

How to practice in the off season...

Some players practice all summer and never get any better, while others improve dramatically. Why? It's has to do with practicing correctly, or what you really need to practice to improve. All players need to work on (1)ball handling skills, (2)shooting, (3)work under the backboard, (4)offensive moves, (5)free-throw shooting, (6)fingertip tipping and jumping drills.

Practice at home, four or five days a week. Just playing in a summer league won't do a lot to help your fundamentals.

Ball-Handling

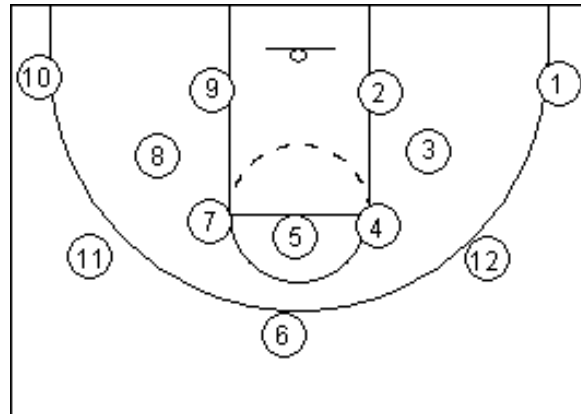
Spend 10 minutes doing our standard ball-handling drills, and dribbling drills. These include pinches, fingertips, slams, circles, drops, crazy eights, etc.

Under the Backboard (Mikan Drill)

Do this drill under the basket before your shooting practice. Become familiar with how the ball comes off the backboard, and at different angles. Start by standing right under the basket. Step on the left foot and do a baby hook lay-up on the right side, using the backboard. Catch the rebound and step on the right foot and do the baby hook lay-up on the left side using your left hand. No dribbling is allowed. Repeat this continuously alternating right and left sides for a couple minutes. This will help you with your lay-ups, both right and left-handed, and give you a better feel for the backboard.

Spot Shooting

See the diagram showing the more common places to shoot on the court. Spend time taking a certain number of shots from each of these spots. Always follow and rebound any missed shots with a lay-up. Start with the shorter shots, working on good one-handed technique with your shoulders square, your elbow in, proper wrist cock and fingertip release and with a nice follow through, getting back-spin (rotation). Extend your range out to the 3-point range.



Offensive Moves

If you are an outside player, work on the outside moves. Inside, post-up players work on the inside, post-up moves. All around players, do them all!

Outside, Perimeter Players

Refer to your Outside Moves handout.
Do each of these moves five times:

First, from the right side of the court: make sure your left foot is the pivot foot, and you jab step with your right foot.

1. Jab step- drive – lay-up.
2. Jab step - crossover – lay-up.
3. Jab step - pull back - jump shot.
4. Jab step - drive - jump shot.
5. Jab step - crossover - jump shot.

Then, repeat all five moves from the left side of the court. Make sure your right foot is the pivot foot, and you jab step with your left foot. Shoot all lay-ups from this side, left-handed.

NOTE: The pivot foot designated in the above drills are for purposes of doing the drills only. In a game setting, which foot becomes the pivot foot often depends on how you receive the pass from your teammate. See "Which foot becomes the pivot foot" on the "Outside Moves" page.

Inside, Post-Up Players

Refer to your Inside Post-up Moves handout.

Do each of these moves five times:

1. Drop step to baseline, right side.
2. Drop step to lane, jump hook, right side.
3. Pivot, face defender, jab step, baby jumper, right side
4. Pivot, face defender, fake shot, up and under move, right side.
5. Drop step to baseline, left side.
6. Drop step to lane, jump hook, left side.
7. Pivot, face defender, jab step, baby jumper, left side
8. Pivot, face defender, fake shot, up and under move, left side.
9. Elbow shooting drill (see 2-Man Shooting Drills).

Free Throw Shooting

See the Free Throw Shooting handout for fundamentals, attitude, and a practice routine. Shoot 25 free throws. Keep a record of your shooting percentage.

Tipping Drill

Stand under the basket on the right side and throw the ball up on the backboard. Jump as high as you can, and tip the ball with your right hand fingertips 10 times. Try to tip the last one in the basket. Repeat this on the left side, using your left hand. This will help improve your fingertip control and play under the basket, as well as improving your leaping ability.

Conditioning

You must be in excellent physical condition to play the game well. Shooting skills, concentration, and basic fundamentals deteriorate when you are tired. In the off season, don't forget conditioning. Run a couple miles 3 or 4 days a week. Do some wind sprints, or 100 yard dashes. Jumping rope is also good for developing quick feet, as well as for conditioning. Be ready when the first day of practice arrives!

BASIC OFFENSIVE TIPS

1. Practice, practice, practice shooting. Work with your shooting form, the "platform", "L", "hinge" and "gooseneck" so that you learn to shoot with your fingertips and get back-spin on your shot ("rotation"). You may not be strong enough yet to do this, but most good shooters eventually learn this. To perfect your shooting technique, practice shots within just a few feet of the basket, every day. Then practice lay-ups, free-throws, 2-pointers, even 3-pointers, and eventually learn to shoot a jump-shot. Don't be afraid to take a good shot. Look for a chance to shoot. But don't force bad shots.

Learn the "triple-threat" position, the proper stance so you will have the option of being able to shoot, pass or dribble.

2. Become a good dribbler and ball-handler. Dribbling and ball-handling are the foundation skills for almost any offensive move with the ball. Practice dribbling drills and moves for 15 minutes every day.

3. Learn the "triple-threat" position, the proper stance so you will have the option of being able to shoot, pass or dribble.

4. Be a good passer. Bad passing and turnovers will destroy a team faster than anything! Make good, short, quick, crisp passes...they're hard to intercept. Avoid long cross-court passes, unless your teammate is wide open. Learn to use your peripheral vision and avoid throwing the ball to your opponent. Make a good pass that your teammate can easily catch. A really good passer can pass to a teammate without looking directly at her. Avoid telegraphing your passes (more in practice). Learn how to make good bounce passes. Learn when not to pass and avoid passing into a crowd. See also: Pairs Passing Drill, 3 Man Passing Drill.

5. Court awareness. Always know where the ball is, don't turn your back on the ball. "Survey" the court. Look for the open teammate with your peripheral vision. Look to the "weak side" of the floor for an easy "back-door" pass and lay-up. Learn to "cut" and find an open area on the floor, where your teammate can pass to you for an easy shot.

6. Except for the point guard, go hard for the offensive rebound. Many easy baskets are scored on second and third chances, if you can get the rebound (see Rebounding Tips). The point guard, 1, should stay back out on top to prevent the other team's fast break (if they get the rebound). If 1 drives to the basket for a shot, 2 (or 3) should stay back. Also, get in the good habit of following your own shot after you shoot. Many times, if your shot is too short or too hard, it will come off the rim right back toward you. Expect this when you shoot, and go get it! You may get a second chance to make that basket. Three of the five players should always go hard for the offensive rebound, one is half-rebounding and half-preventive mode, and one is always back to prevent the opponent's fast break.

7. Get the ball down the floor quickly, fast-break whenever possible and beat the defense down the court. But play under control at all times. Don't try to go faster than you are able!--you'll lose the ball or make a bad pass. It's difficult even for high school kids to

learn how to play with quickness and speed, while still staying under control. Remember: "You must be quick...but never hurry."

8. Avoid too much dribbling as this just allows the defense time to reset. Quick passing and cutting is the secret. But never give up your dribble without being able to pass or shoot the ball. John Wooden, a retired famous coach from UCLA, told his players, "You should always end your dribble with either a pass or a shot." Don't stop your dribble until you can do either. Learn how to jump stop at the end of your speed dribble.

9. Post-up players (4 and 5) must learn two basic post-up moves, the drop-step, and the jump hook. Ask your coach to teach you these moves. After learning these basic moves, you can develop other variations of these moves.

10. Move without the ball. Don't stand still. Set picks, make cuts through the paint, or "back-door". Be ready to rebound.

Ball Handling

Do ball handling drills at the start of nearly every practice and throughout the entire season. Players can really improve their ball handling skills by the end of the season. Very importantly, these drills can also be done at home, in the off-season, without the rest of the team. We have one of our better ball handlers lead the drill, and face the team. All the other players line up in rows facing the leader, and spread out so they don't get into each other's way. Everyone has a ball.

These are the drills: Do each one about 30 to 60 seconds and then move to the next one. With all of these drills, try to keep your eyes forward, without looking at the ball.

Finger Grabs:

Hold the ball with the fingertips, squeezing it while rotating it back and forth from hand to hand. The ball should not touch the palms of the hands.

