

Ball Handling Drills

Banana squeeze

This is a drill that helps increase the strength in your fingers. Hold the ball in front of you at eye level with two hands. By squeezing your fingers and thumb together, you move the ball from one hand to the other as quickly as possible. Before long, you will be an excellent banana squeezer!

Body circles

Circle the ball around your head, and then around your waist, and then around your knees; then go around your waist again and now your head. Try to go as fast as you can, and be sure to practice in both directions. With practice, you can go real fast and look like a pro.

Catch-catch-catch

Hold the ball between your legs, with both hands on the ball, right hand in front and the left hand in the back. Quickly switch your hands, (now left hand in front and the right hand in the back), without letting the ball touch the ground. Do as quickly as possible... this drill is one of the hardest to master... but it just takes lots of practice.

Dribbling through the legs- figure 8

Dribble the ball as quickly as possible in a figure 8 through and around the legs. Use the fingers and dribble very low and quickly. Switch from the right to the left and back to the right. Example: start with the right hand dribbling the ball in front and then dribble through your legs with the right hand; then switch to your left hand and dribble from the back, around your left side to the front and back through your legs... then take over with your right hand behind the body and around the right side. Try to go as fast as possible, and your dribbling skills will improve with practice

Passing through the legs- figure 8

Pass the ball through the legs from one hand to the other in a figure 8. Go as fast as you can and be sure that you practice in both directions. Example: With the ball in your right hand, pass it through your legs from the front to the back to the left hand; bring the ball around your left side to the front and pass the ball through your legs front to back to your right hand. Before long you will look like a pro.

Pass & Catch

With two hands, make a bounce pass between your legs from front to back and catch it with two hands behind you. Then make a bounce pass through your legs from the back to the front and catch the ball in front of your body. This is a good drill for body awareness.

Side to side dribble

In this drill, using one hand, push the ball as far to the left as possible and then back to the right as far as possible. Tip: hand placement on the ball is on top and to the outside so that you can push the ball the other way.

Sit-up dribble

While doing bent-knee sit-ups, dribble up with your right hand as you sit up and around your feet, then switch hands to your left as you go back down, and then dribble up with your left hand, around your feet, switch back to your right hand and go back down while dribbling with your right. Continue as quickly as possible.

Dribble...touch, touch, touch, touch

This is another ball-handling drill that seems very difficult at first, but with practice, improves your handles. This drill is called touch-touch-touch-touch because that is what you do. While keeping the ball between your legs, you dribble once with your right hand in front, once with your left hand in front, then right hand in back, and then left hand in back. Use your fingers to dribble. Continue

in this manner (right, then left in front...right, then left in back... repeat) as fast as you can. Before long, your handles will improve.

Up and back dribble

This is a great ball handling drill. With the right hand, and a stance with your left foot in front and your right foot in back and your knees bent; dribble with your right hand on the side of your body front to back and back to front. In order to dribble from the front to the back, you must place your hand on top and towards the front of the ball and push the ball to the back. When you dribble from back to front, you must place your hand on the top and rear of the ball to push it to the front again. Practice with both hands in order to develop both hands.

Coaching

Make your practices both fun for your players and motivational. Work on the fundamentals everyday in practice...jump stops, pivoting, passing, shooting, boxing out and defense, and your team's performance will improve. Incorporate hustle into your practices. Have high expectations and your players will live up to your expectations.

Defense

Basic defensive stance

Get on the balls of your feet (not your heels), with your feet wider than your shoulders and your toes in a heel-toe alignment, with your knees bent, like you are sitting in a chair (butt down and your back straight), arms out with your palms up, with your elbows bent a little, ready to move in either direction. Your nose should be at your man's chest level. When your center of gravity (hips) is low, you are quicker to change directions, which is extremely important in playing defense.

Close down

This is a strategy to use when you are coming to defend a player from a distance away, such as help defense on a skip pass. What you do is sprint half way to your player and then use quick, choppy steps with your head and shoulders back to slow you down (so the offensive player doesn't dribble around you).

