

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

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

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

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

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

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



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL:

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

FOUNDATIONAL LEVEL:

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

ADVANCED LEVEL:

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

PERFORMANCE LEVEL:

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

USA BASKETBALL

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

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

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

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

STAGE 1: ACTIVE START

*(Found in USAB Introductory Level)
Approximate Age: 0-6 years old*

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

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



STAGE 2: FUNDAMENTALS

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

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

STAGE 3: LEARNING TO TRAIN

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

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

STAGE 4: TRAINING TO TRAIN

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

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

STAGE 5: TRAINING TO COMPETE

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

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

STAGE 6: TRAINING TO WIN

(Found in Performance Level)
Approximate Age: 17+

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

STAGE 7: BASKETBALL FOR LIFE:

The Retirement/Retention Stage (Found in All Levels)

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

APPLYING THE PROGRESSIVE COACHING METHOD TO BASKETBALL



WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE COACHING?

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

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

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

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

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

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

EXAMPLE:

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

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



DECISION MAKING:

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

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

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

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



DIFFERENTIATION:

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

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



USA BASKETBALL PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL





INTRODUCTORY LEVEL

BALL HANDLING & DRIBBLING



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

SKILL 1

HOW TO HOLD A BASKETBALL

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 2

FAMILIARITY WITH THE BASKETBALL

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 3

TRIPLE-THREAT POSITION

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

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

- Players should be in a balanced basketball stance with the basketball just above the waist.
- Hand placement, introduced earlier, should be such that a shot can be taken from the position.
- Hands should resemble a large, spread out “T” as formed with the thumbs.
- Later in the level, as players improve, it is important to emphasize using the pads of the fingers to hold the basketball.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 4

STATIONARY BALL-HANDLING: THE FIRST DRIBBLE

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

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 5

DRIBBLING TO ADVANCE THE BASKETBALL

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

DRILL: DRIBBLING IN A LINEAR PATH



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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

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



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL

FOOTWORK AND BODY CONTROL



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

SKILL 1

STOPPING AND LANDING

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 2

PIVOTING

This skill teaches pivoting for the young player.

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

SKILL 3

RUNNING, PIVOTING, AND BODY CONTROL

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

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

SKILL 1

PROPER STANCE



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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 2

INTRODUCING INITIAL LATERAL MOVEMENT

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL

PASSING AND RECEIVING



OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES: PASSING

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

SKILL 1

BOUNCE PASS TO COACH

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

DRILL 1: TWO-HAND BOUNCE PASS

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



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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



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

DRILL 2: TWO-HAND CHEST PASS

Initial player positioning is similar to the positioning described above.

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS



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

SKILL 2

BOUNCE PASS TO TEAMMATE

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

DRILL 1: TWO-HAND BOUNCE PASS

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DRILL 2: ONE-HAND BOUNCE PASS

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 3

CHEST PASS TO TEAMMATE



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

DRILL 1: TWO-HAND CHEST PASS

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DRILL 2: ONE-HAND CHEST PASS

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

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES: RECEIVING

SKILL 1

INDIVIDUAL RECEIVING

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

DRILL 1: CATCH OWN DRIBBLE

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DRILL 2: CATCH OWN PASS OFF WALL

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 2

CATCH PASS FROM COACH

DRILL 1: CATCH BOUNCE PASS

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DRILL 2: CATCH CHEST PASS

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 3

CATCH BOUNCE PASS AND CHEST PASS FROM TEAMMATE

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES

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



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL



REBOUNDING

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

SKILL 1

SNATCHING THE BASKETBALL

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DEFENDING THE REBOUNDER

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



INTRODUCTORY LEVEL



SHOOTING

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

SKILL 1

BASIC SHOOTING MECHANICS

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

BALANCE

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

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

ELBOW

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

EYES

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

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



FOLLOW-THROUGH

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 2

SHOOTING FROM A POSITION ON THE KNEES

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

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

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

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



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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 3

SHOOTING FROM A STANDING POSITION

DRILL 1: SHOOTING TO SELF WITH ONE HAND

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

DRILL 2: SHOOTING TO SELF WITH TWO HANDS

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

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



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



DRILL 3: SHOOTING AGAINST A WALL WITH ONE HAND

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

DRILL 4: SHOOTING AGAINST A WALL WITH TWO HANDS

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 4

SHOOTING FROM A POSITION ON THE GROUND

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

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

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



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 5

SHOOTING ON A BASKETBALL HOOP

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

DRILL 1: SHOOTING ON A BASKETBALL HOOP WITH ONE HAND

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

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL

TEAM DEFENSIVE CONCEPTS



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

DRILL 1: SHOOTING ON A BASKETBALL HOOP WITH ONE HAND

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



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

SKILL 1

UNDERSTAND DEFENDING ONE OFFENSIVE PLAYER

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

INTRODUCTORY LEVEL

TEAM OFFENSIVE CONCEPTS



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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



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

SKILL 1

PROPER FLOOR AND PLAYER AWARENESS

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 2

RECOGNIZING SPOTS ON THE FLOOR

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

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



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 3

INBOUNDING THE BASKETBALL

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 4

SPACING

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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



SKILL 5

TRANSITION FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE

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

- Start players in five lines at one end of the court. Without the basketball, and on command of the coach, have the first player in each line sprint to the opposite baseline while remaining in their lane.
- Once completed, the players should rotate lines so that each player gets a turn running through each lane. The drill is complete when all the players have run each of the lanes.
- Next, perform the same drill but add basketballs. The middle lane dribbles the basketball while the outside two lanes pass a basketball back and forth while sprinting in their lanes.
- Next, have the middle lane pass the basketball back and forth with the inside lane players while sprinting down the court. At the same time, the outside two players will dribble a basketball.
- Progress the drill with three players inside the middle lane running in a circle with their hands ready. The coach will pass the basketball to one of the players. This player will then dribble the basketball in the middle lane while the other two players sprint the outside two lanes to the other end. If appropriate, the sequence can end with a pass for a layup.
- Continue this drill using five players. One of the inside two player will sprint to the low post area and the other will sprint to the high post area. The dribbler should make a pass to the outside lane player who will then pass to one of the post players up ahead of the sequence.
- The last phase in this transition should be the middle player dribbling to the top of the key while the other 4 run in their lanes. Allow the dribbler to make a choice on who to pass to
- Progress the drill until all players have had the opportunity to play all of the lanes.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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

