from the “ready position” taught in the Introductory Level. This position requires players to extend their hands and arms fully above the head. They must also bend their knees slightly to achieve the maximum height possible when jumping for a rebound.
- Instruct players to snatch the basketball with both hands at the peak of the jump, instead of allowing the basketball to come down to them.
- When a player snatches the basketball, the head and chin should be up, allowing the player to observe the scene.

- At this point, it is important for players to determine whether a shot is available. If no shot is available, the player should pass the basketball out from under the basket to a teammate on the perimeter.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Rebound from the proper ready position.
- Snatch basketball to the chin with both hands.
- Determine whether to shoot or pass.



SKILL 2

FREE-THROW REBOUNDING

When rebounding free throws, the offensive player should line up as far up the lane as possible in the box.

- When the basketball hits the rim, an offensive player should immediately step down the lane hard and quick, to try to beat the inside defender for the rebound.
- This makes it more difficult for the defensive rebounder to make contact and block out the offensive player.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Create as much space as possible from the defensive rebounder.
- Be ready to step down the lane quickly with hands up.
- Eyes should be up at the rim watching when the hits the rim.



DEFENSIVE REBOUNDING

GENERAL OVERVIEW: *In this level, the initial skill for defensive rebounding is taught which includes securing*

the basketball from a missed shot, body positioning, pivoting, and blocking out. After the rebound is the outlet pass, which starts the offensive transition.



SKILL 1

BODY POSITIONING AND BLOCKING OUT

As the basketball is shot, the players must locate their opponents first, achieve an inside position and box out their opponent using a front or rear pivot to get into a position between their opponent and the basket and putting their rear in contact with the opponent. This is done to ensure that the offensive player is behind the defensive player and so that the defensive player can see the flight of the basketball when the shot is taken.

- The first movement is to see where the offensive player is.
- Step toward the offensive player as the shot is attempted.
- Front pivot allows the defensive rebounder to turn while watching the offensive player move toward the rebound.
- Rear pivot is used to move into the path of the offensive player without the same visual contact.
- Encourage defenders to use whichever method gets them in front of the offense, sealing the offensive player away from the basket.
- Once contact is established with an opposing player, the defensive rebounder wants to maintain that contact until releasing to jump for the rebound

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Keep hands up.
- Get the basketball quickly once shot.
- Keep eyes on the basketball as it is shot.
- Secure the basketball.
- Look for an outlet pass or dribble out.



SKILL 2

AFTER REBOUND, PIVOT AND OUTLET PASS

Immediately upon gaining possession of the basketball, the defensive rebounder should land wide with the legs.

- Encourage players to get the rebound at the peak of the jump, with the hands and arms straight.
- The rebounder should bring the basketball quickly and forcefully to the chest, with the top of the basketball at chin height.
- The head should turn over the shoulder toward the best possible outlet area, and the elbows should be spread and wide.
- Protect the basketball by keeping it close to the body at chest height, with the elbows out and each hand on the side of the basketball.
- Try to land on balance with both feet spread.
- After the rebound is secured, the player must look away from the lane area, as this is where most of the players are located.
- Instruct players that a pivot should occur after the rebounder looks for and locates the outlet player.
- Pivot and pass to the perimeter player to start the offensive transition.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Encourage proper rebound form with arms, head, eyes.
- Look away from the lane for outlet.
- Make a pivot to pass to the outlet player.



SKILL 3

FREE-THROW REBOUNDING

For rebounding free throws on defense, the best rebounders should be placed in the positions closest to the basket, as this is where the rebounds generally go.



- Defenders should be in a balanced stance with the knees bent, the hands should be above the waist and their eyes on the rim in anticipation of the missed free throw.
- Step toward the opposite free-throw line corner (elbow) on the miss
- Hands and arms must be extended to go after the missed free throw
- Assume the shot will be missed
- As the basketball hits the rim, the defenders step toward the opposite corner of the free-throw line to block out the offensive rebounder next to them.
- A designated player should also block out the shooter.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Encourage proper rebound form with arms, head, eyes.
- Look away from the lane for outlet.
- Make a pivot to pass to the outlet player.





FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL SCREENING

OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

GENERAL OVERVIEW: Screening is a fundamental skill that should be taught. The Foundational Level will add to the ability to run and stop with body control to set a screen that was a skill in level 1. It is important that the young player at this level knows how to set a proper screen to get a teammate open for a pass and then how to react to the teammate who uses the screen. This level should also be teaching the skill of how to use the screen based on the defender.

SKILL 1

SETTING A SCREEN

The mechanics of setting a screen are developed at the Introductory Level, which is when running and stopping under control are taught.

- Basically, a screen is a jump stop with the knees slightly bent, feet wider than the shoulder, head and chin up, and hands and arms either crossed at the chest or at the hip area for protection.
- The knees cannot be out to the side but must be in a straight line from the hip to the feet.
- It is up to the teammate that is using the screen to come close enough so that his defender will run into the screen.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Feet should be wider than the shoulders.
- Hands and arms should be inside the body.
- Keep knees in a direct line of the hip and feet.



SKILL 2

USING THE SCREEN

Using the screen to get open may look easy but will take repetitions and an understanding of where the defender is located.

- To start with, the player using the screen must make a job step in the direction opposite of how they want to use the screen.
- If the offensive player wants to go over the top of the screen, a step should be taken in the opposite direction first before they cut over the screen.
- When using the screens, the player should stay low. The shoulder should be at the hip of the screener. This will make it difficult for the defender in guarding over the screen.
- Hands should come up as the player comes off the screen to give a good target and be in a ready position to shoot the basketball.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Step opposite from the direction of the intended screen.
- Stay low.
- Hands in a ready position.



SKILL 3

TYPES OF CUTS

The hard part of teaching the use of screens is what type of cuts to make for the offensive player using the screens. This is determined

by the defender. In this level we are working on the types of cuts without a defender. Several types of cuts are introduced and then repeated so the offensive player becomes accustomed to the footwork for each cut.