Defending the 3 on 2 fast break

When defending the 3 on 2 fast break, the quicker of the two defenders, Player A, stops the ball at the top of the key. The second defender, Player B, who starts in the middle near the basket, takes the first pass. Player A then drops down to defend a pass across to the 3rd offensive player. If the ball goes back up to guard at the top of the key, then the nearest defender takes him, and the other defender has the next pass.

1 pass away defense (Denial defense)

When your man is one pass away, you must deny your player from getting the ball and maintain a defensive triangle... the ball, you, and your man all in a flattened triangle. You must always see the ball and your man also. Flatten out the triangle with you at the point of the triangle... you should keep a hand in the passing lane (the direct line between the ball and your man) looking for the steal. Look at a point down the center of this triangle and use your peripheral vision (side vision) to see the ball and your man. As your man moves, try to keep this defensive triangle. Stay low and slide up and slide back, with your ear to the chest level of your opponent. This allows you to change directions quickly.

Double down

This is a defensive strategy that is used when the low post player gets the ball. The perimeter (outside player) will double team the post player, but should not take his eyes off her player, in case the post passes back out to the perimeter player for a shot, in which case you would have to retain good defensive position on your player.

PLAYING DEFENSE

To be a complete player, you need to have defensive skills. Anyone can play good defense. It takes a lot of heart to be a great defender.

1. Never take your eye off of the ball.
2. Focus on the player's belly button... so you won't get faked out of position.
3. Stay low and slide (don't cross your feet) so you can change directions quickly.
4. Keep your hands active.
5. Stay between your player and the basket.
6. Be aggressive and go for steals off of the pass.
7. Play in good position (with your feet) and reaching in to get a steal is a chancy maneuver.

High post defense

The basic rule for guarding the high post (post player at the free throw line) is to deny the pass in from the side. This is a position where the defensive player is at the ball side of the post player, with the forward arm denying the pass into the post. Use the back of your other hand to maintain contact with your man. When the ball moves to the other side, go in front of your man and assume the side denial position on the other side.

Low post defense

The basic rule for playing defense on the low post is this: if the ball is above the free throw line extended (imaginary line extending from the free throw line to the sideline), then you should side deny on the high side. If the ball is below the free throw line, side deny on the baseline side. (So you can get help from your team). The post player probably is not going to want you in this position, so it is a constant fight for good inside position between the post player and defender. Be persistent and don't give up!

On the ball defense

Assume the basic defensive stance... be within an arm's reach of the player you are guarding... if you are quicker than your opponent you can play closer; if you are slower, give a little space. You want to stop your player from going where he wants to go. If he is driving to the basket from the center of the court, try to force him towards the sideline. If he is driving baseline to the basket from the wing position, try to force him to a point on the baseline 15 feet away from the basket and stop him. If he drives middle from the wing position, your team can help you. The basic rule is to keep your body between your player and the basket.

Strong side lane closure

Strong side lane closure is closing off the passing lane after a pass is made and your player cuts to the hoop. When your player passes, make a quick jump to the ball side and slide down the lane with your player, getting in that passing lane and denying a pass to go into your player.

Weak side defense

When your man is 2 passes away from the ball, you must learn to play good weak side or help defense. Help defense means just that... if someone else's man is driving to the hoop and is beating the defense, you leave your man and you move in front of them with both feet on the ground facing the player to stop the drive, and then go back to your man. Point to your man and the ball and see both your man and the ball, aligned in a line with the basket. NEVER take your eye off the ball. Stopping the ball, no matter whose man is driving is your first priority. Once the ball comes to within one pass of your player, then get back into ball denial 1 pass away defense. If the ball is skipping passed to your player, then you must quickly get back up on her (close out) and play good on the ball defense. This is good team defense.

Weak side lane closure

you are in your weak side defensive stance in line with the basket, pointing to your man and the ball. Weak side lane closure is when your player, who is on the weak side, now attempts to cut to the ball. What you must do as your player cuts towards the ball, is to slide up in a denial position, make some contact, and make him cut behind you, which then, you would again deny that pass from getting to your man, also.

