

# Coaching Philosophy

As a youth basketball coach, you have one of the most important and exciting jobs in the world! You'll be teaching habits that will stick with these kids for the rest of their lives, and whether you like it or not, you'll be setting an example and teaching kid's lessons about life (good and bad). Kids are impressionable and they pick up on things. You have an obligation and responsibility to teach them the right things - in both basketball and life. When you think about it, teachers would do anything to get the enthusiasm that you get from your players. Kids actually like and want to play basketball. Your players look up to you, they listen to you, and you have an amazing opportunity to make a POSITIVE impact on their lives!

## **You have a very important and rewarding job!**

As a coach, what is your philosophy? Coaching philosophy is an important ingredient that all coaches utilize -- whether you know it or not. It's important to recognize, embrace, and refine your coaching philosophy. It will guide you, keep you on the right track, give your team an identity, and make you a better coach. All great coaches eventually acknowledge, reflect upon, and embrace their philosophy. You could say it becomes their "formula for success". For most coaches, their philosophy will change as they get more experience. This is a good thing. This is how you grow and improve as a coach.

There is no right or wrong philosophy. Every coach must have a philosophy that fits their personality and beliefs. But it is important for you to reflect on your philosophy, document it, and continually try to improve it. As a coach, part of your philosophy might be to focus on the fundamentals. Not only can fundamentals make your team really good -- but it puts the best interests of your players at the forefront.

# Basic Coaching Tips

1. Establish game time expectations and stick to them. For example, if a player is late and you've established that a late player doesn't play in the first half, then don't let them play in the first half -- even if they're your star player.
2. Don't yell at the referees. This gives your players permission to yell at them and it sets a bad example. Everyone, including referees, make mistakes. They're doing their best. If you disagree with a call, talk to the referee the way you would expect to be talked to if you made a mistake.
3. Bench players for inappropriate behavior during a game. Inappropriate behavior could be pushing a player, yelling at a referee, yelling at the crowd, or at a teammate.
4. Don't let players get away with not doing their best. If your players are not giving 100% of themselves, then bench them until they're ready.
5. Keep yourself in check and remember that you're dealing with youngsters. Yelling at them isn't going to get the results that you desire.
6. Establish a time-out ritual. This means that your players know exactly what to do and expect during a time out. One suggestion is to have benched players make room for players coming off the court. This way they can towel off and grab a drink while they're listening to the coach.
7. Call time outs to rest your players without making a substitution.
8. Call a time out to restore order if chaos is reigning on the court.
9. Use halftime to focus on what the team is doing right and what they need to do in the second half.
10. Don't use half time to focus on the negatives. This only deflates the players. Be positive!
11. Win with class and lose with dignity! Win or lose like you want the opposing team to win or lose.
12. Don't discuss tactics immediately after a game, save it for the next practice.
15. Keep all conversations before, during and after the game positive regardless of the outcome!

# Coaches First Day

At the first practice, provide a handout for the players and their parents. This handout could contain some of the following items:

- Your phone number, or how they can contact and communicate with you.
- Your game and practice schedules.
- Your goals for the team.
- A roster of all the players.
- Your policy regarding playing time. At this age all kids should play... winning is not the primary consideration. Explain your policy on excused and unexcused absences.
- You should mention how parents could help, such as keeping stats, driving to games, providing treats, helping with uniforms, post-game pizza parties, and maybe even assisting in practice.
- You could briefly discuss the common problem these days of unacceptable parent behavior at games... yelling advice to their own child, yelling at the refs and other team's players, and "coaching" from the stands.

When dealing with parents, be honest and open and show them that you really care about helping their child... get them on your side. Make yourself available to talk with them after a game. Be diplomatic about any "coaching" advice they have to offer. Rather than getting into an argument with them, just politely thank them for their interest... you obviously don't need to follow their advice, but you also don't have to be rude about it either! Remember that most parents are good people who care about their kids and just want what's best for them. Do not simply choose to ignore parents. When coaching youth basketball, even at the high school level, parents can help make or break you.

# Sample Youth Practice Schedule (Ages 7 to 10)

Here is a sample structure of a practice schedule for a youth team. It may not be exactly what you would do every practice. For example, some days you may spend more work on athletic skill work and spend 15 minutes at the beginning of practice to do so.

## 1. Dynamic Warm Up & Athletic Development Work - 10 to 15 minutes

It helps prevent injury, improves performance, and improves athletic ability. What good is a basketball player who is injured or is not athletic enough to utilize the basketball skills developed? The better the player moves, the better the player performs. There are a lot of players who have tremendous SKILLS, but lacked the ATHLETIC ability to make it to the next level.

## 2. Teaching Skills and Using Fun Drills to Improve Skills - 25 to 30 minutes

The #1 reason kids quit sports is because it's not fun anymore. Youth coaches' primary focus should be to teach skills and make it an enjoyable experience! This isn't high school, college, or even PRO basketball, so don't treat your practices like it is. Try the skill-fun drill technique. This means that you teach a skill, then follow up that skill with a fun game or drill to work on the skill. It helps break up the monotony of practice.