- There are four cuts to teach using the screen:
- Back cut
- Curl cut
- Flare cut
- Straight cut
- The back cut may be used on a back screen, or if the offensive player refuses the screen. This cut is simply a hard cut to the basket.
- The curl cut is a tight cut around the screen.
- The flare cut is one in which the offensive player steps back from the screener, or when the offensive player will “flare” out to the sideline.
- The straight cut is used to get open at the wing and will come straight out to the wing to receive the pass.
- Regardless of the cut, players should stay low when using screens, with their shoulders at the screener’s hip.
- As for the footwork for proper cuts, players should step high and go low, or step low and go high.
- Hands need to be up to be ready to catch the basketball when making the cut.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Stay low.
- Proper footwork.
- Cutters keep hands ready.



SKILL 4

SCREENER REACTING TO THE CUTS

The screener’s main job is to get set and let a teammate use the screen.

- The screener must watch the teammate to determine which cut to make. When screening, instruct players to keep their feet wider than the shoulders and keep elbows inside the body.

- Once the offensive player cuts off the screen, the screener then reacts to these cuts. Remind screeners to travel in the opposite direction of the cut.
- Many times the player that is the most open to receive a pass is the screener, so hands must be ready to catch the basketball.
- If the offensive player makes a curl cut, the screener must pop out to create proper spacing.
- The screener will roll to the basket on flare cuts or straight cuts.
- Coaches should drill the various footwork frequently to improve footwork.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- The screener must watch his teammate to determine the cut that is made.
- Screener will travel opposite the cut.
- Screener should have hands ready to catch basketball.
- Repetition.



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

GENERAL OVERVIEW: *This is an area that may be very new to the players in the Foundational Level. It is imperative that the teaching be slow when going over defending the screens. At this level, awareness of screens is the most important aspect of defending the screen. In this level, the focus is on defending screens in one of two ways: going over the top of the screen, or “switching” after the screen.*

SKILL 1

GOING OVER THE TOP OF A SCREEN

- First of all, it is important that players are in the proper help side position on defense, so the screener has a much more difficult time setting a good screen.

- To go over the top of screens, instruct players that the top, or inside foot needs to get on top of the screener. This will make it difficult for the offensive player to use the screen.
- As the inside foot goes over the top of the screen, the knees straighten to get over the screen.
- Make sure the inside arm is up to deflect any passes.
- Players may also use an outside arm bar to prevent the offensive player from pushing off into the defender.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Start in good help side position.
- Inside foot goes on top of the screen.
- Knees must straighten.
- Raise the inside arm to deflect the pass.



SKILL 2

SWITCHING

This is probably the easiest way to start teaching defending the off-ball screens.

- As the offensive player uses the screen, both players should talk on the screen with the player who first sees the necessity of it calling it loudly and clearly. The other player answers and completes the switch.
- It is important that both defenders have an awareness of the screen.
- As the offensive player uses the screen, the defender on the screen will call “switch” and take the cutter.
- The defender on the cutter will switch to defending the screener. Now defending the screener, the player should be positioned on the ball-side of the screener to get into a passing lane.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Communicate.
- Both defenders must have an awareness of the screen.
- Get into passing lanes.





FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL

SHOOTING

GENERAL OVERVIEW: Shooting is a necessary fundamental to learn in the game of basketball, as the object of the game is to score the basketball. This level will continue to emphasize the correct skills and mechanics necessary for a solid fundamental shot, which is important to developing players' shooting consistency.

SKILL 1

ONE-HAND FORM SHOOTING

- Standing one step from the front of the rim, with feet balanced, slight knee bend and squared to the rim, the player will begin with one hand underneath the basketball. The palm should be facing upward and the basketball should be held at waist level.
- The guide hand, or “off hand,” will be placed behind the back to allow the player to focus on the mechanics of the shooting hand.
- Once the player has the appropriate grip on the basketball (on the finger pads with a little light between the basketball and the thumb as described in Skill 2 of the Introductory Level), move the basketball from the waist level to the shoulder level. This is a good step for the player to work on basketball control and the importance of using finger pads to do so.
- The elbow should be in a “U” shape, the wrist should be cocked backward, and the basketball should be positioned correctly in the hand. The elbow should be in line with the knee of the shooting hand. Pause briefly at this position to make any corrections before beginning the upward shooting motion.





- Following the pause and any corrections, the player will begin the upward motion, using the shooting arm and legs together for added strength. On the follow-through, the elbow should be slightly ahead of the ear. The middle finger should guide the follow-through, and the hand should end with four fingers pointed toward the floor, as if players are grabbing a cookie out of a jar above their heads.
- The eyes should remain on the target, the rim, until the basketball hits the ground. Ideally, if the follow-through creates the correct backspin (and the basketball does not touch the rim), the basketball will spin back to the shooter off of the bounce without the shooter having to move to grab the basketball.
- Continue to reinforce proper mechanics, rather than makes and misses. As the player becomes comfortable with the skill, change locations on the floor along with the distance from which the player is shooting, careful not to extend too far.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Focus on details of mechanics from beginning to end.
- Encourage proper mechanics rather than makes/misses.
- Upper & lower body work together.



SKILL 2

TWO-HAND FORM SHOOTING

Once the above skill is completed, move the player back to the front of the rim one step from the rim.

DRILL 1: SHOOTING WITHOUT JUMPING

- With the same stance and mechanics listed above, have the player add the guide hand. This hand should be placed on the basketball creating a large spread out “T” with the thumbs of both hands.
- It is important to reinforce that the guide hand is intended to be a guide. The hand should stay with the basketball until just above the head. At this point, the guide hand will stop and allow the shooting hand to complete the shooting motion.

- Beginning players have the tendency to push through the basketball with the guide hand, which is not the purpose of that hand. Continue to reinforce mechanics rather than makes and misses, as the consistency of a player’s shot will develop through repetition of the proper technique.

DRILL 2: SHOOTING WITH A JUMP

- Once the player is comfortable performing the skill, add a small jump to the exercise without increasing distance. This will help players get more familiar with how the upper and lower body works together throughout the shooting motion.
- The player should still remain on balance even with a jump. Ideally, the player will take off from and land in the same or slightly forward spot. Be sure to correct players if the momentum of the jump takes them to the side or backward. It is important to control momentum through movement and jumping.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Reinforce correct shooting mechanics.
- Make sure the guide hand is a guide.
- Hold follow-through.
- When adding jump, pay special attention to momentum.