Pound the ball:

Pound or slap the ball hard from hand to hand.

Circles:

Move the ball in a circular motion around one leg, then the other leg. Then circle around the back. And then circle around the head. Then combine them and move the ball in circles around your head, then down your body, down around your knees, and then around your ankles. Then come back up again. Be sure to use your fingertips, not the palms.

Figure Eights:

Spread your legs out wide with the ball in front of you. Move the ball around through your legs in a figure-of-eight motion. Keep your eyes forward and don't let the ball hit the floor. After 30 seconds, reverse the direction.

Tipping:

Tip the ball back and forth from one hand to the next, starting with your hands straight up over your head. Then gradually move the ball down, while continuing to tip it back and forth. Go down to your chest, then your waist, knees, and ankles, and then back up again.

Drops:

Put the ball between your feet and grab it with both hands. Start with the left hand behind your left leg and your right hand in front of your right leg. Drop the ball and let it bounce once. Quickly, move your left hand in front of your left leg and your right hand behind your right leg, and catch the ball as it bounces up. Drop it again and switch your hands back to the original position (left behind, right in front) and catch it. Repeat this motion continuously. For a more difficult variation, try catching the ball before it actually hits the floor!

Dribbling...

Dribbling is one of the most fundamental skills that must be learned. Not only is it important to learn how to dribble well, but it is important to know when, and when not, to dribble. One player who over-dribbles can kill a team's offensive motion and momentum. To become a good dribbler and ball handler, you must practice dribbling as often as you can, using both hands.

You may dribble:

1. To advance the ball up the court.
2. To drive to the hoop.
3. To get open for a shot.
4. To open up a passing lane, to have a better chance of completing a pass.
5. To get out of a trap.
6. To kill the clock at the end of a game.

How to Dribble

Use your fingertips, not the palms of your hands.. Basketball is played on the tips of your fingers and the balls of your feet. Use your forearm and wrist to bounce the ball. Don't look at the ball... keep your head up and eyes forward. You must learn to use either hand. So when doing drills, always work both hands.

When the defender is up close on you ("Control Dribble"):

When a defender is close guarding you, you should use the "control dribble". Keep in a somewhat crouched, bent over position. Keep your body between the ball and the defender. Keep the ball low to the floor, and close to your body. Keep your other arm straight out in front of you, as a guard against the defender. You can't push off, or grab the defender, but you can keep a "stiff-arm" to keep the defender from reaching around you. Do not stop, or give up, your dribble until you can either pass or shoot. Once you stop your dribble, you are "dead in the water" (a boat with no engine)... and the sharks (the double team) will close in on you soon.

In the open court ("Speed Dribble"):

To move the ball quickly down the floor use the "speed dribble". Push the ball forward, ahead of you several feet. Bounce the ball at least waist high. As always, keep your head up, and visualize the whole court, so you can find the open teammate. Move as fast as you can, but never faster than you can control the ball. You must always be in control. As Coach Wooden has said, "You must be quick, but never hurry." Often a jump stop at the end of the speed dribble will allow you to maintain control and avoid a traveling call (see Learning the Jump Stop).

Crossover Dribble

Simply, the crossover dribble has you switch dribbling from one hand to the other, by bouncing the ball in front of you across to the other side. Then the other hand picks up the ball and you are now dribbling with the opposite hand. You can use this dribble to quickly change your direction on the court. For example, you could be on the point, dribbling with your right hand to the right wing, then suddenly crossover the dribble to the left and drive up the lane.

In and Out Dribble

The "in and out" dribble is a good fake move to help you get around a defender and take it to the hoop. With this move, you make one bounce in front of you as if you were going to crossover, but instead of picking the ball up with your other hand, you just roll your dribbling hand over the top of the ball, and bring it sharply back and go hard around the defender. For example, if you are dribbling right-handed, make one dribble to the left in front of you and "dip" and put your weight on your left foot. To the defender, this looks like you will crossover and go left. Instead, roll your right hand over the top of the ball and bring it back quickly to the right, push off the left foot, and go hard around the right side of your opponent.

Hesitation Dribble ("Rocker Move")

This is another fake move to help you get around the defender in the open court. You speed dribble up to the defender, then suddenly come to a stop by putting your inside foot forward and "rocking" backward onto your outside foot. Then as the defender closes, you blow around his side, resuming the speed dribble, straight to the hoop. For example, you are speed dribbling with your right hand. As you approach the defender, you stop suddenly by putting your left foot forward, and then rocking back on the right foot. This hesitation throws the defender's timing off. Then push hard off the right foot, and speed dribble around his right side. You can also use this move and combine it with a crossover dribble and go hard left.

Behind the Back Dribble, Through the Legs Dribble

You used to be considered a "hot dog" if you dribbled behind your back, or through your legs. But not any more! These moves are very useful when used correctly, in the right situations. A good use for these dribbles is in the open court, such as a guard bringing the ball down the floor against pressure from a defender. As you are dribbling right with your right hand, the defender gets position and over-plays you to the right. Quickly, you do a behind the back, or between the legs dribble to crossover to the other hand, and change your direction to the left, leaving your defender in the dust! Why not just do an easier crossover dribble? -- because the defender is right in front of you and could steal the crossover. By going behind the back, or through the legs, you can better protect the ball by keeping your body between the ball and the defender.

To do the behind the back dribble, dribble the ball once behind you and pick up the dribble with the opposite hand. For example, you are dribbling with the right hand. Get your body ahead of the ball on your right side, then crossover bounce it once behind you over to the left hand. The between the legs move is similar, except with one bounce through the legs to the other hand.

The Basic Shots -- the Lay-up

The lay-up is the easiest shot and the first shot you should learn. It's not as easy as it looks at first, as a lot of kids have difficulty getting the correct footwork, and shooting off the correct foot. Then you must also learn to use either hand, and eventually do the reverse lay-up.

Footwork

When dribbling toward the basket, move slightly to one side of the hoop to create the proper angle. If you're on the right side, dribble right-handed, and plant your left (inside) foot and jump off that foot, and finally shoot with your right hand. As you raise your right hand, your right knee should also elevate. Pretend there is a string attached to your right hand and your right knee. Reverse this form if shooting from the left side.

As you approach the hoop, take a half step with your outside foot or the one farthest from the hoop, then take a full stride with your inside foot pushing off the court. When jumping your outside knee should be bent. Go directly toward the basket, with your head up and eyes focused on the backboard. Go up strong and straight to the hoop. Don't shy away if there is a defender, just go strong to the hoop. You may get fouled and get a three point chance.

Aim

Always use the backboard ("use the glass") when shooting lay-ups from either side. Aim for the box above the rim, slightly to your side of the center. Focus in on this area; don't watch the ball. Keep your head up.



The Push Release

Younger players who are not yet strong enough for the underhand release should use the push release. Release the ball with the back of your hands facing you. Extend your shooting arm, as you push the ball to the hoop off your fingertips. You should go up with two hands, then release the ball with your outside hand. A very young player may need to shoot the ball with two hands.



Underhand Release

As you get stronger, you should develop the underhand shot. This release results in a softer shot, and more control when you are moving at high speed. Release the ball with your palm up and arm extended. Let the ball roll off your palm and then your fingertips, and lay the ball softly off the backboard. Use two hands going up, but then release the ball with your outside hand at the top of your jump. Be strong and concentrate... "finish"!



Here is a simple drill or technique to help teach the footwork.

Have the players get into a line near the right side of the basket (to shoot the right-handed lay-up). Each player takes a turn. You can use more than one basket if you have enough assistants to watch each player's technique. This drill works on correct footwork. Have the player (with a ball) face the right side of the backboard with both feet together. Then have her take one step forward with the inside (left) foot, plant that foot and jump off of it and shoot the right-handed lay-up. When jumping, the right thigh comes up with the knee bent. Have each player work on this technique. Then try it on the run (without dribbling), and then with dribbling. Do the left side also... on this side you step forward and plant the right (inside) foot, and raise the left thigh and leg.

The Set Shot, Shooting Form

The set shot, the lay-up and the hook shot, were about the only shots before the jump shot came along. The set shot is still used for free throws and perimeter shots, or shots when the shooter is wide open. However, the shooting technique used with the set shot is the same basic technique employed by the jump shot.

Start with shots only one foot from the basket, to develop correct technique. Move farther away as you get better, but do not sacrifice correct technique. Practice shooting from locations where you will likely shoot from in a game.