## 3. Practice Offense and Defense (Plenty of 2 on 2 & 3 on 3 work to teach skills) - 20 to 25 minutes

Spend some time going through offense and defense. It gives you a better chance for each player to get a better understanding of how a play is run. Then bring everyone together and continue to practice 5 on 5. Switch up with offense and defense with your players.

## 4. Cool Down - 5 minutes

AVOID STATIC (held) stretching with kids under the age of 10. At this age, the child's nervous system has not developed to the extent that they can properly use static stretching. As a result, this will decrease safety and effectiveness of the stretch. Use dynamic flexibility and full range of motion exercises.

# Sample Youth Practice Schedule (Ages 7 to 10)

## Dynamic Warm Up & Athletic Work - 10 minutes

- Dribble Tag - You could also alternate days with regular tag.
- Races from Different Positions - This is great to improve athletic ability and it's a fun way to for the kids to work on first step quickness. On your command whether it's a verbal or a visual cue, the kid's race to a spot (3-point line, free throw line).

You can alternate starting positions between standing, on your belly, on your back, facing the opposite direction, or anything else you can think of.

- Coach Says - This is a fun game to get the players to practice movements. Coach says a particular movement. Then, the child does what you say. It's kind of like Simon Says. Coach says "Do a push up."

You can do this with many different types of movements & directions, such as skips, backward skips, lateral skips, push-ups, partner pulls, crawls, lunge, squat, jump, hop, bound, lateral shuffle, and lateral crossover.

## Teaching Skills & Fun Drills - 25 minutes

- Jump Stop Drill - 5 minutes
- Form Shooting - 5 minutes
- Lay Ups - 5 minutes
- Pivot 21 - Lay Ups - 5 minutes

## Fun Games to Practice Offense and Defense - 20 minutes

- No Dribble Keep Away - 10 minutes
- Defensive Challenge - 10 minutes

# Sample Youth Practice Schedule (Ages 11 to 14)

Here is a sample structure of a practice schedule for a youth team. Of course, this is just a sample and things would be different every day, but this is a basic structure of how a practice may look.

## 1. Dynamic Warm Up & Athletic Work - 10 to 15 minutes

It helps prevent injury, improves performance, and improves athletic ability. What good is a basketball player who is injured or is not athletic enough to utilize the basketball skills developed? The better the player moves, the better the player performs. There are a lot of players who have tremendous SKILLS, but lacked the ATHLETIC ability to make it to the next level. Because it is the game of basketball, try to include a basketball in the warm up as much as possible.

## 2. Teaching Skills and Using Fun Drills to Improve Skills - 30 to 45 minutes

The #1 reason kids quit sports is because it's not fun anymore. Youth coach's primary focus should be to teach skills and make it an enjoyable experience! This isn't high school, college, or even PRO basketball, so don't treat your practices like it. Try the skill-fun drill technique. This means that you teach a skill, then follow up that skill with a fun game or drill to work on the skill. It helps break up the monotony of practice.

## 3. Drills & Games to Practice Offense and Defense - 15 to 25 minutes

Spend some time going through offense and defense. It gives you a better chance for each player to get a better understanding of how a play is run. Then bring everyone together and continue to practice 5 on 5. Switch up with offense and defense with your players.

## 4. End of Game Drill - 10 to 20 minutes

This can be anything, you can pretend there is 30 seconds left and it's a tie game. Make it fun but also gives them a chance to understand what needs to be done at the end of a game when the score is close.

## 5. Cool down with Light Stretching - 5 minutes

# Sample Youth Practice Schedule (Ages 11 to 14)

Dynamic Warm Up & Athletic Work - 15 minutes

Warmup #1 - With Basketball:

Stationary Ball Handling:

- Around the World - 30 sec
- Figure 8 - 30 sec
- Behind-the-back dribble - 30 sec
- Two Ball Dribble Crossover - 30 sec
- Two Ball Front-to-Back Dribble - 30 sec

Full Court Ball handling: (Incorporate Lay Ups if you want)

- 1/2 Speed Dribble
- Backpedal - 1/2 Speed Dribble
- Protect-the-Ball Dribble going backwards & forwards - Switch Hands at Half Court
- Crab Walk - Figure 8 while walking. Walk down the court forwards. Come back walking backwards.
- 3/4 Speed Dribble
- 3/4 Speed Crossover Dribble
- Full Speed Dribble
- Full Speed Crossover Dribble
- Full Speed Behind-the-Back Dribble
- Full Speed Inside Out Dribble
- Partner Passing - Shuffle and Pass - Chest, Bounce, & Overhead.