SKILL 3

TWO-HAND SHOOTING FROM A SELF-PASS

Once the player begins to become comfortable with the mechanics of the form shot, it is important to develop the footwork necessary to shoot a basketball after receiving it on a pass.

- Instruct players to begin in a triple-threat stance, about five feet away from the front of the rim. Players will pass the basketball to themselves by tossing the basketball directly in front of them with the proper backspin, so that it returns after the bounce.

- As the basketball is returning, the player will begin stepping toward the basketball with one foot, followed by the second, resulting in a one-two step. This concept is more commonly known as, “ball in the air, feet in the air.”
- If a player is right handed, it is most natural to lead with the left foot, followed by the right. In this particular instance, the left foot would be considered the “inside foot.”
- When receiving the basketball, it is wise to begin creating a habit of doing so with a bend in the knee. This is important for developing both strength and quickness as the player begins to extend the shooting range. In addition, the player should begin developing an understanding of timing for this type of footwork in order to avoid traveling, while maintaining momentum and quickness.
- It is important to begin this process with players passing to themselves, rather than receiving an actual pass from a teammate or coach. The basketball comes more slowly with this technique, allowing players to develop the correct footwork rather than rushing it. It gives players some control over the learning process and allows them to progress at their own pace.
- Once the player receives the basketball on the inside foot, the player will begin the shooting motion as outlined above. Remind players to receive the basketball low, control the movement during the shooting process, then complete the shot as previously practiced.
- As the player begins to develop the proper footwork, have the player receive the basketball using the opposite footwork. At this level, it is important to begin getting players comfortable receiving the basketball using both feet as the lead.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Receive low.
- “Ball in the air, feet in the air.”
- Control movement.
- Continue to encourage and reinforce proper shooting mechanics.



SKILL 4

TWO-HAND SHOOTING FROM A HOP



Receiving the basketball on a hop tends to present many more issues for players than receiving on the inside foot, so be careful not to compromise proper mechanics just to teach this skill.

- Setting up and finishing this skill is very similar to the process outlined above. The only difference is that the player receives the basketball on a hop rather than on the inside foot.
- Instruct players to use the “ball in the air, feet in the air” technique. In this case however, players will move both feet at the same time instead of one and then the other.
- The timing is critical to avoid traveling, to increase the ability to get the feet set, and to help get the shot off quickly.
- Again, remind players to receive the basketball low, using a quick low jump stop on the catch. It is important to pay close attention to the player’s ability to control momentum during the movement, as it can be more challenging when receiving the basketball off of a hop.
- Once the basketball is received, the player will begin the shooting motion. Change location on the floor, distance from the hoop, and the angle at which the basketball is received as the player improves.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Receive low.
- “Ball in the air, feet in the air.”
- Control momentum during movement.
- Continue to encourage and reinforce proper shooting mechanics.



SKILL 5

FIVE-MINUTE WARM-UP SHOOTING ROUTINE

Many times, players will walk into a gym and immediately begin shooting from the three-point line. Although this may be a fun activity, it does not allow a player to warm up properly or work on shooting mechanics.

- A five-minute warm-up shooting routine players can do every time they walk into a gym may be as simple as performing skills from earlier in this level in succession. For example:
 - Drill — One-Hand Form Shooting; performed one two two steps from the rim;
 - Drill — Two-Hand Form Shooting Without Jumping; performed one to two steps from the rim;
 - Drill — Two-Hand Form Shooting With A Jump; performed four to five steps from the rim; and
 - Drill — Two-Hand Shooting From a Self-Pass; performed six to seven steps from the rim initially, then work on increasing distance.
- Just as above, vary locations on the court along with varying distances as long as the player is able to maintain form, mechanics and technique with the variations.
- Emphasize that this type of shooting routine should be used every time upon entering the gym to help warm up, as well as to create good habits.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Reinforce all technical concepts above.
- Encourage mechanics rather than makes and misses.



SKILL 6

LAYUPS

DRILL 1: FROM THE STRONG SIDE

- To begin learning the footwork and technique of a layup, it is best to begin without using a dribble.
- Starting two steps from the basket, while concentrating on the strong side first. For purposes of explanation, the right side will serve as the strong side.
- Have the player stand at a 45-degree angle on the right side of the basket, two steps away, holding the basketball at waist level. The player will then take one step with the right foot, then plant the left foot, driving the right knee upward.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Develop correct footwork and proper knee drive
- Use both hands.
- Control momentum.
- Use the backboard properly.
- Develop comfort level using a dribble into footwork.



SKILL 7

SHOOTING FROM A PASS WHILE STATIONARY

This skill is similar to Skill 3, but the difference is that players will receive the basketball from a teammate or coach rather than from themselves. The biggest adjustment for the player will be developing timing with the footwork while receiving the basketball from another individual.

- Remind players to use the “ball in the air, feet in the air” technique.
- Players will square themselves to the basket, standing approximately six to 10 inches away. The individual passing the basketball should do so from the under the rim in order to keep the shooter squared to the basket.
- As the pass is made, the shooter will step with one foot at a time, beginning with the inside foot in the one-two step pattern described above. Then, the shooter will receive the basketball low and progress upward into the shot. The player will work on receiving with the one foot first, then switch feet.
- Once the one-two step pattern becomes comfortable, players may begin receiving the basketball on a hop.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- “Ball in the air, feet in the air.”
- Receive low.
- Control momentum.
- Reinforce correct shooting mechanics over makes/misses.



SKILL 8

SHOOTING OFF A PASS; RECEIVING IN THE ONE-TWO STEP PATTERN

When first learning the footwork into a shot, it is best to create a natural angle that leads to an easy square-up. For example, having the player make a straight cut from the wing to the elbow and receiving the basketball from the opposite elbow will lead to a natural inside foot (one-two step) square-up.