Stance

Have your feet about shoulder width apart. If you shoot right-handed, your right foot should be slightly forward, and your weight should be on the balls of your feet (not the heels). Your shoulders and body should be square to the hoop, although some great shooters are more comfortable with the side that the ball is on turned a little toward the hoop (find out which is most comfortable for you). Your knees should be bent a little as your thigh muscles will provide power for your shot. Don't move sideways when shooting. Stay balanced.

Holding the ball

Use both hands to hold the ball, but only your shooting hand will actually propel the ball forward. Don't shoot two-handed. Your shooting hand is the "platform" and should be underneath the ball with your wrist cocked back. Your other hand helps support or balance the ball, but does not enter into the actual shooting of the ball. Your non-shooting hand should actually come off the ball just before you release the ball, so that you are shooting with one hand, just your shooting hand. Use your fingertips, not palms, to hold and release the ball.

Here is a method to learn what the correct "platform" is. Extend your shooting arm straight forward with your palm facing up and let the ball sit comfortably your hand (fingers comfortably apart). Now in one motion, bend the elbow while rotating the forearm, wrist and hand outward and upward, and under the ball so that the ball is now resting on your hand above your right shoulder with the wrist cocked back. The shoulder is the "hinge", the elbow points toward the hoop and an "L" is formed by the forearm and the arm (looking from the shooting arm side). Your elbow should be in and pointing at the basket.



Set Point

The set point is where you position the ball just prior to releasing the ball. If you are right-handed, have the ball to the right of your face, a little toward the right shoulder. Don't line the ball up in the center of your face, as this may result in your shooting elbow flying away from your body, and could actually cause your wrist to turn sideways (supinate) when you release the ball, imparting a side-spin. Also, it is best that the ball is as high as your forehead, or even higher (if you are strong enough or close to the basket),

in order to keep your shot from being blocked. Younger players who have less strength will have a lower set point, perhaps even below the shoulder, in order to get more power. As the youngster matures, his set point should move higher.

Upward Force

Most of the power in your shot should come from the upward force of your jump (in the jump shot), or the upward force from your thighs moving upward (in the free throw). You should not try to power up longer shots with your arm, wrist or hand muscles. Let the big muscles in the legs do the work. Release your shot on the upward force of the jump, not on the way down.

Aiming the ball

Pick out a spot to aim at... either the back of the rim, or just over the front of the rim, or the backboard (if you are shooting a bank shot). Concentrate on this spot, and don't look at the ball, or the flight of the ball.

Releasing (shooting) the ball

Use the shoulder as a "hinge". Your shooting arm extends forward toward the hoop (keep the elbow in), and then you release the ball with a snap of the wrist, with the ball rolling off your fingertips. This will impart a backspin, or "rotation" on the ball, that all good shooters have. This backspin is what makes the ball land softly on the rim, and often creates a favorable "shooter's" bounce, resulting in a score, even though the shot was not perfect. Shoot the ball high with an arch on the flight of the ball; you don't want to shoot a flat, line drive, type of shot. An arched shot has a better chance of going in, since the target (the hoop) is actually bigger and wider for a ball coming in from above, than from a line drive. Don't "push" the ball with the heel of your palm; let it come off your fingertips.

The release should be repeatable, and pretty much the same with every shot. Don't sling the ball up for more power on long shots... use the power from the up-force of your jump, or lower your set point a little or more power. Don't pull the ball back over and behind your head before releasing it, as this will result in a flat, line-drive type shot. On shorter shots, release the ball more at the top of the jump and use a higher set point (arms extended up over your head).

Follow Through

This is important in getting the proper rotation (back spin) on the ball. Your fingers should be pointing toward the hoop, and your wrist bent forward, in a "goose neck" fashion. Another analogy is if you were "reaching into the cookie jar" high on the shelf. Hold this release after your shot until the ball hits the rim. You will notice that with a proper follow-through, the palm of your hand will be facing downward toward the floor. If it is turned sideways with the back of the hand facing outward (as if you were going to shake hands with someone), then you are incorrectly twisting your wrist during the release.



The Jump Shot

The jump shot is the most common shot used today. It revolutionized the game back in the late 50's and 60's. Most games used to be very low scoring until the arrival of the jump shot. With the jump shot you don't have to be stationary and open (like with a set shot). You can score on the move, and in traffic, by jumping and extending your shot over the defender.

Be sure that you don't start shooting a jump shot until you are physically strong enough. If you start too young, you will sacrifice good technique

Gripping the Ball, Footwork

Receive the ball in the "triple threat" position, where you are ready to either shoot, pass, or drive. Young kids have difficulty shooting the jump shot because they are not strong enough yet. They will often use a two handed method. But you must develop the correct technique to be effective. First start with shots only one foot from the basket. Gradually extend your range out. If you get too far out, your technique will fall apart and you will develop bad habits. If your shot is suffering, try to fix it by going back to the basic one foot shot near the basket, using proper release, backspin ("rotation") etc.

Gripping the ball and the shooting motion are the same as in the set shot. The shooting hand acts as a "platform" and is under the ball. The other hand is used to balance the ball and should be on the side of the ball. Receive the ball with your knees bent and feet shoulder width apart. Use your legs to provide the power for your shot. Be sure that you are squared up to the basket, with your shoulders lined up to the hoop. It is important that you are in balance before releasing the shot. Spring off the floor with both feet and do not drift sideways. Go straight up, or slightly forward for longer shots, and shoot the ball just before you reach the height of your jump, especially on outside shots, where you need the extra power of the upward force from the jump. On short shots in the paint, shoot from the top of your jump. This will allow you to shoot over a defensive player. When going up for the shot, the shooting arm forms an "L" with the elbow pointing toward the hoop, and the forearm vertical, with the ball up over your head.

Release

Focus in on your shooting spot, either the back of the rim, just over the front, or a section of the backboard. Concentrate on this area; don't watch the flight of the ball. When shooting, the shoulder acts as a "hinge" as you extend your arm upward. Keep the elbow in and release the ball with a snap or the wrist, letting it roll off your fingertips. Then extend your fingers and wrist in a "gooseneck" fashion, or like you were "reaching into the cookie jar" high in the cupboard.



Becoming a Good Free Throw Shooter

First, understand how important free-throw shooting is. At least 3-4 games per year in a 20 game schedule will be determined by free-throw shooting. All close games, the ones that really count.. the close tournament games and conference championship games can be won or lost on the free throw line.

Team Goals in free throw shooting.

Middle school teams should strive for 60% from the line, and high school teams should look to 70% as a goal. You won't shoot as well in a game as in practice, so strive for 75% (high school) in practice. Understand that this is a team skill... become a good free throw shooting team. Encourage and work with your teammates on free throws. Take a positive, aggressive attitude in shooting free throws... take the attitude that the opponent made a big mistake in fouling you, and you're gonna' make 'em pay for it! This is much better than worrying about whether or not you will make it.

How to become good free throw shooters... fundamentals, attitude and practice.

In shooting free throws, develop a ritual where you do it the same exact way every time. Position yourself on the line the same way every time. Bounce the ball the same number of times every time, and take a deep breath before shooting every time. This creates muscle and mind memory, and allows you to be successful more often. Success creates confidence, and confidence creates better, more relaxed shooting.

Fundamentals:

1. Line up with your right toes just to the left of center so that your right arm and ball are lined up with the basket. Place the left foot back just a little. Shoulders should be square to the basket.
2. Put your weight forward on your toes, but keep your back straight... don't lean forward. Keeping your back straight will keep you from stepping over the line. Bend a little at the knees. Your legs will provide the power.
3. Focus on the basket... don't look at the ball
4. Shoot with your right hand (right-handed players), and just use the left hand to help balance the ball. Release the ball from your fingertips to get good backspin (rotation) on the ball.
5. Take the deep breath, and shoot. Use your legs for power and come up on your toes as you release the ball. If your back is straight, you won't cross the line or lunge forward. If you need more power, it's OK to jump a little on your release.
6. Follow-through...
Keep looking at the basket and hold your shooting hand in the "gooseneck", follow-through position until the ball goes through the net.

Attitude:

Make 'em pay attitude.

Think and say to yourself "net" before each shot... to focus on the ball going through the net.

Be confident... this comes from success, and hours of practice! Don't let a missed free throw ruin your confidence. If you miss one, just quickly analyze the miss and correct it. For example, if your shot was long, next one use less leg power. Too short, use more leg power. Off line, reposition yourself on the line. You won't make them all, so expect to miss a few, and don't let it bother you when it happens. The most important free throw is the next one, not the last one!