Warm up and Athletic Skill work without ball:

- Full Speed Defensive Shuffle without Ball - 15 to 25 feet - twice each direction
- Butt Kicks - Up the court
- High Knees - Down the court
- Lunge Technique - 2 sets of 10 reps
- Squat Jumps - 2 sets of 10 reps

Warm up #2 - Without Basketball

- Jog.
- Backpedal.
- Carioca.
- Defensive Shuffle - 50% to 75%
- Walking Lunge with Hamstring Stretch
- Side Hops.
- Skipping with Arm Swings.
- Butt Kicks
- Crab Walk
- High Knees
- Bear Crawl
- Squatting Form - 10 Reps
- Jumping and Landing
- 180 & 360 Degree Hops
- Diagonal One Leg Bounds - with 1 second Pause
- Tennis Ball Drops - Start on Belly - Get Up & Sprint

# Sample Youth Practice Schedule (Ages 11 to 14)

Teaching Skills and Using Fun Drills to Improve Skills - 40 minutes

- Two Ball Dribbling Drills - 5 minutes
- Form Shooting - 5 minutes
- Two Ball Shooting - 5 minutes
- Knock Out and Water Break - 5 minutes
- Teaching Motion Situations (Motion Drills - 2 on 2 & 3 on 3 work) - 10 minutes
- Wing - 1 on 1 - 4 minutes
- Defense Reaction & Conditioning Drill - 2 minutes
- Free Throws & Quick Water Break - 4 minutes

Drills & Games to Practice Offense and Defense - 25 minutes

- No Dribble Keep Away - 5 Minutes
- 4 on 3 - Overload Drill - 5 Minutes
- 4 on 4 - 5 minutes (Emphasize rules and teaching skills - after pass to wing, you must screen away. Similar to Situations Drill below.)
- 5 on 4 - Overload Drill - 5 minutes
- Situations Drill - 5 minutes

End of Game Drill - 10 minutes

Use the end of game drill to end practice in a fun fashion. It also gets players accustomed to end of game situations.

Cool down with Light Stretching - 5 minutes



# Basketball Overload Defense Drill

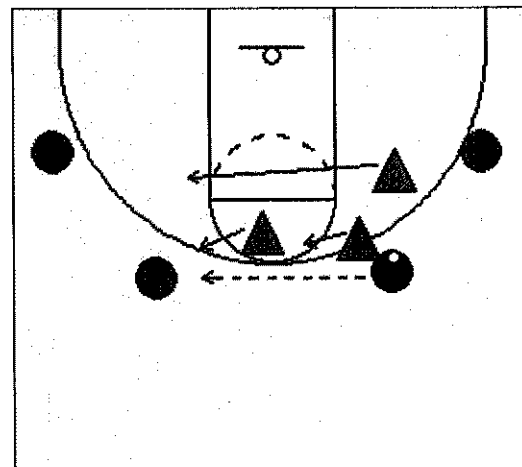
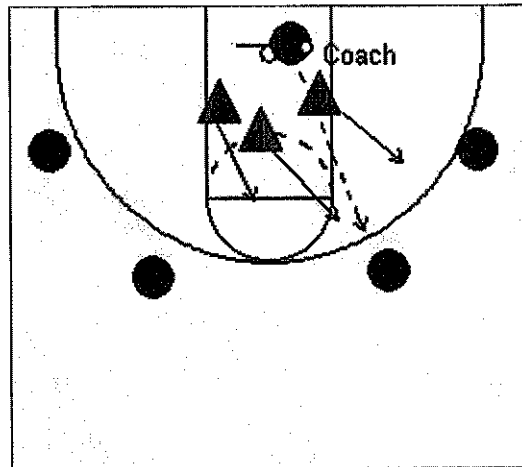
## Drill Purpose:

This is one of our favorite defensive drills. This drill really makes your players work, because you have one less defender while trying to stop the offense. If you are having problems with communication and rotating, this drill will force your players to do so. When your players go back to normal 5 on 5 defense, it will seem easy.

It can also be useful to practice rotations that may occur after a ball is passed out of a trap.

## Instructions

1. Have four offensive players around the perimeter and three defensive players in the lane.
2. A coach will pass the ball to one of the perimeter players and the defensive players have to sprint to a player and match up.
3. The offense will instantly try to score. The same defensive player cannot guard two passes in a row.



I've also seen variations of this drill done with 5 on 4, 3 on 2.

# The Defensive Challenge Drill

## Drill Purpose:

This drill is great because it provides a positive, fun twist to scrimmaging that encourages and rewards defense. It also gets your players in the mentality of, "I want to play defense."

## Instructions

Perform this drill with 3-on-3, 4-on-4, or 5-on-5 in the half-court or full court.

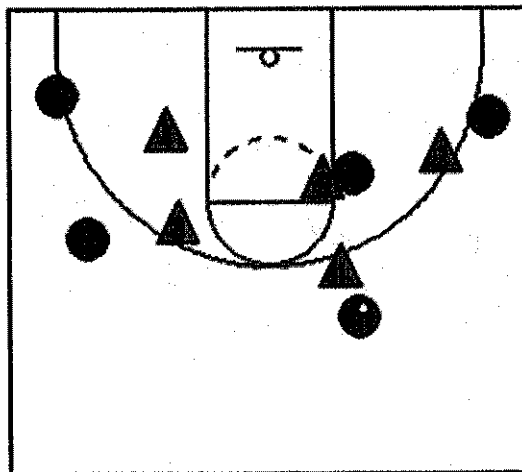
Split your players into two teams.

