



# Sisters Outlaws Basketball Age-Specific Curriculum

# Section I

## FUNDAMENTALS

Here's a breakdown of fundamental basketball skills for youth development, following guidelines from USA Basketball, FIBA, and other organizations. These are based on the physical and mental abilities of kids at each grade level.

### Kindergarten to 2nd Grade (Ages 5-7)

**Focus:** Fun, enjoyment, basic coordination, and introducing the game.

- **Ball Handling:** Dribbling with both hands, controlling the ball while stationary, then moving.
- **Passing:** Simple chest and bounce passes, focusing on accuracy and soft hands.
- **Shooting:** Layups with proper footwork, starting form shooting close to the basket (no need for 3-point shooting or long-range shots).
- **Footwork:** Basic stance, balance, and running; introduce the concept of pivoting.
- **Games:** Simple 1-on-1, relay races, and fun basketball-related activities to build enjoyment of the game.

### 3rd to 4th Grade (Ages 8-9)

**Focus:** Developing fundamental skills, coordination, and basic teamwork.

- **Ball Handling:** Dribbling with both hands, simple crossovers, and controlling the ball while moving.
- **Passing:** Adding overhead and bounce passes to chest passes, teaching passing while moving.
- **Shooting:** More emphasis on shooting form (using proper mechanics), layups from both sides, introducing bank shots.
- **Defense:** Basic man-to-man defense principles (stay between your player and the basket), introducing sliding and staying in a low stance.
- **Footwork:** Learning how to pivot and make quick stops, running and changing directions efficiently.
- **Games:** 3-on-3 games to introduce basic team concepts like spacing, passing, and communication.

### 5th to 6th Grade (Ages 10-11)

**Focus:** Refining individual skills, learning team concepts, and developing basketball IQ.

- **Ball Handling:** More advanced dribbling moves (between the legs, behind the back), handling pressure.
- **Passing:** Accurate passing on the move, leading teammates, introduction to no-look passes.

- **Shooting:** Continue to work on shooting form, introducing shooting off the dribble, and developing mid-range shooting.
- **Defense:** Understanding help defense and rotations, defending screens, staying disciplined in man-to-man defense.
- **Footwork:** Better pivoting, jab steps, and learning how to move without the ball (cutting to the basket).
- **Games:** Full 5-on-5 games, understanding basic team concepts like setting screens, spacing, and fast breaks.

## 7th to 8th Grade (Ages 12-13)

**Focus:** Advanced skills, game strategy, and mental understanding of the game.

- **Ball Handling:** Mastery of advanced dribbling moves, improving ball control in game situations, breaking down defenses with dribbling.
- **Passing:** Precision passing, understanding how to pass out of double teams and traps, making quick decisions.
- **Shooting:** Consistent shooting mechanics, shooting under pressure, from various spots on the floor (mid-range, perimeter).
- **Defense:** Understanding both man-to-man and zone defense, defending fast breaks, mastering team defense strategies.
- **Footwork:** Mastering footwork for creating separation from defenders, defensive slides, and offensive moves like step-backs.
- **Games:** More complex team strategies, such as pick-and-roll, off-ball movement, defensive traps, and reading the defense.

These progressions allow young players to build a strong foundation of skills and gradually learn more complex techniques and strategies as they get older and more experienced. The focus shifts from fun and coordination in the younger grades to skill mastery and game strategy in the older grades.

# Section II

## GAME PHILOSOPHY

Here's a breakdown of game philosophy and strategies for each grade level, based on guidelines from USA Basketball, FIBA, and other youth basketball organizations.

### Kindergarten to 2nd Grade (Ages 5-7)

**Philosophy:** Focus on fun, enjoyment, and introduction to the game.

- **Game Length:** Short, 15-20 minute games with frequent breaks.
- **Strategy:** No formal strategy; focus on getting the kids comfortable with the ball, teaching them the basic rules of the game, and ensuring everyone participates.
- **Coaching Focus:** Encouragement, positivity, and basic skill development. Emphasize the joy of playing and celebrating small successes like making a pass or shot.
- **Team Play:** Introduce the concept of teamwork but avoid strict positioning. Let kids explore different areas of the court.
- **Defense:** No advanced defensive strategies. Keep it simple with "stay between your player and the basket" or light man-to-man defense.
- **Game Structure:** 3-on-3, smaller courts, lower hoops (around 6-7 feet), no scorekeeping to reduce pressure.

### 3rd to 4th Grade (Ages 8-9)

**Philosophy:** Skill development with emphasis on teamwork and fun.

- **Game Length:** 20-24 minute games, split into halves or quarters.
- **Strategy:** Simple offensive structure, focusing on spacing the floor and passing. Teach basic plays like give-and-go, but keep the game free-flowing.
- **Coaching Focus:** Encourage ball movement and teamwork. Make sure every player touches the ball and understands that passing and moving are just as important as scoring.
- **Team Play:** Introduce positions lightly but allow kids to explore different roles. Focus on teaching spacing and passing, not rigid positioning.
- **Defense:** Basic man-to-man defense, focusing on staying in front of their player. No zone defense at this age to encourage individual defensive responsibility.
- **Game Structure:** 4-on-4 on smaller courts, lower hoops (8 feet), encouraging fast-paced, fun games. Minimal to no full-court pressure.

### 5th to 6th Grade (Ages 10-11)

**Philosophy:** Transition from individual skill development to team concepts.

- **Game Length:** 24-32 minute games, quarters or halves with timeouts for instruction.

