



Youth Basketball Practice Ideas

ALL Grades (Kindergarten – 8th)

Circles

- Instructions - Put your feet together and make circles around both legs. Then circle around the back. And then circle around the head. Then combine them and move the ball in circles around your head, then down your body, down around your knees, and then around your ankles. Then come back up again. Be sure to use your fingertips, not the palms.
 - Put your right foot out and make circles around just the right leg. Then do it around the left leg.
- Circles Dribbles
 - This drill is similar to “Circles” except now the ball is dribbled. Extend the left leg forward and dribble the ball low around the leg in a circular fashion. Then do it around the right leg. After doing each leg dribbles the ball between legs in a figure-of-eight motion.

Free Throw Round

- Instructions - Place one player at foul line with ball; have other players stand at positions for foul shot. Player with the ball at the line shoots to make a free throw. If he makes it, he continues to shoot until he misses. When he does miss, the entire team rotates to the left and the next player in line begins to shoot free throws.
 - Once a player makes 10 total free throws, the player is done. Each player tries to be the first to finish. Players shoot and rotate until everyone has made 10 free throws

King of the Court

- Instructions – Every player must have a ball. Place all the players in the three-point arc area. Players dribble inside the three point arc. If someone’s ball gets knocked out of the arc that player is out. Reduce the size of the playing area once player’s start getting knocked out.
 - If a player loses control, another player touches their ball, double dribbles, travels, or stops dribbling, that player is out. Monitor proper dribbling techniques. Protect the ball. Be aware of surrounding players. Eliminated players work on ball handling exercises. Last player left wins.

Sideline Dribbling

- Instructions - Players pair up along the sideline, and spread out. The first player in each pair dribbles from sideline to sideline right-handed, and then back left-handed. The coach will call out which move he/she wants them to execute at the half way point going across (right-handed), and then again coming back (left-handed). The ball is then passed to the partner, who

goes next. Have each player do each of the moves down and back twice before moving onto the next move.

- Moves can include changing speed of dribble or changing speed of player, crossover dribble, fake crossover, hesitation move, behind the back, through the legs, or a spin move. Concentrate on keeping control of the ball at all times, especially during the move.

2 v. 1 Fast Break

- Instructions – Two players start spread out on the baseline with one ball. One defender stands at the top of the key. When the coach yells “Go!” the two offensive players begin a fast break down the court and try to score. The one defender must try and avoid the offense from scoring.
 - The two offensive players must have good spacing, make good passes and communicate well in order to score. The defender must try to be in a good defensive position to try and block either a pass, shot, or layup by the two offensive players.
- The drill can also be done as a 3 v. 2 or a 4 v. 3 fast break. Promote good ball-handling, passing, defensive positioning, and most importantly good communication with teammates.

1st – 3rd Grade

Lay-up Lines

Instructions - Team is divided into two lines, rebounders and shooters. Each line is at the top of the key, one on the left the other on the right.

- The drill starts with the first shooter in line dribbling in and shooting the lay-up, while the first rebounder rebounds and passes to the next shooter in line cutting toward the basket. The shooter goes to the rebounding line and the rebounder goes to the shooting line. Switch sides so that now the left line is the shooting line (for shooting left-handed lay-ups).

Pass it Down the Line

Instructions – In this drill, line up a number of players (4-8) on the sideline facing into the court. One player should have 1 basketball and be approximately 5-7 feet away from the players on the sideline and should also be facing those players. On coach’s command, the player with the ball will run in a straight-line down the court, passing and receiving a return pass from each player. After they receive the last pass, the player should continue towards the basket for a layup.

- Make sure everyone is making a good pass and making sure to lead the runner so he can get up the floor as fast as possible. The floor runner should be sprinting down the court. The players on the sideline need to make sure to lead the runner so he can get up the floor as fast as possible. Try the drill with both bounce passes as well as chest passes. Once the player makes the layup, switch who is the one runner. Also try the drill having the runner shuffle instead of run.

Partner Passing / Monkey in the Middle

Instructions – Have players partner up and stand facing each other far apart. Each pairing has one ball.

- The players simply pass the ball to each other, making strong clean passes to their teammate. The players should do chest passes, bounce passes, and overhead passes.
- Make sure the players are aiming their passes at the right spot and make sure the passes are the appropriate speed. Put a player in the middle of the two partners and make it into a “Monkey in the Middle” game.

Red Light / Green Light

Instructions – Players each have a ball and line up down the baseline. Coach is standing at either half-court or opposite baseline. Similar to the physical education activity, players attempt to reach the other end of the court while running/walking on green lights and stopping on red lights.

- Coach will whistle or yell “Green Light!” and players will have to dribble forward. When coach yells “Red Light!” players must stop and pick up their dribble immediately. Players who do not do so or are too slow must go back to the baseline and start over. The first player to reach the end wins.
- Be sure players are controlling their dribble and stopping quickly.

Sharks & Minnows

Instructions - Line up team on baseline. Every player needs a ball. Select one or two players to be the defensive players (sharks) at half court. Offensive players (minnows) must dribble to the other baseline and the sharks must attempt to steal the ball. If sharks steal the ball, knock balls away, or the minnow loses control, the minnow becomes a new shark.

- Be sure to teach to keep your head up and always maintain your dribble. Use moves such as crossovers or spins in order to avoid defenders. Defenders must shuffle feet to get in front of their opponent, keep their arms out and only hit the ball, not the player.

Steal the Bacon

Instructions - Partner players up and give them the same number. Have everyone line up on the baseline a couple steps back from the basket.