Dribbling Moves

Behind the back dribble

This is a great move to take the defensive pressure off of the guard. To practice this move, dribble three times with the right while moving at a 45 degree angle right; then push the ball behind your back and towards the front and start dribbling left three dribbles to 45 degree angle left; then behind the back again back to the right hand. Tip: when doing the behind-the-back dribble, put your hand on the front side of the ball and push it around your body to the other side. Be sure to push the ball around your body and ahead of you. Soon you will look like a pro!

Crossover move

This is a popular move in today's game and is exciting to watch. Place the ball in your right hand. Then, while stepping forward with your right foot, crossover to your left hand. Your left foot should be hitting the ground just as the ball reaches your left hand. Then, explode to the basket.

Hesitation dribble

In this deceptive move, you try to get the defender off balance, and then you explode by the defender to score the basket or to penetrate and dish off to a teammate. Always practice with both hands equally. Example: Dribble with the right, hard and fast towards the basket, then almost come to a stop (still dribbling), and then explode hard to the hoop. Tip: you want to make the defender believe that you are going to stop and take the jumper, but then... poof! They're eating your dust!

Reverse dribble

This is a great move that you use when the defender is overplaying you to the ball side. Example: dribble right three dribbles to a 45 degree angle right, and as you step forward with your left, make a reverse pivot and switch to your left hand... you are now dribbling to a 45 degree angle left. After 3 dribbles left, as you step on your right foot, make a reverse pivot, switch the ball to your right hand and now you are dribbling right again. Hint: be careful to keep your hand on the top and side of the ball so the referee won't call a carryover/traveling violation. This is a great move for a guard if done quickly.

Stutter step dribble

This is another deceptive move, similar to the hesitation dribble. Always give both hands equal practice time. Example: Dribble hard with the left, trying to go by the defender, the brake hard stomping left, right, left; then explode by your defender to the hoop. You want to make your defender believe you are stopping for the jump shot; then poof! They're eating your dust!!!

Through the legs dribble

This move has been popularized in the '90's... it is a good way to change directions while closely guarded without putting the ball in front of your body. Example: dribble right 3 dribbles to a 45 degree angle right, and as you step on your left foot, dribble the ball between your legs from front to back, and then switch dribbling hand to the left. Dribble left 3 dribbles to a 45 degree angle left, and as you step with your right foot, dribble the ball between your legs from front to back and into your right hand. Hint: Make sure when you dribble to always keep the ball in the hand away from the defense!

Dribbling

DRIBBLING

Dribbling is a good skill to have, even if you play the forward or center position. Strive to have all of the skills to be a good all around player.

1. Push the ball to the floor with your fingers, and flex your wrist, not your whole arm.
2. Keep your head up when you dribble so you can see your teammates.
3. The closer your defense is, the lower you dribble.
4. Dribble with the hand away from your defense... (when going right, dribble with the right hand and when going left, dribble with your left hand.) Keep your body between your defender and the ball.
5. Keep your elbow close to the body.
6. Practice dribbling with both hands equally... most players have a weak hand.

Foot Work

Moving Without the Ball

If you want to get involved in the team's offense, you must learn to move without the ball. If you are standing still, your defender is probably standing still with you, waiting to steal the next pass intended for you. You must move to get open. Don't expect anyone to pass to you if you are standing still. Move to get open!!!

The Jump stop

The jump stop is a way to get control and balance of your body after you have been running fast. Whether you have the ball or are receiving a pass, just jump with two feet, landing on both feet at the same time, bend your knees with your feet wider than your shoulders and get your balance. Now you can use either foot as your pivot foot.

Pivot

The pivot is a fundamental skill that can get a player relief from pressure defense, and can be a great skill to have to begin an offensive move. To pivot, turn on the ball of your foot. Once you choose your pivot foot, it must maintain contact with the ground until you dribble, shoot or pass. (You can go airborne to shoot or pass) If your pivot foot moves and you do not dribble, shoot or pass, it is a violation called traveling, and the ball is awarded to the other team. A reverse or back pivot is when you turn backwards and when you turn forwards it is called a forward or front pivot.