Practice:

Shoot free throws every practice, with the team, or on your own. There is nothing wrong with coming to practice 10 minutes early, or staying 10 minutes late, to shoot extra free throws. Each two hour team practice should allow 10 minutes for free throws. Shoot free throws in the off-season, in the summer. College players may shoot 2000-5000 free throws each summer! High school players should be able to shoot 1000 free throws each summer. Shoot 25 shots every day for 5 days of each week. In eight weeks, you will have shot 1000 free throws... but be sure your technique is correct, using the fundamentals above, and that the line is 15 feet from the backboard. For your own fun, keep track each day of how many you made, and keep your totals. Keep track of each week's stats, and see if you are getting better by the end of the 1000 shots. If you are not improving, there could be a flaw in your fundamentals, and you need to ask for help.

Inside (Post-up) Moves

These are some basic moves the inside player should learn.

Get Position

Before you can make a move on the low post, you have to be able to get the ball first. You want to post-up, or receive the ball, along the free throw lane, between the center hash marks. You do not want to post up in the lane, or you may get the three-second call. You may have to fight hard to get into position to receive a safe pass. Get strong, feet wide apart, butt out, back straight. Seal the defender off. If she is over-playing you from one side, keep that arm and elbow firm to ward her off, while extending the opposite arm and hand to make a good target for the passer. When the pass comes, move toward it, to meet it. After receiving the ball, keep it up at forehead level with elbows out, to protect it. Do not actually throw an elbow, just keep them out to ward off the defender.

Two things to try if you can't get open:

1. Move away off the low post a few steps, then quickly come right back.
2. If the defender stays in front of you, move her up to the high post at the elbow. Then give the passer a hand signal, and quickly cut back-door for the lob pass to the hoop.

Low post moves

1. Drop step to baseline.

After receiving the ball, feel where the defender is. If she is on the lane, or high side, give a fake toward the lane. Then extend your inside (baseline) foot backward, pivot on it quickly to the baseline and to the hoop. Keep your body between the defender and the ball, and extend your arms forward toward the hoop. This way, she can only block your shot by going over your back ...usually a foul.

2. Drop step to lane (jump hook).

After receiving the ball, feel where the defender is. If she is on your baseline side, fake to the baseline, and drop your lane-side foot backward. Pivot quickly on that foot, and jump hook and shoot with the hand opposite the defender.

3. Turn and face defender and jab step.

After receiving the ball, feel where the defender is. If she is directly behind you, that is, not toward either the lane or the baseline, but right behind you, do this. Pivot and face the defender, while protecting the ball. Give a quick jab step fake, and see what her reaction is. If she drops back, just shoot up the baby jumper, often off the glass. This is a good high-percentage shot.

If she does not back off the jab step, quickly drive around her. Go right off her shoulder... don't be afraid of a little contact, because usually she will not be planted after your jab step, and she'll get called for the foul (and you may make the basket as well).

4. Up and under move

After pivoting and facing the defender, fake a shot to get her to leave her feet. Once she has straightened up, or jumped, you can beat her. Quickly duck under her on a straight line to the hoop. Again, don't be afraid to bounce off her shoulder, as this is the

straightest path, and quickest way to the hoop. If a foul is called, it will be on her, since she was not obviously planted when she jumped after your shot fake.

5. Flash to the elbow or free throw line

Cut up to the free throw line (get out of the lane to avoid a 3-second call). Receive the ball, pivot and face the defender. You can now either fake a shot, and drive around the defender to the hoop, or jab step and fake the drive, and shoot the easy shot from the free throw line area. This move is especially useful if the player guarding you is much taller, and not as quick. You go high post to get him away from the basket. Once he is away from the hoop, you use your quickness and drive around him.

6. Back door lob

If the defender is in front of you, take him up to the free throw line. While he is still fronting you, seal him off, give the guard with the ball a signal, and cut back door to the hoop, receiving the lob pass from your teammate.

These moves are not easy at first. They require a lot of practice... first to perfect the moves themselves... and then to learn by experience which move to use in which situation. For example, if you beat the defender once or twice with the baseline drop step, then she will be looking for that move, and you can easily get the turn around jab step baby jumper, because she will back off. Just the opposite, if you have already made a couple baby jumpers, you can drop step either to the baseline or lane, or do the up and under move, since she will be looking for your jumper. The bottom line... perfect the moves by practicing, and vary your moves in the game.

Another real bonus is that frequently these moves will get the defender into foul trouble when she tries to stop you. If she already is in foul trouble, she won't challenge you, and you can easily take it to the hoop. This is also very important... since you will get fouled a lot, become a good free throw shooter... make that defender pay for fouling you!

7. Learn to read the defense. See the low post information on the Basic Concepts of Motion Offense page.

Playing the High Post.

I added this after a coach emailed me and informed me that his post player was pretty good down on the low block, but didn't have a clue what to do up at the elbow or free throw line area -- the "high post" area.

When the high-post player has the ball, he/she is in excellent position to make a pass to the opposite side (reverse the ball) or to a back-door cutter. Also, he/she can find a teammate spotted up for a three-pointer on the wing or in the corner. So being a good passer and finding the open teammate is important here.

The high post player should look to score also. At the foul line and elbows, have him/her pivot and face the hoop, looking to take the open shot, or looking for the pass to a baseline cutter. If his defender is up close in his face, have him fake the shot and use his quickness to explode around him and take it to the hoop. So you see that even your big

man must have the ability to shoot the shot from the free-throw line, or fake and drive, just like a perimeter player.

The elbow shooting drill would be an excellent drill here: see 2-Man Shooting Drills. Also the #3 drill on that same page would be good too... have the passer, after making the pass to him, rush up and close out tightly on him, and then he power drives around him to the hoop.

A post player is so much more effective and versatile if he/she can shoot the shot from the free-throw line consistently. Several years ago, we had a young lady who was only 5'7" and played the post. She was very quick and a smart player. In our Regional game, she was defended by a girl 6'3". The first few times, she tried to post up down low and got her shot blocked each time. Being the great competitor that she was, she didn't get discouraged, but instead of posting up on the low block, decided to take her defender up high to the elbow area. She popped in a couple quick shots from the high post area, and then when the tall girl came out on her, Liz used her quickness to beat her to the hoop for the lay-up. Now the tall girl didn't know whether to play up tight or back off. Liz had the best game of her career, scored 23 points against the giant, and we won by 7. Just goes to show you how having the versatility of posting up high, being a good high post shooter, and taking your defender away from the hoop can really pay off.

Outside (Perimeter) One-On-One Moves

These are some basic moves the outside player should learn.

Know how to jump stop off the speed dribble, and how to receive the pass with a jump stop (see Learning the Jump Stop).

When you receive the ball, be ready to shoot, pass, or drive.

Receive the ball within your shooting range... if you are too far out, the defender can back off of you, since you are not a threat to score from that position.

Triple threat position.

1. Catch the ball and get squared up to the basket so you can see the basket, the defender and any open teammates.
2. Have your hands positioned on the ball in the shooting position, so you are ready to shoot.
3. Keep your weight back on your pivot foot (often the left foot for a right-handed player).

Learn to read the defense... use a short **jab step**, or drive step, with your non-pivot foot. Jab the foot forward quickly, hold for 1 second and judge the defender's reaction. See if she drops back, or stays up. If she stays up, see which side is vulnerable to your drive.

A few tips on the jab step...

1. Read the defender... whichever foot the defender has forward is his vulnerable side and that's the side you make your drive to the hoop. Now, we don't really want players looking at their feet... we like them to see the whole floor. So to read the defender, read his arm position... the arm that is up high is almost always the same side as his forward foot. So drive at the defender's higher arm... this way you can keep your head up and see the floor.
2. Do not rush the jab step (give it a count of one).
3. The jab step should not be too long where the player then has his weight forward on the jab foot.

Which foot becomes the pivot foot and which is used for the jab step?

The answer often lies in how you receive the pass. There are two techniques in receiving the perimeter pass, depending on the amount of space the receiver has created between himself and his defender. Depending on how this pass is received will determine which foot is your pivot foot and which foot you jab step with.

1. Situation #1. Plenty of space between receiver and the defender.

Catch the ball in a position to shoot, squared up to the hoop. As you meet the pass, you are turning your body to face the hoop. You want to receive this pass with your shooting hand, and as the pass arrives, you "jump behind it", catch it and land with both feet

squared up to the hoop. In this situation, use your inside foot now as your pivot foot, and jab step with the outside foot.

2. Situation #2. Tightly guarded with the defender up close on the receiver.

The receiver should move toward the ball and catch it with both hands extended, and land on the inside foot (closest to the basket and defender) and establish that foot as the pivot foot. This way, you can protect the ball with the body. Now here's where many average players go wrong... many will immediately start to dribble here, instead of making the aggressive front pivot and face the defender. After making the front pivot (while protecting the ball), now you make the jab step with the opposite foot (the inside foot), and if the defender is up close on you, you can often take it to the hoop around him.