- Coach calls out a number and rolls the ball out. The two players with that number hustle for the ball and play one on one at the basket they ran from. If you get the ball first you try and score, if you don't you play defense and try to get the rebound and put it back up.
- Once everyone has gone 1 v 1 call out two numbers and the player you previously played 1 v 1 against is now your teammate to play 2 v 2 against the other pair of numbers.

3rd – 5th Grade

Chase and Shoot

Instructions - Create 2 lines on the baseline, one under the basket and one in the corner. Coach should stand behind the players on the baseline.

- Coach throws the ball down the court and both players sprint down the court toward the ball. The player that started in the corner retrieves the ball. The player that now has the ball dribbles down the middle of the court. Once both players are down the floor the player with the ball passes it back to the player who started under the basket and who makes a layup. The player receiving the pass must make sure they get in the middle of the court to create good spacing and the other player must make a nice bounce pass to his teammate.

Defensive Positioning – Man-to-Man

Instructions - Five players are positioned and stationary, placed in different places on the court. Coach is at the baseline and five defenders stand in the paint. The coach passes to one of the five offensive players who stay put.

- When the ball is passed, one defender goes to the ball, while the other four go out and defend the four other offensive players. The defender against the ball must defend closely and make sure the offensive player would have trouble shooting or passing. The other four defensive players must position themselves correctly, not too close to their offensive player, but close enough to steal a bad pass or gain possession on a missed shot.
- The coach makes any corrections in the players' alignment, and then the ball is passed back to the coach for the next five defenders in line. The current defenders become offense and the offensive players go to the back of the defensive lines. There is no scoring, passing, attacking in this drill. This drill simply emphasizes how the defenders should position themselves in a man-to-man defense.

Foul Shot Box Out

Instructions - Choose one player to be the shooter and position the rest of the team in the proper spots for a foul shot. One ball will be used. Have the shooter take a shot. Whoever gets the rebound becomes the next shooter.

- Make sure players are not pushing each other or fouling each other in order to get the ball. Show them the proper positioning of boxing out. Make sure they get their hands up and go up for the ball. Encourage hustle and confidence to gain possession of the ball.

Inbound Plays

Instructions - Two teams are created, one on offense, one on defense. One offensive player is standing out of bounds at the baseline under one of the corners of the basket ready to make an inbounds pass.

- The goal of the offensive team is to create a play, run it, and score a basket after the inbounds pass. The defensive team will play man defense and try not to let the offense score.
- Be creative with the inbounds plays. Try and run some pick-and-rolls, screens, and spread out the offensive players to improve your scoring chances and make it

difficult for the defense. After a few plays, switch the offensive and defensive teams.

Knockout

Instructions – Line up players at free throw line. Give balls to the first two players in line. First player shoots, if made they retrieve ball, if missed they keep shooting until they make it. After making a basket you pass it to the next person in line. If a shot is made before the first shooter scores the first shooter is out. Process repeats.

- Make sure players stay relaxed and shoot properly. Do not panic under pressure and throw the ball up without a purpose.

Loose Ball

Instructions – Create 2 teams. Line up each team in a single file line at the baseline. Entire court will be used. Use one ball. Coach stands in between both teams with the ball. Coach tosses the ball down the court in the middle of the two players. Players will go after the ball. The player who gains possession must try to score on the opposite basket they started at while the other player plays defense. Players can recover the ball to score. Players must hustle to the loose ball and be prepared to play either offense or defense. Encourage each player to gain possession quickly and to score quickly. Encourage defensive players to recover, steal the ball, and regain possession to score. Make sure players are not fouling.

6th – 8th Grade

Defensive Positioning – 2-3 Zone Defense

Instructions - Defensive players line up in a 2-3 zone defense. Offensive players line up around 3-point line.

- The ball starts at the top of the key and is passed to any offensive player along the 3-point line. Depending on where the ball is passed, the defensive players must quickly shift toward the ball and be in a ready defensive position. The player closest to the ball tightly defends the offensive player, while the other four players position themselves correctly to block easy passes and shot attempts.
- The coach makes any corrections in the players' alignment, and then the ball is passed back to the coach for the next five defenders. The current defenders become offense and the offensive players go to the defensive zone positions.

Foul Shot Box Out

Instructions - Choose one player to be the shooter and position the rest of the team in the proper spots for a foul shot. One ball will be used. Have the shooter take a shot. Whoever gets the rebound becomes the next shooter.

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- Be creative with the inbounds plays. Try and run some pick-and-rolls, screens, and spread out the offensive players to improve your scoring chances and make it difficult for the defense. After a few plays, switch the offensive and defensive teams.

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Around the World

Instructions - One player begins with the ball at one of the corners of the court at the three point line (or closer to basket depending on age). One rebounder is placed underneath basket.

- When the coach says “Go!” the shooter must shoot from the corner. Whether or not the shot goes in, the player moves to the next position on the court (down the 3-point line). The rebounder must quickly retrieve the rebound and pass the ball to the shooter in the new position. The shooter immediately shoots the ball and continues this process until he reaches the other corner of the court. The shooter then goes the opposite direction back to where he began.
- After the shooter goes around and back, the total number of shots made is recorded. Each player does the drill and the player with the most made shots is the winner. Be sure to switch rebounders as well.

Three Man Weave

Instructions – Divide class into teams of three. Place the groups at the baseline. Entire court will be used. The player in the middle starts with the ball (Player 1). The three Players will begin to run down the court toward the basket. While on the run, Player 1 passes the ball to Player 2. Player 1 runs in the direction they just passed the ball and runs around Player 2. Player 2 passes to Player 3 and then runs in the direction they passed the ball and around Player 3. Player 3 will then pass it to Player 1 who makes a lay-up at the basket.