Individual Offensive Moves

Crossover move

This is a popular move in today's game and is exciting to watch. Place the ball in your right hand. Then, while stepping forward with your right foot, crossover to your left hand. Your left foot should be hitting the ground just as the ball reaches your left hand. Then, explode to the basket.

Hesitation move

This is a great move for a guard. Dribble fast past your defender, then slow down like you are going to stop and take the jump shot, and then go fast past your defense. Often you will catch them flat footed, and you will get an open lane to the basket

Jab step and drive

Take a step like you are going in one direction, and drive to the basket in the other direction. When you start your drive, have a quick first step and go shoulder to shoulder past your defender straight to the basket. If you take your first step to the side, your defender will catch up to you and play defense again.

Jab step and shot

Step with either foot like you are going to drive to the basket. You must sell it... make the defender really believe that you are going to go to the basket. Then you balance back up and take the jump shot.

Reggie Miller of the Indiana Pacers has a step back move that is effective. He dribbles forward and then jumps backwards landing on 2 feet and then takes his jumps hot. It is hard to block because he is creating space between him and the defender.

Fake and drive to basket

Fake a shot, and then drive to the basket. The key to this move is to stay low when you use the shot fake, so that you take off fast on your drive to the basket (like a track sprinter). I tell my players to "fake little, move big".

Fake and 1 dribble and a shot

Use a shot fake, and dribble by (shoulder to shoulder) your defense and take a mid-range jumper. If the defender stays with you, try another shot fake and see if you can get the defender airborne. Once the defender is airborne, you have him in a very vulnerable to a foul. All you have to do is make sure that on his way down there is contact. Be in the act of shooting so you get to shoot 2 free throws. If the defender stays on the ground, you can look for someone to pass to

Stutter step move

This is a great move for a guard also. Dribble hard toward the defender, take some hard steps in place, and then go fast past the defense. Often you will catch them flat-footed and you will have an open lane to the basket

Offensive Play

PLAYING OFFENSE

1. Don't try bad shots... shoot when you are open, and pass to a teammate if they have a better shot.
2. Always keep your eye on the ball.
3. If you get an offensive rebound, shoot the ball back up. (You might get fouled and then go to the free throw line).
4. If you make a bad pass or take a bad shot, don't worry about it, just hustle ever harder to get back on defense, so your team can try to get the ball back.
5. Play team basketball.... Nobody likes a ball hog.

Triple Threat Position

The triple threat position is the position that the ball should be in after you receive a pass. From this position, you are a threat to do 3 things: shoot, dribble or pass. Your feet should be shoulder width apart and in a heel to toe alignment, with your knees bent; your shooting hand is on top of the ball and your other hand to the side of the ball; and your elbows are bent at a 90-degree angle.

Passing

PASSING

1. Make eye contact with the person to whom you are passing.
2. Have your passes be crisp... know your receiver's ability to catch passes. Don't pass so hard that your teammate cannot catch it or so soft that the defense can get a hand on it.
3. Pass to the outside shoulder, away from the defense.
4. Receive passes by coming towards the passer, so the defense can't just step in and steal it

Baseball pass

This is a long pass, usually full court. Yes, you throw it like a baseball. The secret is to throw it straight, without a sidespin. If it has sidespin on it, it will curve and will be hard to handle.

Bounce pass

The bounce pass is the most difficult pass for a defender to steal, and the easiest to receive when on the move. Pass to where your teammate will be, not where he is now. Lead your teammate so that he can catch the ball in stride. Learn to fake another pass in a different direction and then bounce pass to your teammate. Receive the ball in triple threat position. Hold the ball at waist level: you may need to adjust the position of the ball to the right or to the left, depending on the defender's location. Aim for a spot on the floor approximately 2/3 of the way to your teammate. Push off your back foot and step forward with your front foot. Extend your arms in a quick, downward motion to pass. Develop a killer bounce pass and get that assist.