Only the defense can score points, either by forcing a turnover or securing a rebound.

If the defense gets a defensive stop, the team stays on defense.

If the offense gets a basket or the defense fouls a shooter, the offense and defense switch.

Play to 5 points or whatever you deem necessary.



## Teaching Tip

If the defense is having a reoccurring problem, fix it immediately so they know how to react the next time.

## Variations

- If the defense fouls two or three times in a row, the offense and defense switch.
- Play without any boundary lines. This gives the offense more freedom and makes the defense work harder.
- Force the defense to get 2 or 3 stops in a row before a point is awarded.
- If you have too many players, divide the group into 3 or 4 teams. If the defense does NOT get a stop, they rotate out. The offense rotates to defense and a new team comes in on offense.

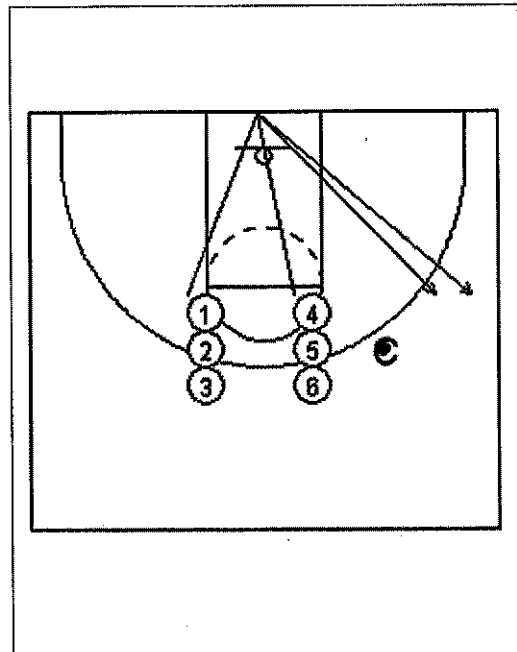
# Wing 1 on 1

## Drill Purpose

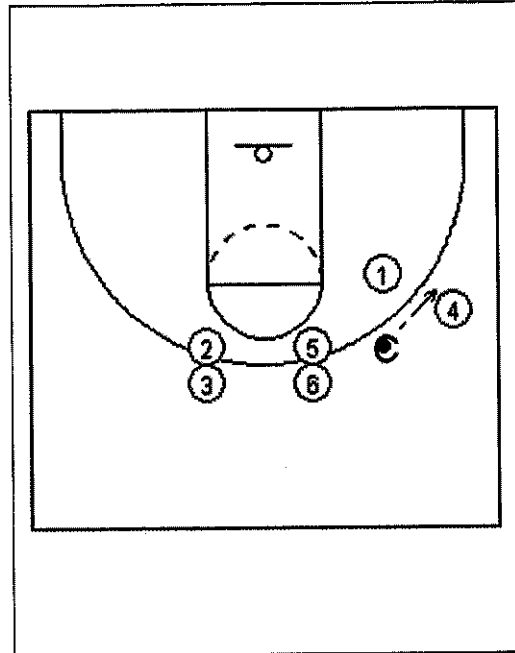
The purpose of this fun drill is to improve one on one offense and reading the defender to make the appropriate move.

## Drill Instructions and Diagrams

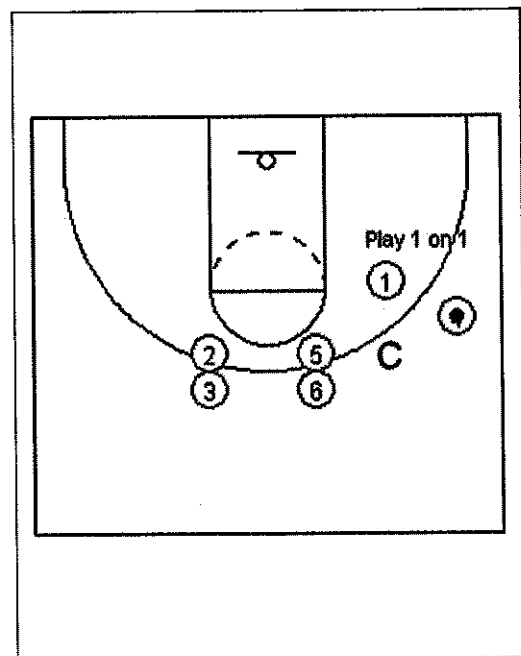
1. Players line up in 2 lines, one on each elbow, facing baseline.
2. Coach is on top on the right side with the ball.
3. Coach calls "Go."
4. First player in each line sprints to touch a spot on the baseline in the middle of the lane.
5. After touching spot, players race to the right wing.