- **Strategy:** Introduce basic offensive strategies like pick-and-roll, spacing, and ball movement. Focus on creating scoring opportunities through teamwork, not just individual play.
- **Coaching Focus:** Continue to stress fundamentals (passing, shooting, defense) but start emphasizing the importance of decision-making and game awareness (e.g., when to pass, when to shoot, how to read the defense).
- **Team Play:** Define roles and positions more clearly. Start explaining the basics of offensive and defensive roles, but rotate players through different positions to develop versatility.
- **Defense:** Man-to-man defense with the introduction of help defense and rotations. Avoid complex zone defenses, but introduce the idea of defending as a team, not just guarding a single player.
- **Game Structure:** 4-on-4 or 5-on-5 on a standard-size court with lower hoops (8-9 feet), encourage ball movement and teamwork. Allow minimal full-court press late in the game.

## 7th to 8th Grade (Ages 12-13)

**Philosophy:** Competitive games with a focus on team strategy, mental understanding, and sportsmanship.

- **Game Length:** Standard 32-minute games (4 quarters or 2 halves) with timeouts and substitutions.
- **Strategy:** Teach structured offensive sets (e.g., motion offense, pick-and-roll, fast breaks) and begin to incorporate more advanced offensive principles like spacing, timing, and court awareness. Defensive strategies like zone defense and trapping can be introduced.
- **Coaching Focus:** Emphasize both individual development and team concepts. Players should understand how their role fits into the bigger picture of team success. Decision-making, leadership, and game awareness become key points of focus.
- **Team Play:** Positions are more clearly defined, and players should understand their roles (e.g., point guard as the playmaker, forwards as scorers, etc.). There's still room for flexibility, but roles become more specific.
- **Defense:** Man-to-man defense remains the primary strategy, but zone defenses (e.g., 2-3 zone) can be introduced depending on the team's skill level. Full-court pressure can be used more frequently, but teaching the fundamentals of good defense is still the priority.
- **Game Structure:** 5-on-5 on a full-size court with 10-foot hoops, standard game rules apply. Strategy and teamwork should be prioritized, with an increasing focus on competition, but always within a framework of sportsmanship.

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In summary, the philosophy evolves from enjoyment and basic understanding at the K-2 level to competitive, team-oriented play by grades 7-8. Strategies move from a focus on fun and experimentation to more structured offenses and defenses, always with the development of both individual and team skills in mind.

# Section III

## PRACTICE PLANS AND PHILOSOPHY

Here's a breakdown of practice philosophy and strategies for each grade level based on guidelines from USA Basketball, FIBA, and other youth basketball development programs. Each practice plan focuses on age-appropriate skill development, fostering enjoyment, and gradually building basketball IQ.

The goal at all levels is to have all players engaged and playing as often as possible. Set an expectation that even in drills athletes should go at game speed in order to get better while performing at the speed of the game. If you are doing one on one or individual drills, think about setting up multiple baskets or stations so that all players are actively engaged.

### Kindergarten to 2nd Grade (Ages 5-7)

**Practice Philosophy:** Fun, basic skill introduction, and development of coordination.

- **Practice Length:** 30-45 minutes (short sessions with multiple activities to hold attention).
- **Focus Areas:**
  - **Ball Familiarity:** Introduce dribbling, passing, and shooting in fun, creative ways.
  - **Motor Skills:** Develop running, jumping, balance, and hand-eye coordination through non-basketball activities.
  - **Game-Like Situations:** Focus on games like "Red Light, Green Light" for dribbling, relay races, and simple tag to keep kids engaged.
  - **Rule Introduction:** Gently introduce the basic rules, such as boundaries and what a basket is worth, in a fun manner.
- **Structure:**
  - **Warm-Up** (5-10 min): Fun stretches, running in different directions (forward, backward), and simple games.
  - **Skill Stations** (20 min): Rotate between stations focusing on dribbling, passing, and shooting. Use cones and small hoops to make it fun and age-appropriate.
  - **Game/Activity** (10-15 min): End practice with a simple 2-on-2 or 3-on-3 half-court game or another engaging activity. No pressure, focus on participation.
- **Coaching Strategy:** Keep instructions simple, use lots of positive reinforcement, and be patient. Encourage curiosity and exploration with the basketball.

### 3rd to 4th Grade (Ages 8-9)

**Practice Philosophy:** Skill development with a continued focus on fun and teamwork.

- **Practice Length:** 45-60 minutes.
- **Focus Areas:**

- **Skill Development:** Focus on dribbling with both hands, making accurate passes, and shooting with proper form. Introduce concepts like footwork and basic defensive stances.
- **Teamwork:** Introduce passing and moving without the ball. Emphasize sharing the ball and working together.
- **Rules and Strategy:** Introduce basic game concepts like traveling, double dribbling, and the difference between offense and defense.
- **Games:** Use fun, competitive games that reinforce skills (e.g., knockout for shooting, dribble tag for ball handling).
- **Structure:**
  - **Warm-Up** (5-10 min): Light jogging, stretches, and fun agility games.
  - **Skill Work** (25-30 min): Focused drills on ball handling, passing, and shooting form. Use group stations to keep players engaged.
  - **Small-Sided Games** (15 min): 3-on-3 games that emphasize spacing, passing, and defense.
  - **Cool Down** (5 min): Short review of what was learned and praise for effort and improvement.
- **Coaching Strategy:** Use simple language, give lots of positive feedback, and break skills down step-by-step. Encourage teamwork and introduce small competitions to make it fun.