- From the wing, the shooting player will begin cutting toward the elbow with the pass arriving at the same time as the shooter. The shooter will plant the inside foot and square up with the outside foot.
- Squaring up and catching the basketball low are both important in order to have leg strength behind the shot. Further, the player will need to change the momentum of the cut to use the momentum in the actual shot, elevating straight up or slightly forward from the take off point.
- At this level, getting comfortable with the different components is important and being able to get the body to work together throughout the shot, rather than working against itself.
- Once the player gets comfortable with this footwork, move the player to the other side of the court to use the opposite foot as the inside foot. As the player gains confidence in the footwork on both sides, adjust the angle from which the player receives the basketball, making some more challenging than others.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- “Ball in the air, feet in the air.”
- Timing of footwork.
- Square all the way to rim with shoulders.
- Catch low.
- Control and change momentum from cut to enhance shot.
- Reinforce proper mechanics with shot.



- In an effort to help players remember which knee drives upward, you can provide the visual of a string being attached to the right knee and the right elbow. As the right elbow rises to shoot the layup, the string will pull the right knee upward with it.
- The right knee and right elbow will rise simultaneously, allowing the player to drive upward, jump toward the backboard, and shoot the basketball with the right hand.
- Remind players to follow through with the layup, just as they had done in the previous shooting skills.
- Players should aim to hit the square on the backboard. The momentum from the steps should lead players straight up or slightly ahead of where they took off. The momentum should be more upward, rather than straight outward toward the baseline.
- Once players get comfortable with the footwork, allow the player to move backward a step and add a dribble. Make sure they still end in a right-then-left stepping pattern, driving the right knee upward on the layup attempt.
- As a player improves, two dribbles can be added, etc.
- It is important to keep the player at a 45-degree angle to create the habit of shooting layups from this position. This is the ideal angle from which layups should be performed in a game, as it increases the likelihood of using the backboard and making the shot.

DRILL 1: FROM THE WEAK SIDE

- After the player gets comfortable on the strong side, begin layups from the weak side. Remind players to drive the opposite knee upward and use the opposite hand to shoot the basketball.
- Encourage players to use the weak hand, even if they are unable to make a basket. Having the ability to use both hands is critical to players' development.
- Work through the same process as above until the footwork and use of the weak side becomes more comfortable.



SKILL 9

SHOOTING OFF A PASS; RECEIVING ON A HOP

This skill is the same as detailed in Skill 8, except that the player will receive the basketball while both feet are in the air, catching it on a hop.

- It is important to concentrate on catching the basketball low to add strength to the shot. Remind players to control the momentum of the cut, as well.
- The hop allows more freedom of movement for the player, but this is not always used positively. Sometimes, players fade to the side or backward. Ensure that any momentum from the cut itself goes straight upward or slightly forward on the shot.
- If learned properly, the hop can be used to get a shot off more quickly than by using a one-two step pattern. It is critical that the fundamentals are learned correctly in order to provide strength for the shot, especially as the player attempts to extend shooting range.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- All of the points outlined in Skill 8.
- Special emphasis on catching low and controlling momentum of cut.



SKILL 10

SHOOTING OFF OF THE DRIBBLE IN THE ONE-TWO STEP PATTERN

Similar to above, it is best to introduce this skill by using an easy angle on the basketball floor for the player to successfully square to the rim off of the dribble.

- Beginning with the player at the free-throw line, have the player take one dribble at a desirable angle in the direction of the shooting hand. For purposes of this explanation, the player will take one dribble to the right.



- As the dribble is taken, the player will plant the inside foot, in this case the left foot, followed by the outside foot, or right foot. It will be important that the player brings the outside foot all the way around the body to fully square to the rim.
- As described above, the player will want to go into the footwork low to add strength to the shot. Remind players to control the momentum of the cut, as well.
- Again, the player should land where the shot started, or just slightly ahead of that spot.
- Instruct the player to receive the basketball from the floor directly into the shooting pocket while the footwork is being executed. Once the footwork is complete and the player is fully squared, the player will rise to complete a shot as outlined above.
- Once the player becomes comfortable with the footwork on the strong side, change directions to the weak side. This side can be more challenging due to the dribble being on the opposite side of where the shot will originate.
- As the player takes a dribble to the left, the player will plant the inside foot, or right foot in this instance, followed by the outside foot, or the left foot.
- Squaring up to the rim properly and controlling momentum are very important.
- Remember that the player will need to get the basketball from the left side of the body to the right side in order to shoot the basketball.
- Many players will want to accomplish this by using a crossover dribble, but it would likely get stolen in the presence of a live defender. Therefore, instruct players to dribble with the left hand, which will require them to shift the basketball over to the right hand in mid air without an additional dribble.
- If the player really pounds the basketball into the floor on the last dribble, it can help execute this shift more quickly.
- Once the basketball is in the shooting pocket and the player is squared, rise up and shoot a shot as described previously.
- As players improve, use more difficult shooting angles and incorporate additional dribbles.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Full square-up to the rim.
- Start low into the square-up.
- Control momentum for strength.
- Get the basketball from the floor to shooting pocket as quickly as possible.
- No extra dribbles.
- Reinforce proper shooting mechanics.



SKILL 11

FREE THROWS

There are many theories concerning the right way to shoot a free throw: jumping versus no jumping, long routine versus short routine, etc. The approach does not seem to be the most important; the consistency is.

- Players should develop a routine that is comfortable for them and that they are committed to completing during every single free throw attempt. The consistency allows players to develop muscle memory so that they do not have to focus on technique or mechanics during a stressful game situation.
- The more consistency and successful repetition there is in the routine, the more confidence a player will have with the free throw process.
- The routine should be short enough for the player to be able to catch the basketball from the official, complete the routine and release the basketball all within 10 seconds.
- The shot itself should contain the same mechanics and shooting fundamentals as outlined through the entire level, ending with a solid follow-through with the middle finger over the center of the rim.
- At this level, work on developing the preferred routine for each player's free throw. Then, repeat the routine to increase consistency.
- Also, work on a player's ability to execute the chosen routine at the free-throw line while others are watching, as this will be the case in a game. This will require a great deal of focus and concentration from the free-throw line, which is great to begin developing early on.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Develop routine.
- Execute same routine with consistency; repetition.
- Encourage focus and concentration from free-throw line.
- Encourage carryover from all shooting fundamentals/mechanics.
- Focus on technique rather than makes/misses.



FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL

TEAM DEFENSIVE CONCEPTS



GENERAL OVERVIEW: Level 2 defensive team concepts are introduced with the half court team defense gradually progressing from one on one to two on two, three on three, four on four and finally five on five team defensive concepts. Help side defense is introduced along with rotations when the offense breaks down the defense. Defending the passing lanes, defending off ball screens and defensive transition are introduced in level 2 as part of the defensive concepts.

SKILL 1

ON-BALL DEFENSE

- Stance wider than the shoulders, eyes on the waist of the offensive player, inside foot up, inside hand down and head lower than the shoulders of the offensive player.
- The best drill for this on ball defense is to start the offensive player with the ball on one baseline. The offensive player will v cut on his third of the court back and forth while dribbling to the opposite baseline. The defender will be in proper position while guarding the dribbler one on one full court.
- The alley drill starts at the wing position with the offensive player restricted to an “alley” to the basket using cones as boundaries. The defender stays in the proper stance and works to stop the offensive player from getting to the basket for the shot.
- Play one on one starting at any position on the half court restricting the offensive player to one or two dribbles. The defender works on keeping between the offensive player and the basket. On the shot, the defender works on getting the hand up high, calling out shot and boxing out.
- The “cone drill” starts the players on the baseline with the player closest to the sideline with the ball.



- The cones are set several steps in front of the half court line about six feet apart with the offensive player and defensive player facing the cones on the baseline.
- On command by the coach, the offensive player dribbles out hard to the cone in front of him and the defensive player sprints around his cone and gets in position to play defense on the dribbler.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Usually the player who stays the lowest wins the battle so it is important that the defender's head is lower than the offensive players shoulders.
- The inside foot is the foot closest to the rim line which should be up in the staggered stance. This will force the offensive player to the sideline/baseline rather than the middle.
- As the dribbler works the defender down the court in v cut fashion, the defender will drop step with each change of direction of the dribbler.
- The defender must finish all the one on one drills by getting the hand up, calling out shot and boxing out the offensive player.
- The defender must try to force the offensive player to use his weak hand in a one on one situation.
- The key to the defenders footwork is to move the foot first in the direction he will go to stop the dribbler.

SKILL 2

DENY THE BALL

- The deny position of the defender is to not allow the offensive player to catch the ball in a position where he would like to catch.
- The deny position is knees bent with the chest facing the offensive player. The inside hand is up and out with the thumb down and the palm of the hand open to the offensive player with the ball.
- The chin is turned to the ball and is on the shoulder so the defender can see both ball and the offensive player he is guarding who is working to get open for the pass.



- The top foot of the defender is higher or above the offensive players foot in order to deny the pass directly to the receiver.
- The coach starts with the ball at the top of the key with the offensive and defensive player at the wing position. The offensive player will work to get open by making any type of offensive move – v cut, L cut, seal cut – while the defensive player works to deny the pass.
- Once/if the pass is complete the offensive player will make a move to score going one on one against the defender who was in deny position.
- The drill progresses to two on two with the guard at the top being defended and the offensive player at the wing working to receive the ball against a defender.
- Three on three allows both wing positions to be the potential receivers against a defender with the offensive player at the top trying to enter the pass to the teammate on either wing.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- It is important for the defensive player to keep a distance of about 3-4 feet from the offensive player who is working to receive the pass. The defender must not allow the offensive player to “get into his body” and then make a move to get open.
- The deny position does not necessarily result in steals but will make the offensive player work to receive the pass outside of his normal area.
- The arm and lead foot should be in the passing lane – which is the line between the ball and the offensive player. Even though the defender is in deny position he must be aware of the potential to help stop the dribble from the offensive player at the top if he is able to get around his defender.
- Two on two or three on three are excellent methods to implement the one on one defense and the deny defense together.

HELP SIDE DEFENSE

- Help side defense is the first concept in putting the team defense together in order to create a defensive unit
- The strong side is the side of the court that contains the ball. The rim line is the divider for the strong side and the help side. The help side is the side of the court that does not contain ball.
- The help side defense is predicated on the ball line which is the path of the ball from the offensive player on one side of the court to the offensive player on the opposite side of the court.
- The help side defender should always be one step off the ball line in order to be able to see the ball and his man.
- A good teaching introductory drill is to have a defender and offensive player on one side of the court with the coach on the opposite or ball side of the court. The defender is in proper stance and position on help side one step off the ball line pointing one hand to the ball and one hand to the offensive player.
- As the coach moves dribbling the ball from the baseline to the wing the defender on the help side will adjust his help side defense as the ball line will move. The offensive player on the help side stays in one spot while the coach dribbles to new positions.
- The coach with the ball now stays in one spot while the offensive player on the help side moves up and down from the baseline to the wing with the defender adjusting his help side position to keep one step off the ball line.
- Progress to two on two with going from help side to strong side by the defenders. The ball starts on one side with the offensive player holding the ball in triple threat position. The defender is in good on ball position. The help side defender is in a good ball – you – man triangle positioned off the ball line.
- The offensive player skips the ball to the opposite wing. The defenders now will move from ball side to help side and help side to ball side as the ball is passed.
- The drill progresses two on two with the offensive player dribbling baseline to wing and then making the skip pass with the defenders maintaining proper position moving on air time of the pass.

- Adding a top offensive player and two wings will make this drill a three on three drill. The offensive player at the top starts with the ball and initiates a pass to the wing. The defenders now play deny defense on the wings and on ball defense at the top and then moving to a help side and ball side defense when the pass is completed at the wing position.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- The help side defender needs to be in a defensive stance at all times and be ready to move quickly when his offensive player moves or when the ball moves.
- The ball line continually changes as the ball moves and the players move on the court and the defender must be adjusting his position.
- The rim line is an imaginary line that goes from rim to rim and is a focal point for the defender to be in good help side position.
- A big emphasis is the position of the help side defender depending on where the ball is located. If the ball is above the free throw line extended the help side defender is one step off the rim line to the offensive player. If the ball is below the free throw line extended, the defender's head is on the rim line.
- The key to being in great defensive position when moving from help side to ball side or ball side to help side is to move on air time of the ball being passed. The defender then will be in great position when the pass is received by the offensive player.
- The ball side defender must pivot on inside foot and turn to sprint to the rim line to be in good position when the ball is caught by the opposite wing.
- When playing three on three the defenders must move from deny position to help side as the ball is passed from wing to top to wing.