6. Coach passes to the 1st player out to the wing.  
Other player becomes defense.



7. Offensive player must make offensive move  
against live defense.



#### Teaching Points.

- Either player can be on offense. The first player out gets the ball, not the player who started ball side.
- Limit the dribble the offense can use. If you have good players, limit to 1 dribble. In no situation should you allow more than 3.
- Play on half the court. If playing the right side, score must come on the right side. Theoretically in a game, there are defenders on the other side of the court

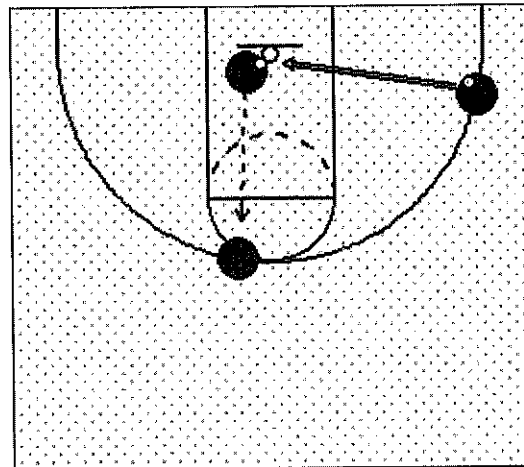
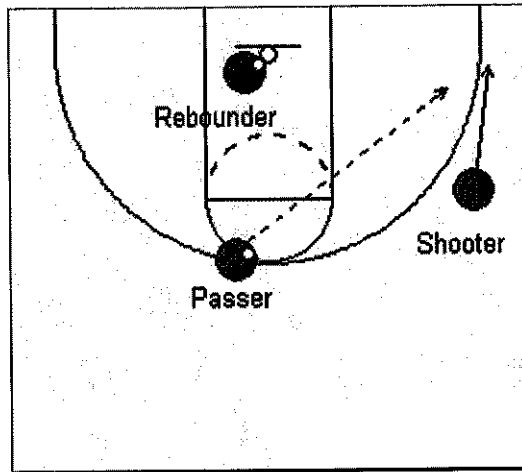
# Two Ball Shooting Drill

## Drill Purpose:

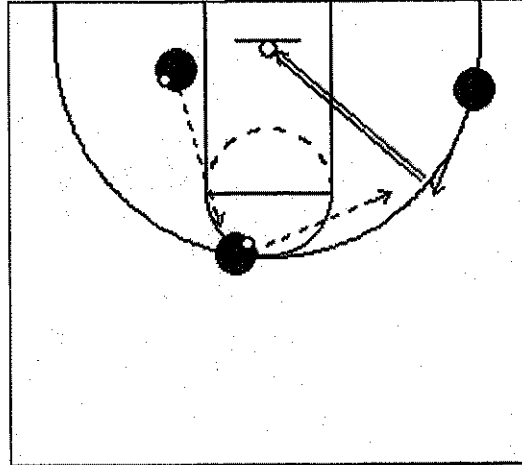
This drill allows the shooter to get a high number of shots in a short amount of time from different spots.

## Instructions

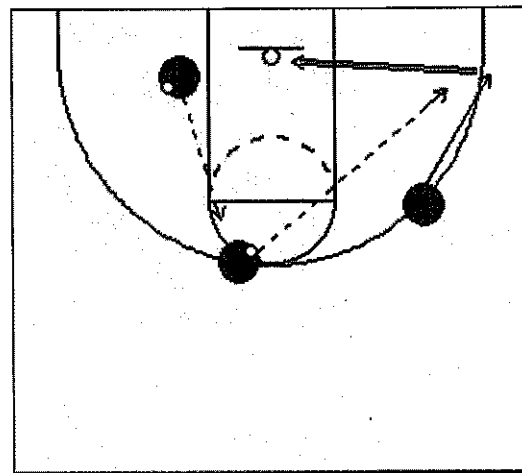
1. You need 3 players: a rebounder (Player 3), passer (Player 2), and shooter (Player 1).
2. Player 2 and the Player 3 start out with the basketballs.
3. Player 1 makes a cut to another spot on the floor and Player 2 throws a pass leading Player 1 to the spot.
4. Player 1 shoots the ball on the catch.
5. After Player 2 passed the ball to Player 1, Player 3 passes the ball to Player 2.
6. Player 3 rebounds the shot.



7. Player 1 cuts to back to a new spot and Player 2 passes him the ball.
8. Player 1 shoots the ball.
9. Player 3 passes the ball to Player 2 and goes to rebound the shot.



10. This pattern continues for a set amount of time or until a certain number of shots have been taken or made.



#### Teaching Tips & Points of Emphasis:

- Keep your hips low, so you can catch the ball and go straight up into your shot.
- Move at GAME SPEED. If you do NOT shoot at full speed, you'll never shoot the ball well during the game, because your brain/body is not accustomed the speed.
- Good Passes. Every pass should hit the shooter in the hands and lead them into their shot.
- Go to different spots on the floor.
  - Elbow to Elbow
  - Wing to Wing
- Change positions of the passer.
- Offensive Patterns. You can perform this drill with certain patterns and cuts. For example, from the wing, you could fade to the corner. From the corner, do v-cut and pop up to the wing for a shot.

# Motion Offense Situations Drill

## Drill Purpose:

This is one of my favorite drills, because it can be used for your motion offense and defense at the same time. It improves all of your defensive and offensive fundamentals. The defense faces game-like situations, while the offense utilizes offensive fundamentals to score.