## 5th to 6th Grade (Ages 10-11)

**Practice Philosophy:** Build on individual skills, introduce more team concepts, and foster game understanding.

- **Practice Length:** 60-75 minutes.
- **Focus Areas:**
  - **Advanced Fundamentals:** Continue working on dribbling, passing, and shooting with more advanced moves (crossovers, layups from both sides, shooting off the dribble).
  - **Team Play:** Emphasize passing and moving to create scoring opportunities, introduce basic plays like give-and-go or pick-and-roll.
  - **Defensive Principles:** Introduce help defense and how to guard different positions. Focus on footwork, staying in a stance, and defensive rotations.
  - **Game Situations:** Begin to introduce situational practice (e.g., what to do in fast break situations, how to play defense when your team is ahead).
- **Structure:**
  - **Warm-Up** (10 min): Dribbling drills, basic footwork, and fun competitive games to get players moving.
  - **Skill Work** (30 min): Split into small groups to work on shooting, dribbling under pressure, and passing. Use more complex drills that incorporate multiple skills (e.g., dribble through cones, pass, and shoot).
  - **Team Drills** (20 min): Focus on offensive and defensive strategies, teach basic positioning, and introduce spacing concepts.

- **Scrimmage** (15 min): 4-on-4 or 5-on-5 scrimmage with real-time feedback.
- **Coaching Strategy:** Give constructive feedback, help players understand the "why" behind drills, and use visual examples. Focus on the development of basketball IQ through decision-making and teamwork.

## 7th to 8th Grade (Ages 12-13)

**Practice Philosophy:** Focus on advanced skill refinement, game strategy, and mental preparation.

- **Practice Length:** 75-90 minutes.
- **Focus Areas:**
  - **Skill Refinement:** Mastery of ball handling, shooting mechanics, passing accuracy, and finishing moves around the basket.
  - **Team Concepts:** Focus on executing offensive sets, defensive schemes, and understanding spacing and timing. Work on pick-and-roll, screens, and motion offense.
  - **Game Strategy:** Situational drills to practice specific game scenarios (e.g., how to defend in the final minutes, fast breaks, handling pressure).
  - **Defensive Schemes:** Implement more advanced defensive strategies like zone defense, trapping, and pressing.
  - **Conditioning:** Incorporate drills that focus on endurance, speed, and strength relevant to basketball.
- **Structure:**
  - **Warm-Up** (10 min): Dynamic stretches, ball-handling drills, and agility work.
  - **Skill Work** (20-30 min): High-intensity drills focusing on dribbling under pressure, shooting with defenders, and making quick decisions.
  - **Team Drills** (25-30 min): Offensive and defensive sets, practicing plays, teaching proper spacing, and learning team roles. Work on transitions between offense and defense.
  - **Scrimmage** (20-25 min): Full-court 5-on-5 game with real-time coaching and feedback on positioning, decision-making, and execution.
  - **Cool Down/Review** (5-10 min): Stretching, feedback on performance, and discussing areas of improvement.
- **Coaching Strategy:** Provide detailed feedback on execution and decision-making. Push for a competitive environment but emphasize the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship. Encourage leadership and accountability among players.

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The practice structure evolves from fun, simple skill-building activities for younger children to more complex drills and game situations as they get older. The focus shifts from individual skill mastery to teamwork, game strategy, and mental toughness, ensuring that by the 7th and 8th grades, players are prepared for competitive basketball at higher levels.



# SECTION IV

## CORE PHILOSOPHIES

***Self on the shelf:*** Team first mentality. Athletes should ask the question: What is best for the team? Not, what is best for me?

***Iron sharpens Iron:*** As iron sharpens iron, we sharpen each other. By competing with each other and going hard in practices, we make each other better.

***Every player matters:*** The last player on the bench is just as important as the most talented player on the court. They need to be committed to working hard and having a positive attitude. They are making others better by their actions and the team improves faster that way. Often the effort and mindset of the bench will determine how well the season goes.

***Truly enjoy the success of others:*** Our number one character trait in all humans. Players should be excited when a team-mate makes a good play. They should cheer for each other and run over to congratulate another player. This shows not only that they care about the team more than themselves, but it allows them to be actively engaged at all times.

# Section V

## BENCHMARKS

Grade	Key Benchmarks & Skills	Focus Areas
2nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basic rules of basketball (dribbling, passing, shooting)</li> <li>● Introduction to teamwork and sportsmanship</li> <li>● Ball control with dominant hand</li> <li>● Basic footwork (pivoting, jump-stop)</li> <li>● Fun drills to develop hand-eye coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dribbling and ball handling basics</li> <li>● Shooting mechanics</li> <li>● Basic passing drills (chest pass, bounce pass)</li> </ul>
3rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improved dribbling with both hands</li> <li>● Begin learning layups (dominant hand)</li> <li>● Introduction to proper defensive stance</li> <li>● Basic passing on the move</li> <li>● Introduction to offensive spacing (simple 2-3 player movement)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Layup technique</li> <li>● Footwork for defense (shuffle, closeout)</li> <li>● Introduction to transition offense/defense</li> </ul>
4th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consistent dribbling with both hands under pressure</li> <li>● Layups with both hands</li> <li>● Simple shooting form from close range</li> <li>● Understanding man-to-man defense</li> <li>● Passing accuracy on the move</li> <li>● Introduction to game strategy and simple plays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reinforce shooting form and footwork</li> <li>● Basic offensive cuts (V-cut, L-cut)</li> <li>● Team defense concepts</li> </ul>
5th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mastery of dribbling and ball handling under pressure</li> <li>● Shooting from mid-range (free throws)</li> <li>● Off-ball movement (cutting, screening)</li> <li>● Defense: understanding help defense and rotations</li> <li>● Basic understanding of team concepts (spacing, passing, cutting)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Team play and basic offensive sets</li> <li>● Increase in game IQ (reading defense, decision-making)</li> </ul>
6th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improved consistency in shooting mechanics (mid-range)</li> <li>● Introduction to 3-point shooting</li> <li>● Advanced ball-handling moves (crossover, behind-the-back)</li> <li>● Pick-and-roll basics</li> <li>● Team defensive rotations and communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Competitive play focus</li> <li>● Understand basic transition offense and defense</li> <li>● Develop leadership and communication skills</li> </ul>