Three basic outside moves:

1. Drive step, jump shot.

In triple threat position, make a drive step (jab step) and read the defense. If the defender drops off, bring your jab step foot back, toes even with your other foot, and pop the jump shot.

2. Drive step, straight drive.

In triple threat position, make a drive step (jab step) and read the defense. If the defender does not drop back, read her arms-feet. If her left foot is forward, take a long quick dribble to the right by extending your jab step forward. Go in a quick straight line off her left shoulder to the hoop. The most common mistake players make is going too wide around the defender to avoid contact. This just gives the defender time to react. Go right off the defender's shoulder and don't be afraid to make a little contact.

3. Drive step, cross-over drive.

In triple threat position, make a drive step (jab step) and read the defense. If the defender does not drop back, read her arms-feet. If her right foot is forward, swing the ball low and cross to the left. Quickly cross your right foot over to the left (do not first return your jab step back). Drive in a straight line, hard off her right shoulder.

Drive and dish...

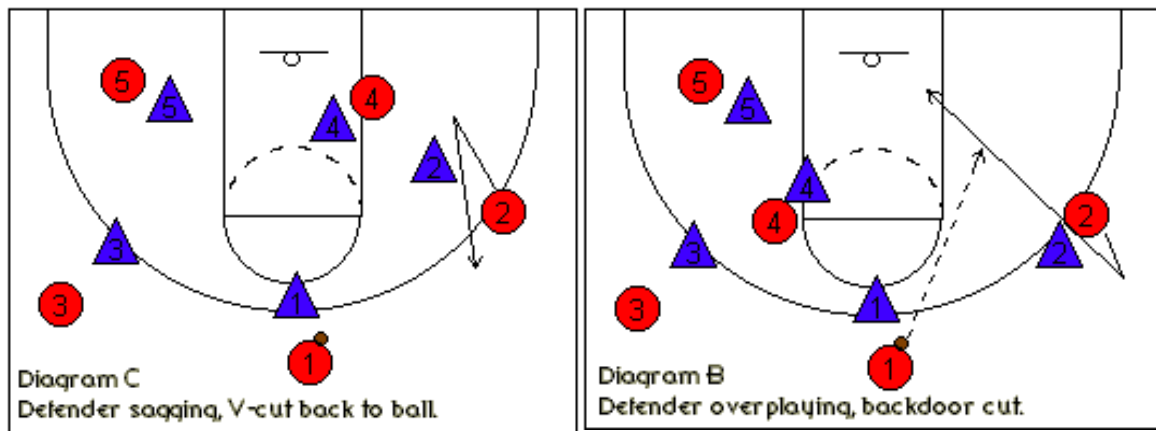
When you drive to the hoop, read the defense. Take the lay-up, or easy short jumper, if you are open. But a good, helping defense will pick you up as you drive. As another defender comes up to defend you, find the open teammate that she left behind, and dish the ball to her for an easy assist. Remember, a penetrating guard who is willing to make the extra pass to an open teammate under the basket is one of the most difficult situations for any defense to stop.

Also read the perimeter player info on the “Basic Concepts of Motion Offense” page.

Perimeter moves when a team-mate has the ball... reading the defense.

Learn to read the defense, situations for perimeter players:

1. You are one pass away from your team-mate and the defense is denying the pass to you: Make a fake outside, and then cut hard backdoor. The low post on that side should learn to read this situation also and clear out to the opposite side, to make spacing for the backdoor cut. See Diagram B.
2. You are one pass away and the defender is sagging off you: make a V-cut inside and come back out for the perimeter pass. See Diagram C.
3. You are one pass away, and the defender is playing good defense and you can't get free: Set a screen either for the ball-handler or the low post.



Here are additional things to work on, to become the complete outside, perimeter player.

Work on your outside shooting, especially "catch and shoot" drills.

Work on your dribbling and ball-handling for 15-20 minutes each day. Challenge yourself with even the more difficult drills... don't just do the easy ones. You want to make some mistakes, otherwise the drill is too easy. Twenty minutes every day using both right and left hands, and you will definitely be a better ball-handler and dribbler in just a few months.

Learn how to set screens, pick 'n roll correctly and how to back-cut. Look at this page to learn fundamental cuts and moves for perimeter players as they apply to all motion offenses: "Motion Offense Drills"

Also, learn the basic principles of good man-to-man defense, on-ball defense, deny and help-side defense. If you learn these concepts, you will have no problem learning to play various zone defenses.

This is a lot of stuff but are all "musts" for any complete player.

When you don't have the ball...

What do you do when you are on offense but you don't have the ball?

Think about it! Most of the time you will not have possession of the ball. Half of the time you will be on defense. Of the remaining half when your team has the ball, 80% of that time you personally will not have the ball, as one of your teammates will have it. So what do you do when you don't have the ball? Do you simply stand still and wait for someone to pass to you? That's not what wins games. There are things to do when you don't have the ball.

1. Try to get open for an easy pass and shot. Keep moving, not aimlessly, but with a purpose. Be savvy and try to cut into an open spot on the floor, especially if the defense is in a zone. If the defense is in man-to-man, set screens for other teammates (and not just the person with the ball). Setting picks will free up teammates for easy shots (see Setting Screens and Cutting and Faking).
2. The low posts (4 and 5), should constantly be trying to get into a post-up position, to get the ball from the guards. 4 and 5 can pick for each other to get free.
3. Maintain spacing on the floor...don't get bunched up...that's when the defense steals the ball, or bad passes and turnovers occur.
4. Never take your eye off the ball. Be smart. Look for a chance to time a cut through the paint, or "back-door", for a quick pass from a teammate, and a lay-up.
5. Be alert and position yourself for a rebound. Assume your teammate will miss the shot, and get into position for a rebound. You'll get extra shots and points this way.
6. Be ready to jump in after loose balls.
7. Be aware of the other team trying to slip a guard down floor for an easy lay-up, or "cherry-picking". Be ready to get back and cover her.
8. Be alert to help a teammate if she loses her dribble or is in trouble.
9. When the shot goes up, each player must know instantly what his assignment is and move quickly into that assignment: whether to go aggressively for the offensive rebound, or to get back into a defensive prevent position.

Remember, often it is not the person initially with the ball who scores. Instead a good pass to you cutting, or coming off a screen, is where the score comes. So work hard on offense when you don't actually have the ball...never loaf!

Cutting and Faking

There are 10 players on the floor. Only one player has the ball. That means that 90% of time, you won't have the ball, and that only 10% of the time you may actually have the ball (a little less for post players, a little more for guards). So you have a limited number of opportunities to score from an individual move when you are the ball-handler. Good scorers find ways to get open for an easy pass from a teammate, and an easy shot off the pass reception. Good scorers never just stand around and watch. They are always trying to find ways to get open by coming off screens, or faking and cutting to open areas of the floor (within their shooting range). The keys are timing, cutting to open areas, setting good screens, and maintaining good spacing. In regard to cutting, there is a saying "get open, or get out!", which means that if you are not open, or don't receive the ball within a couple seconds, move out and maintain motion and spacing. Passing is easier if offensive players maintain a spacing of 12 to 15 feet apart. Don't get bunched up.

Faking

Faking is an important skill that is often overlooked and not taught. Good faking is an important key in just about every offensive basketball skill, whether it is an on-ball perimeter or post move, or throwing a pass, or cutting. A fake simply is a deception or decoy move to throw the defender off balance, or get him leaning the wrong way just long enough so the offensive player can gain a step or two on him, or so a passer can open up the passing lane.

A good passer can "look" the defender off his receiver by looking the opposite way that he intends to pass... example: look left, pass right on a fast break.

Fakes can be a simple "look away", or can be as subtle as moving your eyes opposite the way you want to pass, or cut. A fake can be a jab step to get the defender leaning, and then you move quickly in the opposite direction. You can fake with a shrug of your shoulders, or a bob of your head in the opposite direction that you plan to cut. You can use a "sleep fake", where you pretend you are winded and tired, and you bend over with your hands on your knees, like you are catching your breath... the defender relaxes too, and suddenly you make your hard, quick cut. You can use a verbal fake... yell the ball-handler's name loudly and wave your arms to get the defender (who is help-side defense sagging toward the paint) to come out on you. That may open up the lane for a clean cut by a teammate. In this case you don't actually get the ball, but you made the lane available for your teammate to cut through. Have a team agreement... if you yell "ball!" you really want the ball, if you yell a name, it's a decoy. To be a good faker, you need a little acting ability!