SKILL 4

ROTATION DEFENSE

- Rotation on defense occurs when the offense breaks down the defense by beating or getting by the on ball defender with the use of the dribble.
- When the dribbler beats the defender, the help side defenders must rotate to stop the dribbler from getting to the basket.
- The main rule for rotation is rotate over and down. This simply means to rotate to the ball and then down to cover the helper. Help the helper is this term the players must understand.
- The best way to teach the rotation should start with two on two. The ball starts at the wing with an on ball defender. The help side defender is on the rim line in a position to guard the offensive player on the help side.
- As the offensive player dribbles toward the baseline, the help side defender adjusts his position to keep in a good ball-you-man triangle set while staying on the rim line.
- If the offensive player gets around the on ball defender and goes baseline to the basket, the help side defender must slide over to stop the dribbler preferably outside the lane on the ball side of the court.
- Progressing to three on three rotation, the help side wing defender would slide over to stop the ball on the baseline while the top defender would slide down to cover the wing and the pass across the lane using the over and down rotation concept.
- The four on four allows for the full rotation. Ball is dribbled baseline from the wing. The opposite wing slides/run over to stop the dribbler outside the lane on ball side. This may end up in a trap situation or just a ball stop. The top guard on the help side slides down to cover the lane and pass across the lane. The ball side guard defender then drops to the middle of the lane to prevent a middle lane pass.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- The defenders must always be in a position to see the ball and see the offensive player they are guarding in order to make the proper rotation when the dribbler beats the on ball defender.
- The help side defender must be in position to rotate to the ball and stop the offensive player outside the lane if the offensive player goes baseline past the on ball defender.
- The defender on the ball should be shading the dribbler to go to the baseline so the rotation can stay constant with the over and down concept.
- On the four on four work, the defender at the wing who gets beat baseline now goes to the lane area to take away the middle pass.

SKILL 5

DEFENDING THE BALL SCREENS

- Defending off ball screens involves communication and the ability of the defenders to react to the off ball screen which many times takes place on the help side of the court.
- Off ball screen defenders need to stay in a stance and keep in proper help side ball-you-man position.
- As the offensive player sets the screen off the ball, the defender that is guarding the screener steps back to create a “window” for his teammate who is guarding the player using the screen to slide behind the screen and continue guarding his player.
- The defenders need to stay wide in good basketball position with the arms out to help them adjust to the screener.
- The switch may also occur on the off ball screen by the defenders if the defender that is guarding the screener calls out screen and then switch to indicate to his teammate that he will take the player using the screen.
- After the switch is made the defender who is switching on the screener will be quick to get on ball side of the screener if he rolls.

- The defender guarding the player using the screen may also work to get over the top of the screen by getting his lead foot on the top of the screener and this allows for the defender to stay with his offensive player as he uses the screen.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- If the defenders are in proper help side position it will be much harder for the offensive players to set the screen.
- The help side defenders must always see the ball and their man in order to get through the off ball screen.
- By creating a “window” the defender guarding the player using the screen can easily avoid the screen.
- The key is to communicate by calling out screen by the defender if your offensive player is the one setting the screen.
- The switch is very good to stop a good shooter from getting the ball as the shooter will be defended by the screeners defender who should jump in the passing lane.
- If the defender tries to stay with his player by going over the top of the screen he must push his chest into the player using the screen and bring the rear end in to make his body as “thin” as possible in order to get over the screen
- Keep in mind the screener may roll or pop to get open for a pass after the screen is set.
- The key for defending the off ball screen is to communicate, stay in defensive position and have an awareness of what can happen for the offensive player.

SKILL 6

DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

- Defensive transition is important to stop easy baskets by the offensive team pushing the ball up the court in a fast break situation.
- As the shot is taken, the designated offensive player – usually the point guard- should be the first player back to stop the initial fast break.
- The first defender back should not allow any offensive player to get behind him for an easy basket or a pass over the top him.

- The second defender back should be in a position at the top of the key with the first defender in the lane.
- This may create a three on two situation which would involve the back defender taking the first pass – usually to the wing – with the top defender dropping to the middle of the lane taking the pass away across the lane.
- The third player defending the transition should read the situation but most often will cover the free throw line area as this area is open when the top defender drops down to cover the lane pass the fourth and fifth defenders after sprinting down the court will read what offensive player is open and cover this area which is usually the weak side area and the post area.
- The drill – 3 on 2 with trailer – is a good defensive transition drill for this age group. Two teams are on the sidelines with the first player in line at the center line for each team.
- The drill starts with two defenders in tandem in the lane and three offensive players bringing the ball into the offensive end.
- The offensive tries to attack the two defenders and score. When the ball crosses the half court line a third defender runs and touches the middle circle and then is the third defender vs three offensive players.
- Two defenders from the other team also run to touch the half court line and sprint to the opposite end and make a tandem to prepare to defend the three players who are on defense and will be in transition.
- The three defenders will go to offense with the offensive players going to the back of their team line.
- Each time the ball is crossed at the half line three player come in the action, two new defenders and one defender to add to the two that are in the game.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- The first defender back – point guard – must try to stop the offensive player dribbling downcourt. His main responsibility is to slow, stop or push the dribbler to the side of the court and “buy time” to allow his teammates to catch up and help stop the transition.
- The pass across the lane is one in which the offensive team may try to make most of the time so it is important the top defender drops down to cover this pass which may leave the free throw line area open.
- The 3 on 2 trailer work allows for both offensive and defensive work in a transition situation.
- Communication is the key to stopping a good transition team. Stopping the ball first which allows time for the defenders to get back in defensive transition.
- A good defensive transition team must sprint to the lane area first and then scramble to find the offensive players to guard.



FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL

TEAM OFFENSIVE CONCEPTS



GENERAL OVERVIEW: *In this level, the players are ready for more organized offensive tactics such as advantage opportunities in transition, lane responsibilities in the transition, half-court spacing, off-basketball screening, attacking, and movement without the basketball. Motion concepts are now introduced with the players playing all positions rather than being labeled as a post, point guard, or wing. Position skills are now being developed within the framework of the motion offense. Inbounding the basketball is now a vital part of the offense.*

SKILL 1

ADVANTAGE OPPORTUNITIES IN TRANSITION

- The transition is started either with an outlet pass from the rebounder to a teammate positioned downcourt or with a dribble by the rebounder.
- Once the basketball is advanced by the guard from the outlet pass, the player must center the basketball as quickly as possible at the midpoint between the two sidelines.
- As the transition begins, there should be one cutter on each side of the basketball filling the outside lanes of the court which was drilled in the Introductory Level.
- The decision making occurs by the player with the basketball in the middle of the court which must be drilled and executed in practice situations.
- Several rules determine the decisions – make only as many passes for the transition basket as there are defenders. For example if a two offensive vs one defensive situation occurs, a shot should be taken after one pass. If a three offensive players vs two defenders occurs, the shot should be taken after two passes.

- The middle player with the basketball needs to look to advance the basketball to the cutters on the sideline as soon as possible and then fill the free-throw line elbow closest to the cutter to possibly get the basketball back for a shot or pass to the opposite cutter.
- As the basketball is advanced, the remaining two players will run to the low post and high post opposite the middle player.
- Drill the advantage opportunities starting at ½ court. Two offensive players start at half court with one defender in the lane. One of the offensive players will dribble the basketball at the defender and then make a decision as to either pass or shoot depending on the reaction of the defender.
- Start with three lines at half court with two defenders in a tandem position – one defender at the free-throw line area and the other one under the basket. As the basketball is passed to the cutter, the bottom defender will guard the first pass with the top defender dropping down under the basket to take away the pass from wing to wing. This leaves the passer open who has filled the area of the free-throw line elbow.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- The fast break is not started until the defensive team gains possession of the basketball to transition to offense. Players must not anticipate possession and start the transition early.
- The pass is the best option to start the transition as this is a faster way to move the basketball downcourt.
- It is advantageous to have a cutter on one side being slightly ahead of the cutter on the opposite side of the court.
- The basketball should not be passed from sideline cutter to sideline cutter as the defender should drop to stop this pass.
- The best pass to make from one sideline is to the middle player who passed the basketball now at the free-throw line area.
- When a two-on-one situation occurs, the best pass to make is the bounce pass when the defender stops the dribble.
- When the three-on-two situation occurs, the second pass should go to the middle player who is at the free-throw line elbow. There may be a third pass if the bottom defender rushes to close out on the middle player leaving the opposite wing open.

SKILL 2 LANE RESPONSIBILITIES IN TRANSITION



- The responsibilities for running the lane in this level involve all five players in an organized transition – lanes include two outside lanes, two inside lanes and a middle lane.
- Start with two lines – one on the baseline and one at the wing on the same side as the baseline. The first player in the baseline line will face the basket and throw the basketball up on the backboard, jump, and reach to secure the rebound.
- The first player in the line at the wing is the outlet. He will call outlet as the basketball is secured by his teammate. Hands are up and his back is parallel to the sideline.
- The rebounder will throw an overhead pass to the outlet player and then sprint to the outside lane for a layup at the opposite basket.
- The outlet player will dribble to the middle of the floor and then make the pass to the rebounder for a layup. The dribbler will dribble hard to the free-throw line elbow area and make the pass.
- The players will switch positions and return in the same method – the rebounder now is the outlet and the outlet is now the rebounder.
- The drill continues with three lines – two wing lines and one baseline line. The rebounder throws the basketball off the backboard and will pass to the outlet player on his side. He follows his pass to fill the outside lane.
- The outlet player will dribble the basketball to the middle of the court and make a pass to the opposite wing who has filled the outside lane for a layup. The rebounder will be in good position for a rebound and the dribbler will stop at the free-throw line for a possible pass back.
- Continue the drill adding another baseline line. The drill now is four players with the baseline player not rebounding the basketball filling one of the inside lanes opposite the dribbler and will stop at the top of the key opposite the dribbler for a reversal pass.
- A fifth line is added – this player will run the rim line which is the line going from rim to rim looking for a pass from the middle player or the wing player.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- As the basketball is shot all five players must be in rebounding position to gain possession of the basketball to start the transition.
- The outlet player must call out outlet to let the rebounder know where he is located for the outlet pass.
- All players must rotate to each spot in the drill which will make them familiar with all the transition lanes.
- Instead of an outlet pass, the rebounder may dribble the basketball away from the basket first and then make an outlet pass off the dribble.
- When the player runs the rim line, the dribbler may pass him the basketball for an easy basket or the basketball may be passed from dribbler to outside lane then to the player running the rim line.

SKILL 3

HALF-COURT SPACING

This was covered in the Introductory Level, but now we have half-court spacing in relation to trying to score in a half-court setting

- Start with three players – one at the top of the key and one at each wing at the free-throw line extended.
- The top player starts with the basketball and passes to one of the wing players. After the pass, the player will make a basket cut.
- The opposite wing makes a direct cut to the free-throw line and looks for the pass. If he does not receive a pass, he goes to the top of the key and replaces the player who made a basket cut to keep the proper spacing.
- The player making the basket cut goes opposite the basketball to the wing replacing the player who made the direct cut for the basketball.
- As the basketball gets passed from the wing to the top of the key, the wing who passed the basketball will execute a cut to get open for a possible pass back to him.
- The basketball gets passed from the top of the key to the opposite wing and a basket cut is made. The opposite wing who originally caught the pass is now the direct cutter to the

- basketball at the free-throw line area and will pop out to the top of the key if no pass is made to him at the free-throw line area.
- This drill can now expand to a five-player half-court spacing drill with two additional players now on the baseline. The players simply fill five positions – start with the wing and baseline players exchanging position or the wings setting a screen for the baseline players.
 - The drill starts as previously with the player at the top of the key making a basket cut after a pass to the wing. The baseline player moves to the wing after the wing makes his direct cut to the basketball and fills the top of the key. The cutter now goes baseline opposite the basketball.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- The wing players must move to get open for a pass by executing one of the cuts to get open – V cut, L cut or seal cut.
- On basket cuts, the player should take a jab step in the opposite direction first to set up his defensive player.
- The wing making a direct cut to the basketball must have his hands up ready to catch a pass from the wing. On the pass, he will pivot on his inside foot and square up to the basket in triple-threat position for a shot or a drive.
- Proper spacing after cuts is sometimes difficult. Putting tape on the floor with X's may help the players realize proper spacing at half court.
- As the players move they should change speed and direction to be hard to guard for the defenders.
- Hands should be up ready to catch the basketball when making the cut to the basketball.