7th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consistent shooting from mid-range and 3-point range</li> <li>● Mastery of dribbling moves (crossover, hesitation, spin move)</li> <li>● Advanced offensive plays (pick-and-roll, give-and-go)</li> <li>● Defensive communication and advanced help defense</li> <li>● Rebounding technique (hit and go get, boxing out)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on improving offensive and defensive decision-making</li> <li>● Understanding more complex team strategies (press defense, fast-break)</li> </ul>
8th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mastery of shooting mechanics from all ranges</li> <li>● Understanding offensive and defensive systems (zone defenses, motion offense)</li> <li>● Leadership in game situations (on-court decision making)</li> <li>● Mastery of advanced ball-handling and passing</li> <li>● Strengthening physical conditioning for higher-level play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Physical conditioning and injury prevention</li> <li>● Competitive team strategies and advanced game situations</li> <li>● Preparing for high school basketball</li> </ul>

**Key Notes:**

- **Early Grades (2nd-4th):** Focus on fun and learning the fundamentals (dribbling, passing, basic shooting). Introduce basic team concepts and begin developing good habits.
- **Middle Grades (5th-6th):** Players should begin understanding the game on a deeper level. Develop stronger shooting, ball-handling, and defensive strategies. Team concepts become more complex.
- **Later Grades (7th-8th):** Players should refine their skills, build leadership, and develop a high basketball IQ. Focus on mastering advanced techniques and strategies in preparation for high school play.

This progression ensures that players build on foundational skills as they grow, keeping their development aligned with age-appropriate challenges and learning objectives.

# Section VI

## VOCABULARY AND TERMS

Set piece: A play called during a dead ball set. Usually a quick hitter, not the primary offense.

Gap: When a player is one pass away from the ball on defense they should create a triangle between their man and the ball and be in a position to help defend penetration and deny a pass.

Help: When a player is two passes away from the ball they should create a triangle between their man and the ball. They will be farther from their own man, but in a position to recover or help if needed.

Ball: Signifies a defender is defending the person with the ball.

Transition: When the ball changes possession. Offensively the team should look to attack the hoop without a turnover until the defense is no longer retreating. Defensively the team should sprint back to defend the hoop as a unit and then find their individual assignment.

Triple threat: Offensive position with the ball capable of shooting, driving or passing. Players should catch the ball in triple threat and look at the hoop every time, no matter where they are on the court.

Jump stop: With the ball dribbling, pick it up and plant both feet on the ground at the same time.

Pivot: Moving one foot while the other foot remains planted.

Lay in: Off one foot, opposite foot than the shooting hand. Near hoop and use the backboard.

Basketball order of operations: 1. Shoot, 2. Drive, 3. Pass. Every player should go through these every time they catch it. Ball fakes at the hoop are a good way to get them thinking shoot first.

Zone defense: A defensive set that emphasizes covering a zone as opposed to a man. Ex. 2-3 zone.

### **Shooting form**

#### **BEEF**

**Balance:** Feet are shoulder width apart with dominant foot slightly ahead of other. Feet should be slightly angled to the inside around 15-30 degrees but not more than 45 degrees. Athletic stance. Also known as base. Should be able to remove the balance hand and hold the ball with one hand easily without it falling off.

**Elbow:** at 90 degrees. Emphasize the shooting pocket. Wrist, arm, elbow form an inverted U. There should be a wrinkle in the wrist and the ball should be up on the pads of the fingers, not flat on the palm.

**Eyes:** Focused completely on the target, the entire time. No ball watching.

**Follow through:** When shooting power comes from legs not arms. Wrist should flick as arms straighten. Finish with the thumb pointed down towards the floor. Elbow should be above the eyes. Use terms goose neck or cookie jar. Shooting arm should finish straight every time and follow through should be held until the ball goes through the hoop. The opposite balance hand should fall away from the ball without assisting the shot.

## **FOREST**

**F:** Fingers point at the hoop.

**O:** Offhand

**R:** Rhythm (Dip) Ball drops near waist after catch

**E:** Eyes follow the hand through to the ball then the hoop

**S:** Sweep and Sway

**T:** Turn (Feet land so shooting shoulder is aligned with the hoop).

**Defensive stance:** Athletic stance, heels shouldn't click. 90 degrees at knees. First step is the outside foot with the toe pointed in the direction they want to go.

# Section VII

## READ & REACT OFFENSE

### Read and React Offense - Rules and Guidelines for Coaches

The Read and React Offense, developed by Rick Torbett, is a positionless, player-driven basketball system. It emphasizes spacing, ball movement, and decision-making through a series of layers. It teaches players how to react to specific situations without having to memorize set plays. Below is a comprehensive guide to help coaches unfamiliar with the system.