## Instructions

1. Practice this drill with 4 on 4 or 5 on 5.
2. You provide a situation for the offense:  
For example, offense can only set back screens.

This does two things:

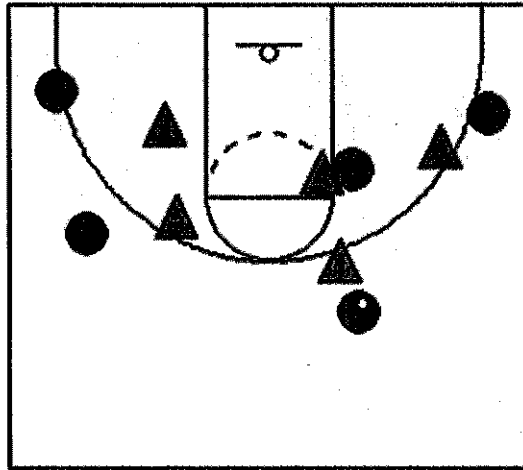
- Teaches the defense how to defend back screens.
- Teaches the offense how to play while setting back screens.

3. On your command, the offense tries to score.

If the offense scores, defense stays out there until they get a stop.

If the defense gets a stop, the next squad rotates in. If there are not enough players to rotate, offense and defense switches.

Any time a possession is over, the player with the ball speed dribbles to the half-court line to start again. The defense and offense sprint to their starting positions.



4. You can have one coach watch the offense and another coach watch the defense.

These are some other sample situations. I'm sure you can come up with more.

- Designated screen - All screens are down screens. All screens are ball screens. And so on.
- Designated cut - After a pass, all cuts are basket cuts.
- Designated shooter - Pick a player and all screens are set for this particular player and only this player shoots.
- No dribble - Offense cannot utilize the dribble to score.
- Lay up only in the first 5 passes.
- Two ball reversals before an attempted dribble penetration.
- Ball must touch post before a jump shot.
- Ball must touch the post twice before a 3-point shot.
- All 3's must come on a pass from the post.

You can use these situations alone or in combinations.



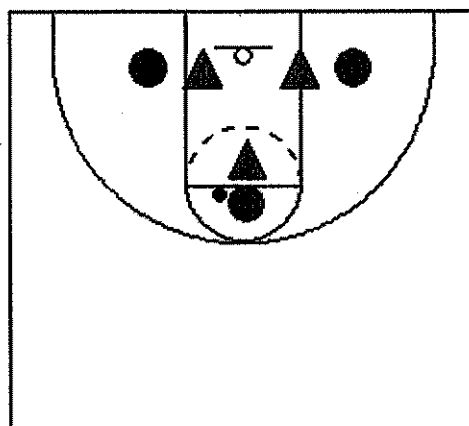
# 3-on-3 No-Dribble Keep Away

## Purpose of the Drill

This drill provides a fun way to teach kids to move without the ball to get open for a pass and provides a context for developing an understanding of effective spacing. For the passer, it provides practice in pivoting and protecting the ball from a defender. Obviously, it helps kids overcome dribble mania and to see the court.

## Instructions

1. The team on offense keeps the ball for two minutes, which is one round. Depending on the age range, you might consider finding a fun piece of music that lasts about two minutes to make the drill more engaging.
2. The team with the ball gets one point every time they complete a pass to a teammate.
3. There has to be a pass every five seconds. If the team does not pass within the five seconds, they lose a point and the counting starts over. They can get negative points, but this isn't likely (In fact, if this is happening, you should stop the drill and teach the prerequisite cutting skills more thoroughly). The coach will count each five second sequence out loud.
4. A steal taking more than five seconds to pass, dribbling, or a pass that goes out of bounds erases a point, but the 'offense' gets the ball back for the remainder of the round.



5. After one round, the offense and defense change roles and you play round two.
  
6. Play for two or three complete cycles and provide the kids with positive rewards for their total completed passes. For instance, you could give kids some skittles.
  
7. Feel free to adjust the time parameters to suit the age and abilities of your kids.

Points of Emphasis:

- Teach kids simple pivoting principles before turning them loose in this drill.
- Teach kids how to v-cut and backdoor cut.
- As the skill level of the kids advance, introduce screens away from the ball to free cutters.
- Provide defenders with the basics of defending the passing lanes effectively. This is a foundational drill for denial defensive techniques.

# Basketball Defensive Reaction Drill

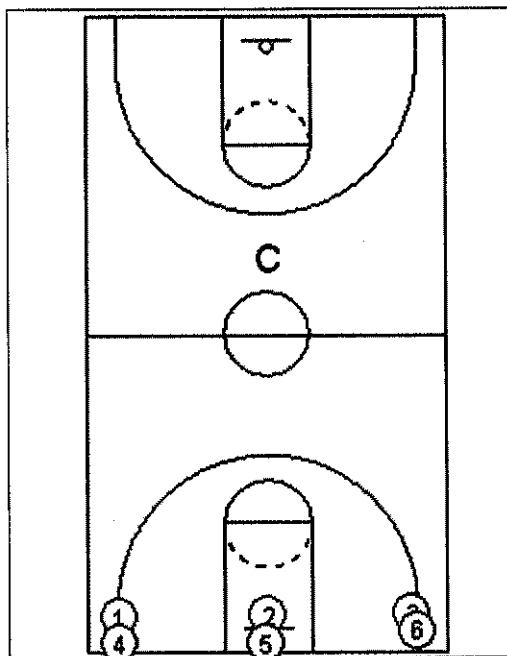
As coaches, we must find better ways to utilize our practice time. Just about everything we do has to have multiple purposes so we have the maximum amount of time to teach and prepare our players to be the best they can be.