Chest pass

The chest pass should mostly be used on the perimeter, where there is less pressure. Avoid using it when the defense is close by. It is easier to steal for the defense, since the defender knows the path the ball will take (point A to point B). If your teammate is moving, lead the ball far enough out in front so your teammate doesn't have to break their stride. Receive the ball in the triple threat position. Put the ball under your chin, with your hand on the sides of the ball, step forward onto your front foot, extend your arms forward in a quick motion, and snap your wrists out, finishing with the back of your hands facing each other. Backspin should be imparted to the ball if done correctly.

Overhead pass

This is a powerful pass. Receive the ball in triple threat position. Place your hands on the sides of the ball. Bring the ball behind your head (with your forearms parallel to the floor). Step forward as you pass. Snap your wrists and elbows down with your arms, finishing with your arms out in front of you.

Rebounding

REBOUNDING

Good rebounders WANT the ball. It takes a lot of effort and is a great skill to have.

1. Block out. (Get between your man and the basket and don't let your man get the rebound).
2. Bend your knees, and make body contact with your man, and THEN get the rebound.
3. Keep your eye on the ball. The ball will rebound at the same angle that it was shot, and most rebounds will land on the opposite side. A long shot very often will go to the area just below the free throw line.
4. Time your jump and protect the ball after you get the rebound. Be careful to make a good outlet pass to your teammate

Boxing out

In order to have a good rebounding team, everyone must box out. To do this from your defensive position: go towards your man and whichever way he goes, front pivot and make contact "Put your butt to their gut" and just slide with them, keeping them away from the rebound. When boxing out, keep your man from pushing you in towards the basket, so you can maintain good rebounding position. (If you let them push you under the basket, the rebound will go over your head). Then go get the rebound.

Getting the Offensive Rebound

In order to get an offensive rebound, you must get the inside position on your defender, who is trying to box you out. You must out quick him, or make some kind of move to get that inside position. You can try a jab step and change directions or you can develop a spin move to get to that position.

Outlet pass

After you get the rebound, you need to make a good outlet pass. A good rebounder who can outlet the ball to the guard can start a fast break on the way to a score. This is a valuable asset to a team. Get the rebound, pivot away from the defense, and outlet to your guard for the fast break. It is a skill that is not much noticed by anyone but the coach knows how valuable you are.

Shooting

SHOOTING

1. The ball touches the fingers, but not the palm of the hand. During the shot, push up with the fingers.
2. Line up your right foot at little ahead of the left foot. (Rt. Hander)

Recommended videos: "Swish" or "Pistol Pete's Homework Basketball: Shooting"

3. Line up your right toes, knee, and elbow to the basket, and your knees should be bent.
4. Your left hand is on the side of the ball, and is not used during the shot.
5. Extend your arm up (not out) and follow through by flicking your wrist down, imparting backspin to the ball.
6. As you shoot, use your legs... the further from the basket, the more you use your legs.
7. Practice, practice, practice..... but practice in correct form.

Reverse Lay up

Drive to the basket as if you were shooting a regular right-handed lay-up, but take an extra dribble, cut underneath the basket, take your 2 steps, take off of the right foot and shoot a hook shot with your left hand, using the backboard on the left side. Experiment with the spin off of the backboard. You can also put the ball up right handed, with spin on the backboard, taking off on your left foot (like a regular right-handed lay-up). Try both ways to see which you like the best.

SHOOTING LAY-UPS

The lay-up is the highest percentage shot in basketball, but no basket is ever easy.

1. Make sure you use the backboard.
2. Do not lose your concentration... focus on the backboard.
3. Try to go up high when shooting the lay-up; don't let your momentum carry you into the wall behind the basket.
4. Drive the knee up towards your chest to get high in the air.
5. Jump off of the left foot when doing a right hand lay-up, and try to land on the left foot first and then down with the right foot. (Do the opposite for a left-handed lay-up).