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#### 1. The Philosophy of Read and React

- **Player Freedom with Structure:** Players are given freedom to make decisions based on defensive actions and spacing but within the framework of specific principles.
  - **Positionless Basketball:** Each player should be able to play multiple roles, focusing on actions, not positions.
  - **Emphasis on Reaction:** The offense is driven by reading the defense and reacting. Every player movement has a corresponding teammate reaction.
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#### 2. The 5 Core Principles

- **Spacing:** Always maintain good spacing on the court, ideally 12-15 feet apart. This makes it difficult for the defense to help and gives players room to operate.
  - **Player Movement:** Players must constantly move without the ball, making it difficult for the defense to guard both the ball and the player.
  - **Ball Movement:** The ball should not stick in one place. Quick passes lead to defensive breakdowns and open opportunities.
  - **Decision Making:** The system allows players to make decisions based on how their defenders react. There is no predetermined outcome, players read the defense and adjust accordingly.
  - **Scalability:** The offense is designed to be scalable, meaning it works at any level, from youth to professional basketball.
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#### 3. The Layers of Read and React

The Read and React offense is taught through a series of **layers**—each layer builds upon the previous one and introduces new actions for players to react to. Here are the key layers:

### **Layer 1: Pass & Cut**

- Rule: Anytime a player passes the ball, they must immediately cut to the basket.
- Reaction: The player who received the pass must read the cut and either pass to the cutter or move the ball to another player.

### **Layer 2: Dribble-At**

- Rule: If a player dribbles at a teammate (toward them), that player must cut backdoor toward the basket.
- Reaction: The dribbler either passes to the cutter or continues to dribble, looking for other options.

### **Layer 3: Post Reactions**

- Rule: When the ball is passed into the post, perimeter players must make a Laker cut, creating passing angles or taking advantage of defensive attention on the post player.
- Reaction: Players must Laker cut off of the post player reading positioning of the defense

### **Layer 4: Baseline Drive Reactions**

- Rule: On a baseline drive (dribble penetration along the baseline), players must rotate to give driving lanes and passing options.
- Reaction: The ball handler either finishes at the rim or passes to teammates who have repositioned to the open spots.

### **Layer 5: Circle Movement on Dribble Penetration**

- Rule: On any dribble penetration to the middle, perimeter players circle move in the direction of the ball.
- Reaction: This movement creates passing lanes and forces the defense to adjust, opening up scoring opportunities.

### **Layer 6: Ball Screens**

- Rule: Players can set ball screens, but teammates must understand how to move based on whether the ball handler drives, shoots, or passes.
- Reaction: The screener either rolls to the basket or pops out, depending on how the defense reacts.

## 4. Key Concepts for Coaches

### Spacing

- Players should always maintain proper spacing (12-15 feet apart).
- This spacing is essential for opening up driving lanes and passing opportunities.

### Cutting

- **Cutting** is a major component of the offense. Players without the ball should constantly be cutting to the basket when they pass or are dribbled at.

### Reading the Defense

- Players should be trained to read their defender's position. Players are taught to play off of the defensive player's position on the "read" line. If a defender is on or over the read line, the player must cut. If the defender is below the read line, the player can space out or prepare to shoot.

### Automatic Reactions

- Players should not stand still. Every movement of the ball triggers an automatic reaction by teammates, ensuring constant flow and motion.
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## 5. Building Practice Plans

Coaches can introduce the Read and React system in stages:

- **Start with Layer 1 (Pass and Cut).** Master this before moving on to the next layers.
  - **Add a new layer** as the team becomes comfortable.
  - **Use drills to reinforce the layers,** ensuring players understand both the offensive action and the reaction needed by their teammates.
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## 6. Special Situations and Adjustments

### Against Zone Defenses

- The Read and React can be adjusted to beat zone defenses by using cuts and ball movement to attack gaps.
- Players should focus on getting the ball inside and cutting behind the zone defense.



## End of Game Situations

- In late-game situations, you can add specific actions (like ball screens) while still maintaining the principles of Read and React.
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## 7. Common Mistakes to Watch For

- **Lack of Spacing:** Players tend to bunch up, making it easier for the defense to help.
  - **Ball Sticking:** The offense stalls when players hold the ball too long instead of moving it quickly.
  - **Failure to React:** Players sometimes forget to react immediately to a pass or dribble, causing breakdowns in the offense.
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## 8. Coaching Tips

- **Patience:** The Read and React offense takes time to teach and for players to understand. Be patient and reinforce the basics.
  - **Encourage Communication:** Players need to communicate constantly on the court to make quick, effective decisions.
  - **Empower Players:** Allow your players to make mistakes and learn from them. The offense is about teaching decision-making, not perfection.
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## Conclusion

The Read and React offense is an adaptable, player-centered system that rewards basketball IQ, teamwork, and constant motion. Coaches should focus on teaching players to read the defense, react instinctively, and maintain spacing for optimal offensive flow. By layering the offense over time, teams will develop a powerful and flexible approach that works against any defense.

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This guide covers the foundational aspects of Rick Torbett's Read and React system. With time, practice, and understanding, coaches will see its effectiveness in developing smarter, more adaptable players.

# Section VIII

## MAN LEFT DEFENSE

### Man Left Defense - Rules and Guidelines for Coaches

The "man-left" defensive concept is built around forcing offensive players to their left, directing them into areas where the defense can provide help. Here are the rules and guidelines focused exclusively on the man-left defense:

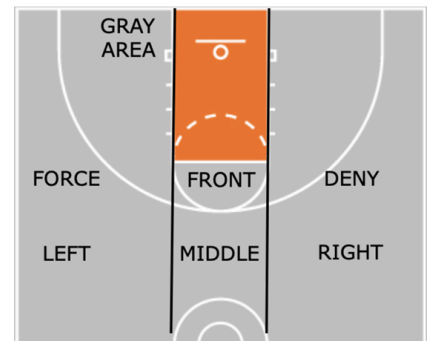
#### 1. The Philosophy of Man Left Defense

- **Force All Players the Same Direction:** Various studies have shown only 10% of people are left-handed. 90% of opposing players will already be at a disadvantage when they face this defense. The main goal is to force your offensive player to drive or dribble to their left side at all times, regardless of their dominant hand.
- **Designed to Force Shots We Want:** The defense is designed to force quick pull-up jump shots while limiting any perimeter looks or direct drives to the basket
- **Speeds up the Offense:** It forces players out of their half-court sets and into quick shots.