Gone, I believe, are the days we can take 15 - 20 minutes out for practice to condition our players. Suicides, 17s, sprints, etc. are of limited effectiveness anyway, I think, but to use skill or team time to do them is a misplaced priority.

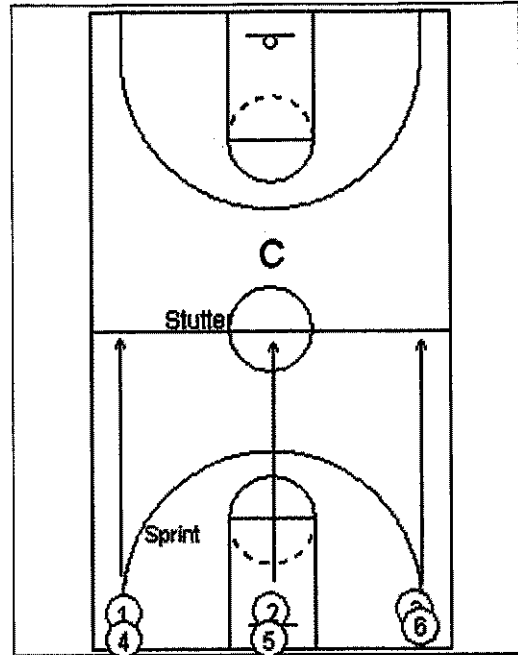
Here is a drill that conditions, reinforces defensive footwork, build intensity and only take a few minutes.

## Instructions

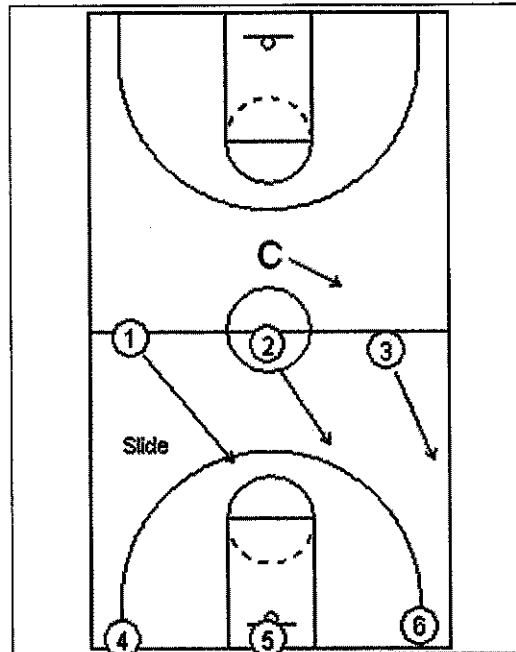
1. Start with team divided into as many lines as necessary to go 3 deep (12 players – 4 lines – 3 players in each line).



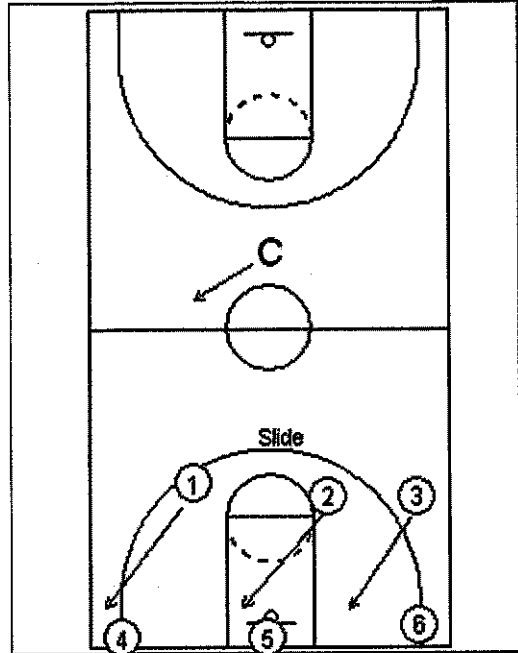
2. On the whistle, the first players in line sprint to mid-court and stutter-step.



