

COACHING RESOURCES

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STEPPING INTO COACHING

If you are like most youth league coaches, you have probably been recruited from the ranks of concerned parents, sport enthusiasts, or community volunteers. Like many rookie and veteran coaches, you probably have had little formal instruction on how to coach. But when the call went out for coaches to assist with the local youth basketball program, you answered because you like children and enjoy basketball, and perhaps because you wanted to be involved in a worthwhile community activity.

Your initial coaching assignment may be difficult. Like many volunteers, you may not know everything there is to know about basketball or about how to work with children. *Coaching Youth Basketball* will help you learn the basics of coaching basketball effectively.

To start, let's take a look at what's involved in being a coach. What are your responsibilities? We'll also talk about how to handle the situation when your child is on the team you coach, and we'll examine five tools for being an effective coach.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A COACH

As a basketball coach, you'll be called upon to do the following:

- 1. Provide a safe physical environment.** Playing basketball holds an inherent risk, but as a coach you're responsible for regularly inspecting the practice and competition courts (see the checklist for facilities and equipment in chapter 6).
- 2. Communicate in a positive way.** You'll communicate not only with your players but also with parents, referees, and administrators. Communicate in a way that is positive and that demonstrates you have the best interests of the players at heart. Chapter 2 will help you communicate effectively and positively.
- 3. Teach the tactics and skills of basketball.** We'll show you an innovative "games approach" to teaching and practicing the tactics and skills young athletes need to know—an approach that kids thoroughly enjoy. We ask you to help all players be the best they can be. In chapter 5 we'll show you how to teach basketball skills, and in chapter 9 we'll provide season plans for 8- to 9-year-olds, 10- to 11-year-olds, and 12- to 14-year-olds, respectively. In chapter 8 we'll provide descriptions of all the tactics and

skills you'll need to teach and to help you detect and correct errors that players typically make.

4. Teach the rules of basketball. We'll ask you to teach your players the rules of basketball. You'll find the rules in chapter 7.

5. Direct players in competition. This includes determining starting lineups and a substitution plan, relating appropriately to referees and to opposing coaches and players, and making tactical decisions during games (see chapter 6). Remember that the focus is not on winning at all costs, but in coaching your kids to compete well, do their best, and strive to win within the rules.

6. Help your players become fit and value fitness for a lifetime. We want you to help your players be fit so they can play basketball safely and successfully. We also want your players to learn to become fit on their own, understand the value of fitness, and enjoy training. Thus, we ask you not to make them do push-ups or run laps for punishment. Make it fun to get fit for basketball, and make it fun to play basketball so they'll stay fit for a lifetime.

7. Help young people develop character. Character development includes learning caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. These intangible qualities are no less important to teach than the skill of shooting the ball well. We ask you to teach these values to players both by conducting Team Circles after every game and by demonstrating and encouraging behaviors that express these values at all times.

These are your responsibilities as a coach. But coaching becomes even more complicated when your child is a player on the team you coach. If this is the case, you'll have to take into account your roles as both a coach and a parent, and think about how those roles relate to each other.

COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD

Many coaches are parents, but the two roles should not be confused. Unlike your role as a parent, as a coach you are responsible not only to yourself and your child, but also to the organization, all the players on the team (including your child), and their parents. Because of this additional responsibility, your behavior on the basketball court will be different from your behavior at home, and your son or daughter may not understand why.

For example, imagine the confusion of a young boy who is the center of his parents' attention at home but is barely noticed by his father/ coach in the sport setting. Or consider the mixed signals received by a young girl whose basketball skill is constantly evaluated by a mother/ coach who otherwise rarely comments on her daughter's activities. You need to explain to your son or daughter your new responsibilities and how they will affect your relationship when coaching.

Take the following steps to avoid problems in coaching your child:

- Ask your child if he or she wants you to coach the team.
- Explain why you wish to be involved with the team.
- Discuss with your child how your interactions will change when you take on the role of coach at practices or games.
- Limit your coaching behavior to when you are in the coaching role.
- Avoid parenting during practice or game situations, to keep your role clear in your child's mind.
- Reaffirm your love for your child, irrespective of his or her performance on the basketball court.

Now let's look at some of the qualities that will help you become an effective coach.

FIVE TOOLS OF AN EFFECTIVE COACH

Have you purchased the traditional coaching tools—things like whistles, coaching clothes, sport shoes, and a clipboard? They'll help you coach, but to be a successful coach you'll need five other tools that cannot be bought. These tools are available only through self-examination and hard work; they're easy to remember with the acronym COACH:

- C - Comprehension
- O - Outlook
- A - Affection
- C - Character
- H - Humor

Comprehension

Comprehension of the rules, tactics, and skills of basketball is required. You must understand the basic elements of the sport. To assist you in learning about the game, we describe rules, tactics, and skills in chapters 7 and 8. We also provide season plans in chapter 9.