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#### 2. The Core Principles

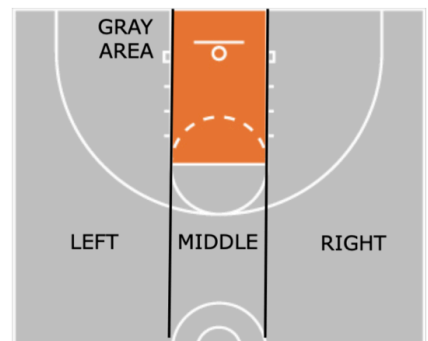
- Force ALL offensive players to the Gray Area when the ball is on the left side.
- Deny the ball from going to the right side of the court when defending in the middle or right side
- No Layups or uncontested 3-point shots.
- If players do drive to the rim, force players to finish at the rim with their left hand (usually their weak hand).

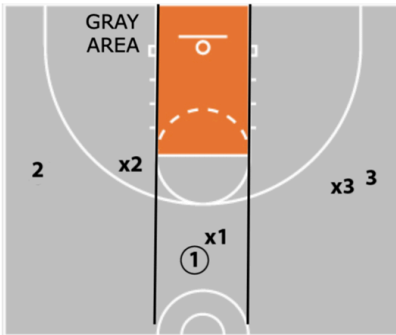


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#### 3. Man Left General Rules

- Divide the court into three (3) parts: Left, Right, Middle
- Goal is to force the opponent to the "gray area"
- The "gray area" is the Left side of the court about 10' from the hoop, and on the baseline.
- Under no circumstances should anyone drive to the basket on the right side of the court.
- Take away all uncontested 3-point shots





### Rules for the **Middle Third** of the Court

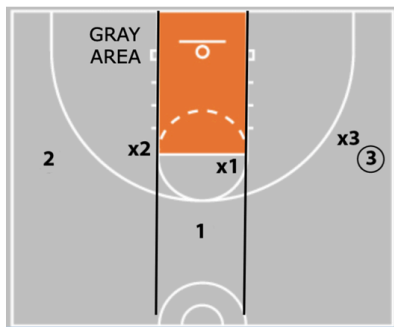
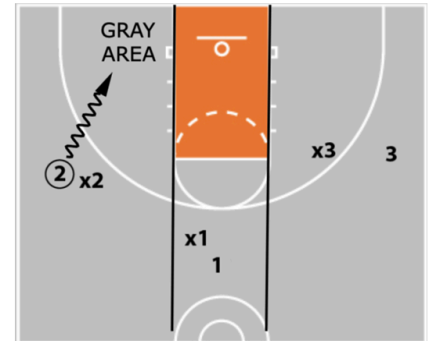
- Keep the ball in front when it is in the middle third
- Shade or slightly force the ball toward the Left side of the court
- Deny the ball from going back to the middle once the ball is on the left side

If the defense is executed properly on the diagram to the left, 1 will end up passing the ball to 2 on the left wing - then 2 will dribble it into the Gray Area!

### Rules for the **Left Third** of the Court

- Allow all passes to the left side of the court
- Once the ball is in the left third, force the ball left toward the “gray area”
- Deny all passing lanes to the middle and to the right

As shown on the diagram to the right, x1 immediately jumps out to deny the passing lane to 1. Now x2 is forcing 2 to the Gray Area and x3 has one eye on the paint and one eye closing out on the skip pass to 3.



### Rules for the **Right Third** of the Court

- Sometimes, the ball will inevitably find itself on the right side of the court. The goal should be to prevent any driving lanes on the right side, while not giving up any wide open 3's.
- To help achieve this goal, players must deny the ball from going to the right side of the court
- If the ball is on the right side, try to force it to the middle or a skip pass to the left

In this diagram below, x3 must successfully influence 3 to drive towards the middle or left side of the court. A straight line drive to the right will produce one of the two worst-case scenarios outlined above. Also notice that the 1-man and 2-man are wide open. The 3-man will naturally look to pass the ball to either one of these teammates.

## 4. Man Left On-Ball Rules

While the same fundamentals apply as in traditional man-to-man defenses, there are additional rules as it relates to on-ball defense in the Man-left system. Players should defend the same way against either right-handed or left-handed shooters.

- Left Third = Force Left
- Middle Third = Influence Left
- Right Third = Influence Left

## 5. Man Left One Pass Away Rules

Playing successful help defense all depends on reacting to where you are positioned on the court. The defender denies with the right foot forward and then switches to the left foot going forward when guarding the ball. As a rule of thumb:

- Off ball to the right = Deny your man the ball
- Off ball to the left = Play in the gap and allow the pass

## 6. Additional Help Defense Rules

The priority is to avoid lay-ups on the right side and open 3's. The man left defense has additional rules for defenders that are one or two passes away from the ball with the aim of preventing these high-value shots for the opponents.