SKILL 4

ATTACKING AND MOVEMENT WITHOUT A BASKETBALL

- At this level, attacking and movement without the basketball is extremely important and the best drill to teach this is called Cuthroat.

- This is a fast paced drill with teams of four lined up on the baseline side by side. Each team should have a different color of jersey to easily distinguish who is on each team.
- The coach is near the half court circle and is the cutthroat referee. He makes all calls and is the only referee for the drill. If another coach is available, he will be placed on the baseline to make sure the next team comes on the court at the proper time.
- There are three main rules for the offensive team – on every catch the player must square up to the basket, after a pass the player must move and on a made basket the player must turn and point to the passer and yell thank you.
- The offensive team works to score a basket within the framework of the rules and will stay on offense if they scored.
- If the offensive team does not score or exits due to not performing one of the rules, the defensive team goes to offense and the new team on the court is always on defense.
- After a score or change of possession the basketball is quickly passed to the coach out front and the coach will make the pass to the offensive team to start the new offensive possession.
- The drill works best with three or more teams involved.
- Keeping track of the teams wins and losses from day to day makes the drill very competitive.
- Teams may be changed each day so the players do not have the same players as teammates each day.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- The team must come on the court in a very quick manner or the coach may tell them to go back to the end of the line.
- The referee coach may take points away or have the team skip a turn for poor body language on a call or for exiting the court too slowly.
- If one of the rules is not done in a timely manner the basket will not count and that team will be told to exit the court. Example on a made basket, if the player is too slow to point and thank the passer, the basket will not count.



- Other rules may be added as the game is more familiar for the players such as limiting dribbles to one or two, must have all players touch the basketball before a shot can be taken, basketball must be passed from strong to help side before a shot or any other rule that the coach would like to use for help in the offense.
- If the basketball is caught and dribbled immediately, this is a violation of the squaring up rule as the player must first catch and square up before putting the basketball on the floor.

SKILL 5

ON-BALL SCREENING

- When teaching off basketball screening, it is best to start with two on two situations with the screener going away from the basketball to set a screen.
- As the screen is being set, the player using the screen keeps his eye on the defender which will dictate his movement.
- The two on two drill starts with the player making a pass to the coach. The player can start at the top of the key and pass to the coach at the wing.
- The passer then will set a screen for his teammate who is at the opposite wing. The player using the screen will take a v-cut in the opposite direction he would like to go to set the defender up to run into the screen.
- This should be done at various positions on the court - start the passer at the wing and the coach at the top of the key with the screen being set for a teammate at the block.
- The passer can be in the post area – block – and make the pass to the coach at the wing and set a screen across the lane for a teammate on the opposite block.
- This is easily expanded into a three on three drill which is a great way to teach many basketball skills. Instead of passing the basketball to a coach, the basketball is now passed to a teammate that is being defended. Three-on-three develops the players skills before moving on to four-on-four or five-on-five situations.
- The cutthroat drill mentioned previously would be a great drill to teach off-ball screening. One of the rules for the passer would be that after every pass they must go screen a teammate off the basketball.

- The cutthroat drill may start with a down screen on each wing to the block area so the coach – referee – will pass the basketball to the offensive player using an off-ball down screen.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- The screener always gets a good base with the feet wider than the shoulders and slight knee bend. The arms and elbows need to be inside the body to avoid illegal screens.
- The player using the screen should not watch the basketball but should keep his eye on the defender.
- The player using the screen must be able to execute a good v cut and keep his hands and fingers up as he uses the screen so he is already in position to catch and shoot or make a quick move.
- The basketball action of using the screen must be one in which the player changes direction and changes speed so he is “hard to guard.”

SKILL 6

MOTION CONCEPTS

- Motion concepts have already been touched on in several places and is the basis for most offenses.
- A simple motion offense can occur from a set with a point guard, two wings and two baseline players which is probably the most common motion set to start the offense.
- The offense may also start with two guards on top with two wings and a single baseline player in the post or on the baseline area.
- The smaller quicker team will want to spread the court and create opportunities for drives to the basket. A five-out allows for good spacing that will be effective for drives to the basket because it keeps the middle of the court open.
- Court balance is necessary to allow the offense to make passes and cuts. The spacing as talked about previously is always 12 to 15 feet apart.
- Keeping the middle or lane area open is a very good offensive maneuver because it enables the cutters to cut through the lane to receive the basketball without much defensive traffic.

- When a player cuts to the basket and does not receive a pass the player should continue through and fill an open spot on the side of the court with the fewer players – usually the opposite side where the player came – which will keep the middle open and the floor balanced.
- When a player makes a cut, the player who is the next player away from the cutting player should move in quickly to the vacated area.
- When replacing a player at the point, the new player should fill wide above the three point line creating a better passing angle. This is a great opportunity to reverse the basketball to the other side of the court and make a basket cut.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- Spacing the court can become an offense as this gives the players freedom to move but also gives some structure to the offense.
- Proper spacing of 12-15 feet will make it more difficult for the defenders to double team and will allow better opportunities for screens and cuts.
- Offensive players should be spaced high at the top, wide on the wings and at the midpoints between the basket and the corners on the baseline.
- Motion concepts are easier taught from a three on three situation before moving on to a five-on-five situation.
- Players must be aware that they should not stay in the post area – high post, mid post or low post – for more than three seconds. A violation will occur after three seconds and the middle area will get congested if the player continues to go into the post area.
- Moving to a vacated spot is important when the player has to cut from the top position – top of the key – because floor balance is needed for a rebound and defensive transition.
- The top position – top of the key – needs to be covered by different players. This occurs due to players moving to different spots on the floor in response to defensive movement.