Lay-up

This is the easiest shot in basketball. For a right handed lay-up, start on the block at the side of the key, by taking two steps: right, left, and then go airborne off of your left foot (right foot for a left handed lay-up), shoot a shot off the upper right hand corner of the box on the backboard and land on your takeoff foot (left). Bring your right knee up towards your chest as you jump. After you have that mastered, add 1 dribble and 2 steps and the lay-up... and when you have that mastered, add several dribbles and a lay-up. Go slow at first, and add more and more speed as you get better. When you have the right-handed lay-up mastered, try the left-handed lay-up.

Jump shot

After learning the basics of shooting, you can learn the jump shot. Start with the ball at your waist, jump straight up, while bringing the ball in front of your face, on the way to correct shooting position. Release the ball at the top of your jump. Follow through with your forearm and wrist and Practice...practice...and more practice!

Team Work

Setting a screen

Setting a screen (called a pick) for a teammate with the ball is a play that Stockton and Malone of the Utah Jazz made a living in pro basketball (pick and roll) perfecting. When you set a pick or screen for someone who has the ball, run to the defender's side and stand at a 45-degree angle slightly behind him. Your stance must be wide, pull your arms into the chest and brace for contact, since the defender will most likely bump into you. When this happens, you have set a good screen. If the player with the ball must wait until you have set your screen before he drives in that direction. If he leaves before the screen is set (stopped), it will be a foul on the screener if there is contact.

The Mental Game

Keep an A+ attitude and it will be contagious... your teammates will see you working hard, and it will motivate them to try harder. Be a leader, and lead your team in a positive direction with that great attitude.

Awareness

Even if you don't have the ball, you should know where the ball is at all times whether you are on offense or defense. On defense, this will allow you to position yourself properly. On offense, you will be able to make decisions as to where you need to go

Fast Break

When leading a fast break, always know where your teammates are and make the passes early and often. Whatever you do, don't telegraph the pass and don't force something that isn't there. As a point guard and a team leader, you must know your teammates strengths and weaknesses to get them the good shot and an easy shot.

Learn life's lessons on the basketball court. And that is why employers love to hire athletes in their businesses. And parents, know that your kids are learning valuable life lessons on the court... remember, your kid doesn't have to be the star of the team, but only the star in your eyes

Nervousness

The main reason that players don't perform well in games is nervousness, and the main cause of nervousness is lack of self-confidence.

You have to believe that you can play with the people on the court and not get intimidated. You must believe that no one on the court is better than you.

Have a good attitude. Believe in yourself.

Perseverance

If you want to be a good basketball player, be prepared to work when others are unwilling to. Many find excuses not to work, but you need to find ways to work on your game even when you are by yourself.

The good thing about basketball is that all you need is a ball, a hoop, and the desire to improve.

Find a good role model that possesses the qualities that you admire, both as a player and as a person. What you see on the court usually carries over into their personal life. So choose your role model carefully and wisely. Just remember that "actions speak louder than words."

Summer Improvement

There is an old saying that says, "Basketball teams are made from October to March, basketball players are made March to October." The off season is the time when the greatest player development should be taking place. Get a development program and work on it throughout the off season in order to become the best possible player.

Taking Advantage of Bigger Players

The bigger they are, the harder they fall...A big player may be intimidating, but it shouldn't stop you from taking the ball to the hole. If you get blocked, it's not a big deal, but to beat the big guy, you need to use the only advantage a smaller person will have...speed. Speed is one of the most important things to have when playing basketball, and if you are speedy and can beat other defenders, a big guy should be no different. Throw some fakes and some crosses and the big guy won't be able to move his feet fast enough and will foul.

Teamwork

Always talk to your teammates. Communication is very important at both ends of the court. No one player can win a game by himself. The easiest teams to defeat are those that rely on one

player. Make sure that all of your teammates are involved. The more players who are threats to score, the more difficult your team will be to play against.

Let your game do your talking." A player talks trash trying to take his opponent out of his game. He/she will say negative things to the opponent, trying to take his/her focus off of the game. A good player does not feel the need to talk trash because they "let their game do their talking", meaning that they outplay their opponents and that speaks for itself.