- "Fake & Fade" - Primary goal of Fake & Fade is to NOT give up a 3-pointer. Goal is to convince offensive players to pick up their dribble 10-15 feet away from the basket without finding an open teammate.
  - Fake & Fade means help defenders closest to the ball step at the drive and then fades back to their man
  - Help defenders do NOT give up full help - would rather help too little than too much
  - "Fading" defenders always close out with high hands
  - Would rather give up a speed dribble left-handed layup than a catch and shoot 3
  - Goal is to avoid long closeouts which give up open 3's
- Post Defense - The Man Left takes an aggressive approach to defending the post. Man Left does not allow any clean post entry feeds whatsoever. Post defenders are mostly expected to front the post. In conjunction with heavy ball pressure, there should never be an easy pass to the post
  - Always front the post if below the 3rd hash mark on the line
  - All perimeter rules remain the same if there is a post
  - Post defender will "Fake & Fade" when the ball is driven at them

## 7. Closeouts are Essential

Closing out properly on the ball is absolutely crucial in the Man Left defense. The fundamentals that players have learned since beginning to play basketball may need to be retaught differently. Closing out the "correct way" will end up being the wrong way if the opposing player drives right.

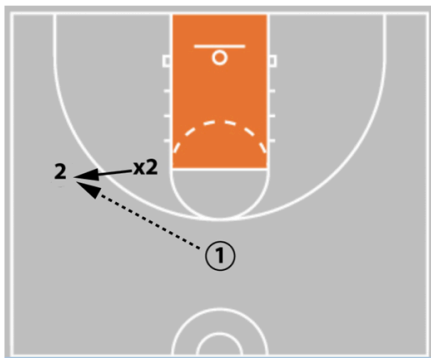
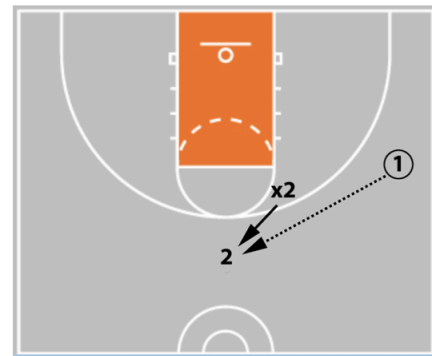
- Do NOT give up a right-handed drive or an open 3
- Closing out square (shoulder to shoulder) means there is a good chance you could give up a drive to the right
- There is no help to the right, which is why forcing the ball left is so critical
- Should end with a drive to the left

Closing out is slightly different from each third of the court, because the purposes of each closeout are different depending on where the ball is located.

## Closing out from **Middle Third** of the Court

Closing out in the middle is much different than closing out on the right side. The middle third of the court presents additional options for the offense.

- Take away the 3
- Do not get beat on a drive
- Influence the ball to the left (via dribbling or passing)



## Closing out from **Left Third** of the Court

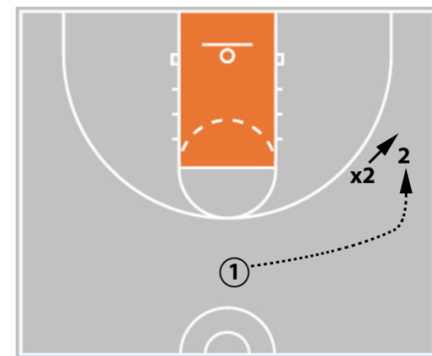
The purpose of this closeout is to force the offensive player to the “gray area”. The closeout must take away the 3 and right-handed drive. As always, players should close out with high hands and in a defensive stance.

- Place the left foot higher than the offensive player’s highest foot
- Left hand should close out to the right ear of the offensive player
- Force the offense to “deck the ball” and dribble toward the baseline

## Closing out from **Right Third** of the Court

Theoretically, a pass from the middle third to the right third should never happen. This is going to happen from time to time, however.

- Closeout straight up.
- Main priority is to not give up a 3
- Go across the offensive player and try to force the ball left
- Take away any drive to their right



## 8. Defending Screens & Cutters

There are different ways to defend these actions in the Man Left defense. A lot of this is predicated on the age and stage of the team you are coaching. Please reach out to Coach Rush to discuss what options are right and appropriate for your team.

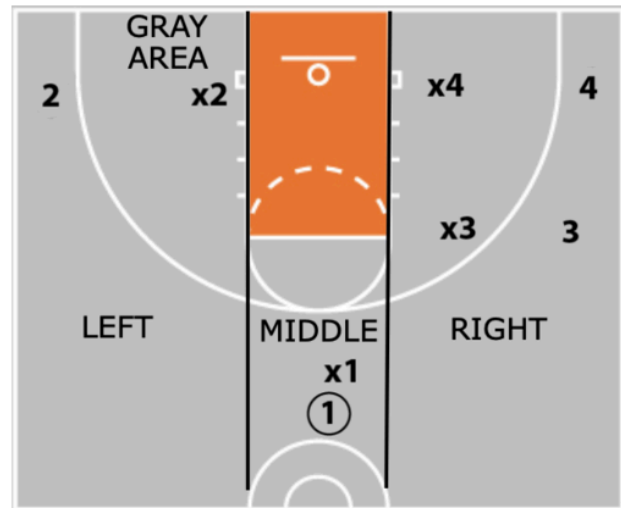
## 9. Defensive Positioning

The next several images will give visual examples of position players should have on the floor when the ball is in the different areas of the court.

### When the ball is in the **Middle Third** of the Court

Here are some keys to playing defense in the middle.