Cutting

There are a number of different types of cuts that can be made, in addition to making the correct moves in running a specific play or set motion offense, and in addition to setting and cutting around screens (see Setting Screens).

Here are some tips in making a good cut:

1. A key in making an effective cut is timing. Try to "time" your cut, so you arrive at the correct time to receive the pass.
2. Make a good fake and cut hard. Often I see kids make a quick fake, and then a somewhat slow cut. Do just the opposite... make a slow, sleepy fake followed by a quick cut move.
3. This is another important tip: kids often try to avoid contact with the defender and try to run away from him. In trying to get open, go right up to the defender and make contact with him, then quickly "bounce off" in the direction of your cut. He won't be able to react fast enough to your quick first step.
4. In addition to the cut moves described below, don't forget this move: slip behind the defender (who may be in "deny" and over-playing the passing lane) and move below him toward the baseline. The defender should always see the ball. Try to slip out of his field of vision, so that he loses you briefly... then you can get open.

Types of Cuts

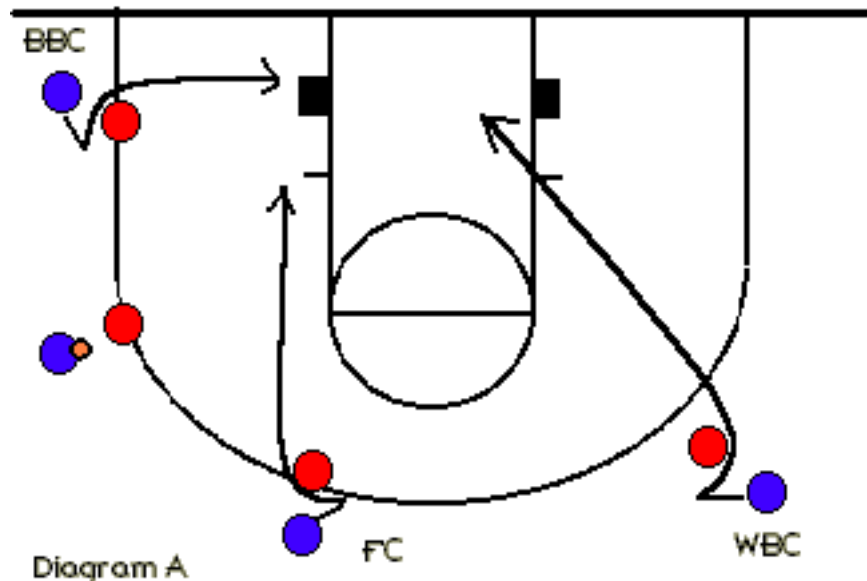
Front cut

The front cut is a cut made with the defender behind you, on your back. This is the typical "give and go" cut (see Diagram A, FC).

Back cuts

A back cut is when you cut behind the defender. Make a fake toward the ball, then cut quickly behind the defender. Back cuts can be a "ball-side" back-cut (see Diagram A, BBC), or a "weak-side" back-cut which means on the side opposite the ball, or "back-door" (see

Diagram A, WBC).



V-cut

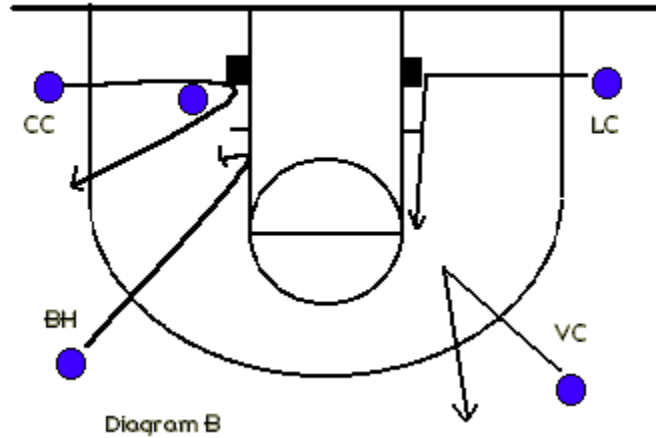
A cut made in the shape of a "V". The first leg of the "V" can be slow. The last leg of the "V" is quick (Diagram B, VC). When making the V-cut, plant the inside foot hard, and step off quickly with your other foot in the direction of your final cut.

L-cut

A cut made in the shape of an "L", often along the lane (or "lane cut"). Diagram B, LC. The cut can be made up the lane, or down the lane (from the wing position). Use footwork similar to the V-cut.

Curl-cut

A curl is a somewhat circular cut often made around a teammate (Diagram B, CC).

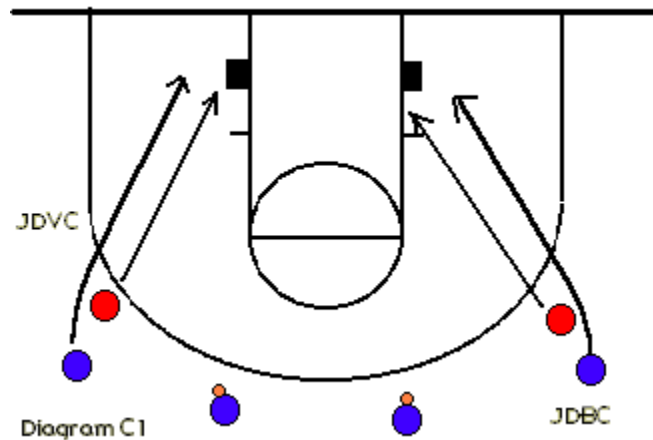


Button-hook

A quick cut made with a quick stop, a pivot toward the ball, sealing the defender on your back side, and receiving the pass from your teammate (Diagram B, BH).

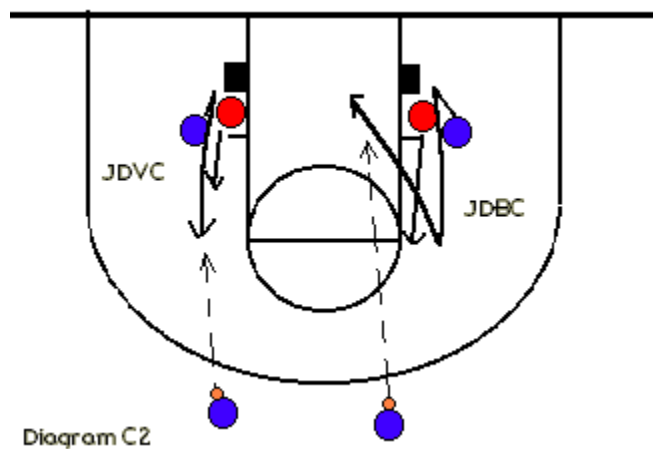
Jam-Down, V-Cut

First walk your defender down to the block area (Diagram C1, JDVC). Then plant the inside foot and quickly make the V-cut back out to receive the ball (Diagram C2, JDVC).



Jam-Down, Back Cut

First walk your defender down to the block area (Diagram C1, JDVC). Then plant the inside foot and quickly make the V-cut back out. But this time the defender is ready and is in front you, over-playing the pass. So now plant the outside foot, and go back-door with a quick back-cut. So that the ball-handler knows which way you are going, use a hand signal. For example, if you are going back-door, hold your inside (receiving) hand up high.



Setting Screens (Picks)

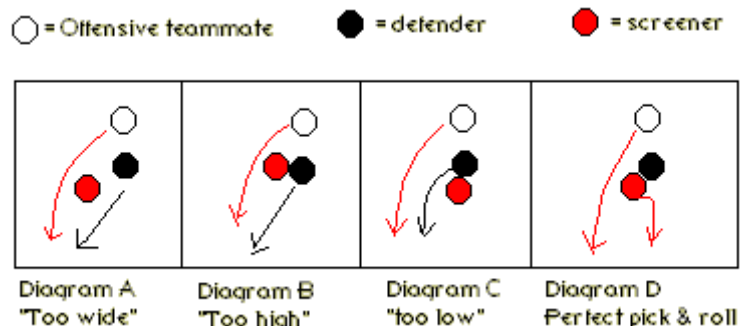
A screen or "pick" occurs when an offensive player attempts to block, or "screen", a defensive player away from the man he is guarding, thereby freeing up that offensive player for an open shot or pass.

Setting good screens (or "picks") is a very important fundamental part of the game. It is often assumed that players will know how to do this, but like any other important fundamental, it must be taught correctly. Screens are most helpful in freeing up a teammate against a man-to-man defense, and in out-of-bounds plays. Setting good picks are basic to most offensive plays. The "pick and roll" is still one of the simplest plays, but when done correctly, one of the most difficult to defend. The Utah Jazz's John Stockton and Karl Malone are masters of the pick and roll.