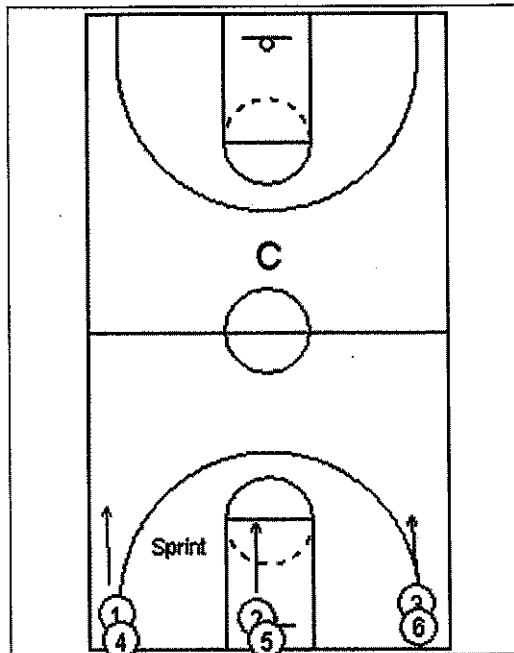
3. Coach points in a direction and players defensive slide diagonally back in the direction the coach points.



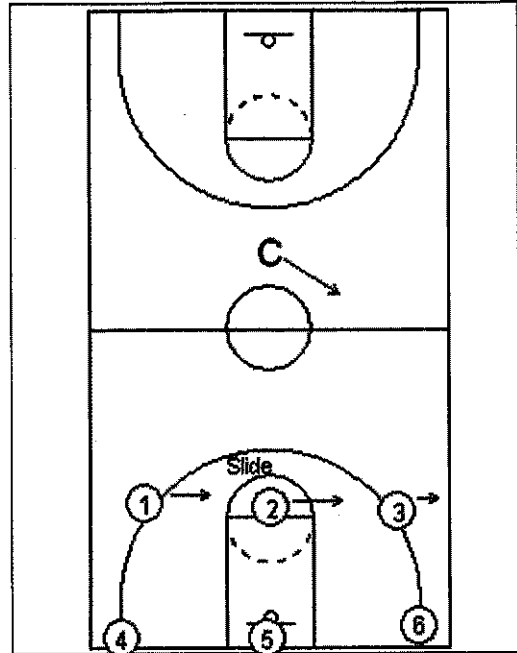
4. Coach points in other direction, players slide appropriately.



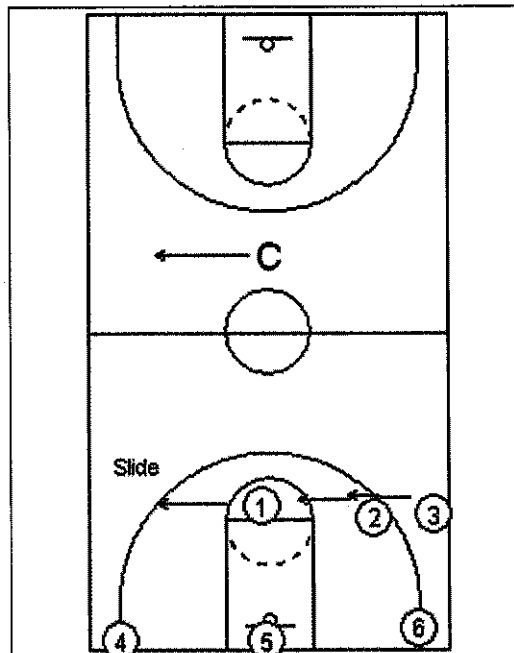
5. Players slide to the baseline, as soon as they touch the baseline, players sprint to foul line and stutter-step.



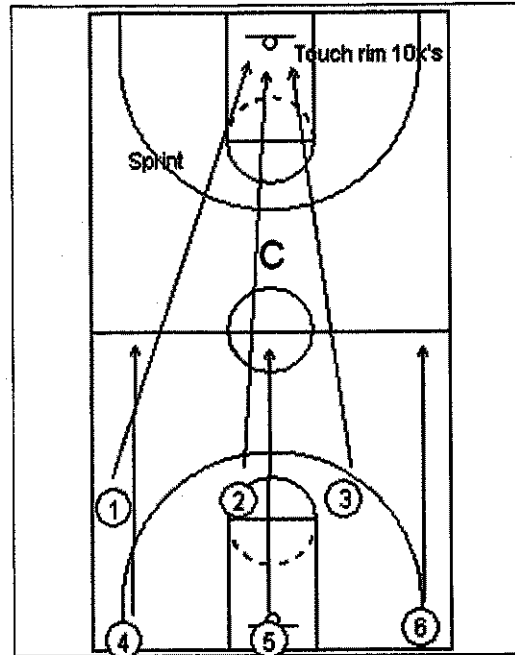
6. Coach points in a direction and players defensive slide laterally in that direction.



7. Coach points in other direction, players slide appropriately.



8. On the whistle, first group of players sprint to the opposite end of the court and touch the rim 10 Xs. At the same time, second group of players sprint from the baseline to mid-court to begin their rotation.



Start with 2 direction changes, then go to 4 on the second rotation, 6 on the 3rd rotation and 8 on the 4th.

Inside the 5 minutes it takes to run this drill, you have been able to practice your diagonal defensive slide, lateral defensive slides, sprints, reactions, jumping and conditioning.

Because the drill only takes a couple of minutes, intensity remains high and because the players are practicing a skill they know will make them better, their willingness to complete the drill is not an issue.