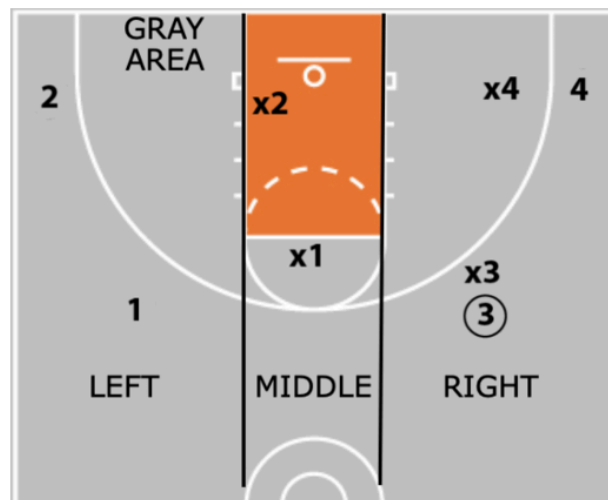
- Have the left foot straddle the offensive player's feet
- The defender (x3) on the right side should be in denial position, but not in an outright denial
- x2 and x4 should venture close to the paint to be in help position



### When the ball is in the **Right Third** of the Court

All passes going towards the right are heavily denied. Help defenders on the right side are aggressively denying their man the ball. There are three crucial points to successfully defending in the right third.

- Completely deny the ball one pass away from the ball on the right side
- x4 on the diagram should be denying the ball to the 4-man
- Do NOT allow players in right  $\frac{1}{3}$  to drive or pass right

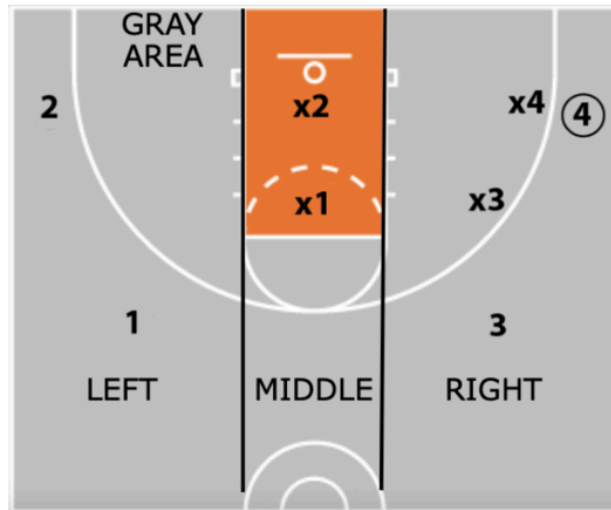


- Allow the ball to be passed left

Sometimes, the opposing offense can get the ball to the right baseline. When this happens, the on-ball defender must not give up baseline under any circumstances.

When the ball is funnelled to the far-right side of the court, the defense should be positioned as follows:

- When the ball is in the right corner, all defenders are in help
- On-ball defender forces the ball left (cannot give up ANY baseline drives)

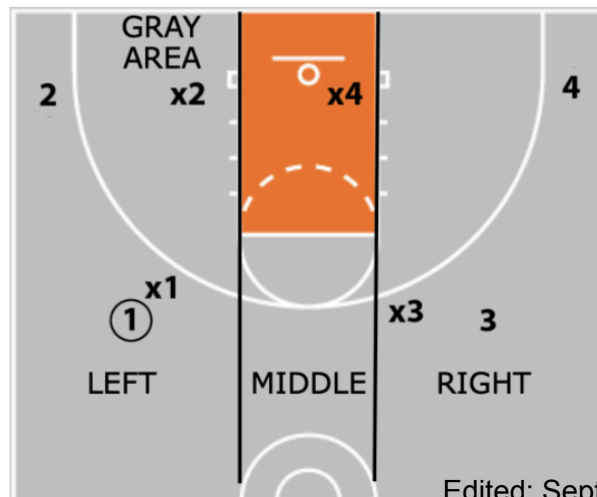


### When the ball is in the **Left Third** of the Court

When playing this defense, the ball is naturally going to go to the left side of the court. The offensive players will instinctively take whatever is given by the defense. For this defense it means the ball will end up on the left side of the court.

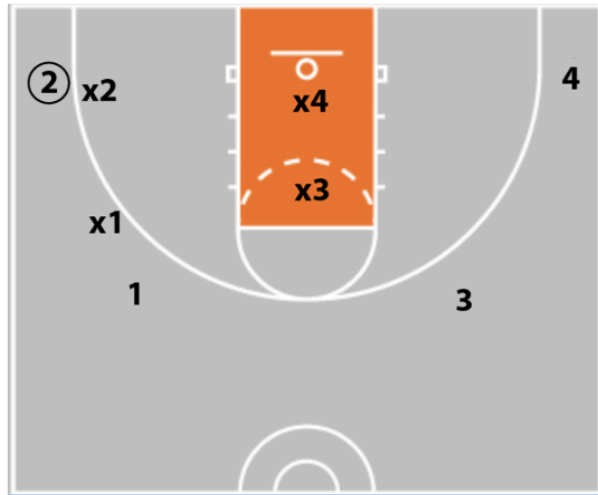
Forcing left means you can NOT allow the ball to be dribbled back to the right. The ball is essentially trapped on the left third for the offense.

- All passes going toward the right are heavily denied
- On-ball defender's left foot should be above the offensive player's feet
- Continue to allow the ball to be passed to the left



When the ball is funnelled to the far-left side of the court, the defense should be positioned as follows:

- The defender on the ball (x2) must force the ball left in this instance
- The goal is for the offensive player to only have the choice to dribble to the gray area
- Complete denial one pass away on the right third
- The help defenders must flood the paint



## 10. Drills & Live Situations

There are plenty of drills and live situation opportunities that can be used to help your players become used to the responsibilities and expectations of the Man Left Defense. Coach Rush has a drill book with drills they use with their teams that he is more than willing to share with you. Please reach out to him and ask for your copy.