There are several important elements in executing an effective screen.

1. The screener must make contact with (but not foul, hold or push) the defender that he is trying to block. If you do not make contact, and get up tight, the defender will simply slide around you.
2. Be strong. Get your feet wide and plant your feet solidly. Do not move your feet once you have established this position or you will get called for a "moving screen" (a foul). You must be stationary and cannot move with the defender, trying to push him away. If a defender bumps into you and you are not stationary, you will probably be called for the foul.
3. Keep your arms tucked into your chest, not only to physically protect yourself, but also so the ref can see that you are not pushing with your hands, or grabbing at the defender, or holding him with your arm.
4. The angle, or direction, of the pick and the timing of the pick are probably the most important, and most overlooked factors in setting a screen. You must have the correct angle, or position, when you set the pick. You must anticipate the direction that your offensive teammate wants to go, and then make contact with his defender in a position so that you are directly in the way of the defender, and he cannot get around you. If you don't get the right angle, he will simply slide around you. Perhaps this is best demonstrated in the diagram.

In Diagram A, the screener does not make contact, and the defender slips behind. In Diagram B, the pick is too high (a common mistake), and the defender slides behind the pick and stays with the defender. In Diagram C, the pick is too low, and the defender can fight through the screen. Diagram D shows a good pick, followed by screener "rolling" to the hoop.



5. After the teammate cuts around the screen, the screener "seals" off the other defender and "rolls" (cuts) toward the hoop. If the defense switches men on the screen, usually the "roller" will be open for the pass.

6. The timing of the offensive player receiving the pick. The player receiving the pick must be patient and wait for the screen from his teammate to arrive. Often, I will see a player make his cut just before the pick is "set", and the defender easily gets around it (because it never had a chance to be set). You must wait for the pick to be set, and then cut hard around it.

7. The offensive player receiving the screen must cut hard, and close to the teammate setting the screen. You must "rub off" your teammate's screen... that is, brush against him as you go by. If you don't brush close to the screen, the defender will slip through the screen.

8. Remember, there are two options on the pick and roll play... pass either to the cutter, or if the defense switches, pass to the "roller".

Types of Screens (see diagram E)

Screens can be on-ball when set for the ball-handler, or off-ball.

1. Front screen

The screener is facing the defender that he is setting the screen on, often used in the open court.

2. Back screen

The screener sets the screen on the defender's "blind" side, or back side. Usually the screener is facing away from the basket.

3. Down screen

The screener sets the screen usually down low for a player near the block, and is usually facing the basket with his back to the ball. When completing the "roll" move, he pivots facing the ball.

Diagram E.

On-ball, front screen:

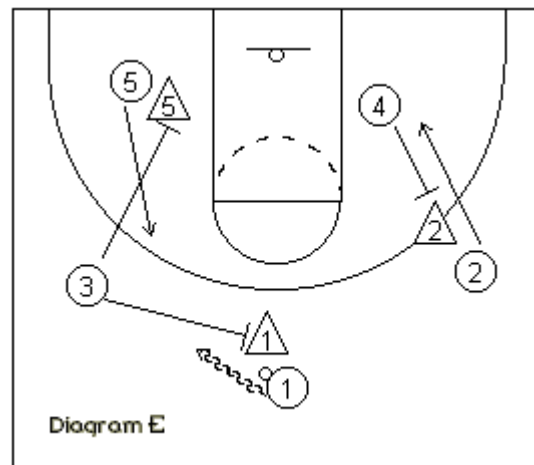
#3 sets pick for #1, the ball-handler.

Back-screen:

#4 sets back-screen for #2, who goes back-door to the hoop.

Down-screen:

#3 sets down-screen for #5, who cuts outside for the pass from #1.



Rebounding

Rebounding is one of the most important aspects of winning basketball games. Offensive rebounding gives your team extra chances, and free throw opportunities, and frustrates the defense. Defensive rebounding is a key part of good defense in general, limiting the offense to just one shot. A good thought is "one shot and their out". Defensive rebounding combined with a quick outlet pass can be an effective offensive weapon, getting the transition game and fast break going, for an easy lay-up at the other end. All good rebounders are very aggressive on the boards and believe that every rebound is theirs. You gotta want it! You gotta be an animal on the glass! Coaches love good rebounders and will reward them with more playing time. You may not be the best shooter or ball handler, but if you are a strong rebounder and defender, you will get to play. Good rebounders are important "role players".

Defensive Rebounding

The most important aspect of rebounding is getting inside position and "boxing out". The player who gets the inside position usually gets the rebound, and the opponent may "reach over" and commit a foul. These "over the back" fouls can be very costly late in a game when teams are in the bonus free throw situation.

On defense, your coach will expect you to get inside position since should already be between your man and the basket. Another key is always knowing where the ball is, so as soon as you see the shot being taken you go get the inside position, and box out.

There are three key ingredients in defensive rebounding.

- (1). Box Out
- (2). Attack the ball
- (3). The outlet pass

"Box Out! "

All players must learn this skill, as much as any other skill in the game. Even the perimeter players (guards) must box out their person, not only to get rebound themselves, but also to prevent the offensive guard from sneaking inside and stealing the rebound.

When you box out, you must first make contact with the player you are guarding. Locate your man, get in front of him, turn facing the basket, bend over, get wide with your feet and arms out, and put your backside into the offensive player, sealing him away from the hoop. I tell my players that the reason that God gave us a butt is to box-out! Be aggressive, and don't let the offensive player push you under the basket. If you get too far under the basket, as a taller opponent with long arms, can simply outreach you for the ball. Keep him away from the hoop. Keep your eye on the ball flight, and go get it! ... which brings us to the next point.

Attack The Ball!

After you have sealed the opponent, or boxed him out, then you must go aggressively after the ball. Attack the ball, jumping high with both arms extended, grab it strongly with both hands, and "rip it down". Don't let a little contact bother you. You got to be tough inside...tougher than your opponent. Once you have the ball, protect it by pivoting away from the opponents, keep elbows out, but you must not throw an elbow... a sure foul, often flagrant.

The Outlet Pass

Once you have the ball, think "fast break". Get a quick accurate outlet pass to a teammate to get the transition game going. If you hold onto the ball too long, the opponents may tie you up, and depending on the possession arrow, all your hard work is for nothing. So immediately pivot away from the defenders toward the sideline and find a teammate to pass to. If you are on the right side of the court, pivot on your right foot, and just the opposite for the left side. Wheel around on your pivot foot and make a strong, sharp two-handed overhead outlet pass to your teammate on the wing. Only dribble if you have to, if you are in trouble and need to create some spacing to get the pass off. Pass as soon as you can safely hit your teammate. But don't make a bad forced pass, and lose possession. Those kind of turnovers can kill you.

Team Rebounding Concept

With each shot, try to establish a triangle of players boxing out around the basket. Have one player of each side of the hoop and one in front, so that you have a triangle of players boxing out around the hoop. Don't get too far under the basket, where a taller player can simply reach over your head for the rebound...box them away from the basket.

Offensive Rebounding

Offensive rebounding should be a very important part of your team offense in general. Nothing frustrates the opponent more, than for them playing good aggressive defense, and you get the one, two, or three offensive rebounds for more shots at the hoop, until you finally score. The keys are you've got to be aggressive and want that offensive rebound, and you must be quick on your feet and try to get inside position on the defender. This is a good way to pick up extra easy baskets. Some people call them "trash" baskets... I call them hard-working, smart, demoralizing baskets... "back breakers"

Technique:

The defender should already be between you and the hoop. He is trying to keep you outside. Make a fake one way, and quickly move your feet and slip around him on the other side. Once you are inside, box him out. Always know where the ball is and just assume that every shot will be missed. If the shot is coming from the corner, remember that most misses will go long on the opposite side, so be ready if you are on the weak side.

Once you get the ball, be strong and power it right back up to the hoop, usually off the glass. There is a good chance you will get fouled, and a good chance for an "old fashioned" three pointer... a put back with a free throw. Expect contact, be strong, and try to finish the shot. Keep working the entire game, as this will be very important in a game when you are trying to come from behind, or in close pressure packed games. You can actually wear the opponent down by the end of the game. Many championship games are decided by this tough inside play... not the outside jumpers. It's not always pretty under the hoop, but all good coaches know how important this aspect of the game really is. You will hear TV commentators talk about "points in the paint" as a key in many games. Most of them are retired, very successful coaches, and they know by experience how important.

BASIC DEFENSIVE TIPS

There are two basic types of defense: "man-to-man" defense, and zone defense.

I believe all good players must learn how to play good man-to-man defense. Yet there are many times that a good zone defense can really shut down a team. It often depends on what the other team's strengths and weaknesses are. So you must learn both.

Man-to-Man

With this defense, each player is assigned to guarding a particular player on the other team. Each player must try her best to stop her opponent. Although it sounds individual, man-to-man is really a team defense. Every one must do his part. If 1 or 2 girls don't play good defense, the defense will fail. Although you are assigned to guard one player, you must learn to "help-out" your teammates, and learn to "slide through" and "switch" the player you are guarding with a teammate, if you or she gets picked. We used to call this a "switching" man-to-man defense.

You must learn what "help-side" means. Simply, when the ball is on the opposite side of the floor from you (and the person you are guarding), you can drop off your man a little and "sag" toward the middle to help cut off passing lanes. Once the ball comes around to your side, you get back up tight on your man.

When I was younger, I were taught to deny the baseline, as baseline penetration often allows an easy basket, or an easy dish to another player for a lay-up. Now coaches are advised to force the offensive player to the baseline. How do you reconcile the differences in teaching? What I believe is that you force the offensive player to the baseline, but once he is there, you trap him, and prevent any further penetration along the baseline. If you allow the offensive player to go uncontested along the baseline, it's usually 2 points.

"Move your feet!" You'll hear coaches yell this all the time...because it is one of the most important aspects of playing good defense. You must have the desire and the quickness to move your feet in order to stay with your man, to get into proper position to take a charge, to move quickly to the boards to box out for a rebound, etc. You must not just "reach-in" and take a swipe at the ball as the player dribbles by you (usually a foul)...you must move your feet, hustle and stay with her, and prevent her from getting to the basket by getting yourself into proper position. We'll work on this.

Zone Defense

There are a variety of zone defenses (2-1-2, 2-3, 3-2, 1-2-2 defenses, etc). In a zone defense, you defend a particular "zone", or area on the court. You don't stay with a particular person (like in the man-to-man). Any time the ball comes into your area, you guard that person with the ball (doesn't matter who it is, go get her!). The defense has to learn to "shift", or move, with the ball (more in practice).

Man-to-Man Defense Tips

1. Most of the time, you should keep between your man and basket (but sometimes players 4 and 5, under the basket, may need to "front" a strong post-up player).
2. Guards get into a low position with your weight evenly balanced, and on the balls of your feet, nearer your toes. Don't be flat-footed. Keep your weight off your heels. The key to good defense is you must move your feet and stay between the player and the hoop. Do not reach in a take a quick swipe with your hand. You will either get a foul, or she will go right around you.
3. Guards out front play back off your man a couple steps, especially if she is very quick, so she can't quickly get around you. This space will give you time to react to her. If your opponent is a good 3-point shooter, then you must play her tighter. If you know she is not a good outside shooter, play back a couple steps and keep her outside.
4. This brings us to the next point...know your opponent! Know her strengths and weaknesses. If she is a good shooter, stay close on her. If she can't dribble very well, stay up close and pressure her. If she is quick and a good dribbler then stay back a couple steps. If she is right-handed and always goes to her right, over-guard her right side and force her to go to her weaker side.
5. Watch her eyes when she's passing...often she'll tell you right where she's going to throw it!
6. Watch her belly-button if she's quick and hard to stay with. She can fake you with her head, eyes, arms, shoulders, legs, and feet, but her belly-button will always go only in the direction that she is going. (unless she's a belly-dancer, or something!)
7. When they shoot, everybody "box-out" your man, rebound (see Rebounding Tips), get the loose ball, and let's get the fast-break going, if we can.
8. Hustle! Hustle! Hustle! You gotta love playing tough, hard defense. Your good defense will win many games for you, especially those games when your offense is "off". It's not so bad if your shots aren't falling, if the other team can't score either. Your defense will keep you in the game until you finally get "hot" on offense. Who said, "Good offense wins games, but good defense wins championships"? Believe it. Much of good defense is inspiration and perspiration.

Daily fundamentals you can do at home...

The following tips are things that you can do at home, by yourself, to become a better player. These skills are very important not only for beginners, but players at all levels. No matter how good you think you are, you can always improve on these basic skills.

Hold The Ball Correctly

The most difficult skills, including shooting, passing, catching, dribbling, and rebounding, involve holding the ball. Work on these skills every day.

Here is how to practice holding the ball:

1. Make both hands into claws. Growl like a lion and move the claws forward like you are going to rip something apart.
2. Make sure your fingers are far apart.
3. Put the ball between the claws and hold the ball securely. Your only contact with the ball should be your finger ends, not the pads. The palm and other parts of the hand do not touch the ball. Overdoing the hold this way is most beneficial.
4. Hold the ball as long as possible at home while watching TV or listening to the radio. Before practice, hold the ball for a minute or two and at every other opportunity.

Use Your Wrists In Shooting, Passing, and Dribbling

The wrist skills, which include shooting, passing, and dribbling, involve the motion of the hand and wrist. Waving good-bye is an example of wrist motion that needs to be practiced. This rarely practiced motion reaps incredible benefits. Not only will you improve, but you will permanently improve.

Here is how to practice:

1. While standing, put your arms straight up overhead, palms facing forward. Keep your elbows straight and do not move your arms throughout the exercise.
2. With your hands slightly clawed, flick your wrist backward and let it come forward without additional effort. Continue to flick your wrists backward. You are doing this correctly if your hand and wrist go back and forth like a wet noodle. Make sure to keep your hands in a slightly clawed position.
3. Continue doing this for one to two minutes. Initially this motion will be very difficult.
4. This first part of the exercise helps with shooting and passing. For help with dribbling, lower the arms to the side with the palms facing backward.
5. With elbows straight and arms stationary, flick the wrist forward and let it come back without effort. Continue doing this for one-two minutes. Make sure the hand is slightly clawed.
6. Do these exercises as often as possible. Make them part of your normal practice warm-up. The more difficult this exercise is to do, the more you need it. It may take one month or more to do these exercises properly.

Pivoting Is A Key To Many Other Skills

Many players and coaches underestimate the importance of pivoting. Every movement with the ball initially involves pivoting. Players routinely pivot to shoot or pass. What is not so obvious is that all moves, most fakes, and driving to the basket all depend on the ability to pivot. Poor pivoters do not have moves and cannot drive well to the basket.

You must be able to pivot forward and backward using either foot. So each exercise must be repeated four times: left foot forward; left foot backward; right foot forward; right foot backward.

The pivot foot is the foot that stays in place. Actually only one part of the foot, the ball of the foot, stays stationary. As you turn, the rest of the foot rotates about the ball of the foot. If you slide or change your pivot point after you have the ball, officials call a walking violation. Your team loses the ball.

Here is how to practice pivoting:

1. Start with the left foot as pivot foot. If you have a ball, hold it in the exaggerated claw position during this exercise.
2. Pivot forward 15 times like you are stomping on bugs as you go. As you find your balance, increase the rotation to a half turn.
3. Repeat rotating backward 15 times.
4. Switch pivot foot. Repeat forward 15 times.
5. Repeat backward 15 times.

Have a bystander or friend watch for several things. You must keep your head up like you would in a game.

- a. Your pivot point must not change.
- b. Your pivot foot does not slide.

Defense Is Easy To Learn

Your stance for defense and dribbling is very similar. In both positions you need to be ready to run full speed in any direction. Tap dancing on your toes while in position helps you to practice tap dancing:

How to get in position:

1. In a standing position, move your feet to slightly greater than shoulder width apart.
2. Bend your knees, keeping your back straight and vertical, not bent, till you are down as far as you can go. Then come halfway up.
3. Move the arms slightly outward from the shoulders and move the forearms parallel to the ground.
4. The hands should be slightly clawed in what I call the "ready" position.

What to do in position:

5. Tap dance by quickly bringing the knees slightly up (one-two inches) and down one at a time.
6. Count to 20, one tap at a time.
7. Then sprint four steps forward. Tap and count to 20 again.

8. Pivot around and sprint four steps backwards. Face the original direction, and tap and count to 20 again.
9. Continue for five minutes, moving back and forth and then left and right.

Practice shooting from one foot, rather than from greater distances.

Unless you shoot with the proper technique, practicing from great distances distorts your shot. Improper practice makes your shot worse. So, practice from one foot while you develop your shot.

Here is how to practice:

Take 10 one foot shots from the right side of the basket, then 10 from the left, and then 10 from the center. Use the backboard from all three positions. You can repeat this many times.