To improve your comprehension of basketball, take the following steps:

- Read the sport-specific section of this book in chapters 7, 8, and 9.
- Consider reading other basketball coaching books, including those available from the American Sport Education Program (ASEP).
- Contact youth basketball organizations.
- Attend basketball clinics.
- Talk with more experienced coaches.
- Observe local college, high school, and youth basketball games.
- Watch basketball games on television.

In addition to having basketball knowledge, you must implement proper training and safety methods so your players can participate with little risk of injury. Even then, injuries may occur. And more often than not, you'll be the first person responding to your players' injuries, so be sure you understand the basic emergency care procedures described in chapter 3. Also, read in that chapter how to handle more serious sport injury situations.

Outlook

This coaching tool refers to your perspective and goals—what you are seeking as a coach. The most common coaching objectives are to (a) have fun, (b) help players develop their physical, mental, and social skills, and (c) win. Thus your *outlook* involves the priorities you set, your planning, and your vision for the future.

While all coaches focus on competition, we want you to focus on *positive* competition, keeping the pursuit of victory in perspective by making decisions that first are in the best interest of the players, and second will help to win the game.

So how do you know if your outlook and priorities are in order? Here's a little test for you:

Which situation would you be most proud of?

- a. Knowing that each participant enjoyed playing basketball.
- b. Seeing that all players improved their basketball skills.
- c. Winning the league championship.

Which statement best reflects your thoughts about sport?

- a. If it isn't fun, don't do it.
- b. Everyone should learn something every day.
- c. Sport isn't fun if you don't win.

How would you like your players to remember you?

- a. As a coach who was fun to play for.
- b. As a coach who provided a good base of fundamental skills.
- c. As a coach who had a winning record.

Which would you most like to hear a parent of a player on your team say?

- a. Mike really had a good time playing basketball this year.
- b. Nicole learned some important lessons playing basketball this year.
- c. Willie played on the first-place basketball team this year.

Which of the following would be the most rewarding moment of your season?

- a. Having your team not want to stop playing, even after practice is over.
- b. Seeing one of your players finally master the skill of dribbling without constantly looking at the ball.

c. Winning the league championship.

Look over your answers. If you most often selected "a" responses, then having fun is most important to you. A majority of "b" answers suggests that skill development is what attracts you to coaching. And if "c" was your most frequent response, winning is tops on your list of coaching priorities. If your priorities are in order, your players' well-being will take precedence over your team's win-loss record every time.

The American Sport Education Program (ASEP) has a motto that will help you keep your outlook in line with the best interests of the kids on your team. It summarizes in four words all you need to remember when establishing your coaching priorities:

Athletes First, Winning Second

This motto recognizes that striving to win is an important, even vital, part of sports. But it emphatically states that no efforts in striving to win should be made at the expense of the athletes' well-being, development, and enjoyment.

Take the following actions to better define your outlook:

1. Determine your priorities for the season.
2. Prepare for situations that challenge your priorities.
3. Set goals for yourself and your players that are consistent with those priorities.
4. Plan how you and your players can best attain those goals.
5. Review your goals frequently to be sure that you are staying on track.

Affection

This is another vital tool you will want to have in your coaching kit: a genuine concern for the young people you coach. It involves having a love for kids, a desire to share with them your love and knowledge of basketball, and the patience and understanding that allow each individual playing for you to grow from his or her involvement in sport.

You can demonstrate your affection and patience in many ways, including these:

- Make an effort to get to know each player on your team.
- Treat each player as an individual.
- Empathize with players trying to learn new and difficult skills.
- Treat players as you would like to be treated under similar circumstances.
- Be in control of your emotions. *Stepping Into Coaching 7*

- Show your enthusiasm for being involved with your team.
- Keep an upbeat and positive tone in all of your communications.

Character

The fact that you have decided to coach young basketball players probably means that you think participation in sport is important. But whether or not that participation develops character in your players depends as much on you as it does on the sport itself. How can you build character in your players?

Having good character means modeling appropriate behaviors for sport and life. That means more than just saying the right things. What you say and what you do must match. There is no place in coaching for the "Do as I say, not as I do" philosophy. Challenge, support, encourage, and reward every youngster, and your players will be more likely to accept, even celebrate, their differences. Be in control before, during, and after all practices and contests. And don't be afraid to admit that you were wrong. No one is perfect!

Consider the following steps to being a good role model:

- Take stock of your strengths and weaknesses.
- Build on your strengths.
- Set goals for yourself to improve upon those areas you would not like to see copied.
- If you slip up, apologize to your team and to yourself. You'll do better next time.

Humor

Humor is an often-overlooked coaching tool. For our use it means having the ability to laugh at yourself and with your players during practices and contests. Nothing helps balance the tone of a serious skill-learning session like a chuckle or two. And a sense of humor puts in perspective the many mistakes your players will make. So don't get upset over each miscue or respond negatively to erring players. Allow your players and yourself to enjoy the ups, and don't dwell on the downs.

Here are some tips for injecting humor into your practices:

- Make practices fun by including a variety of activities.
- Keep all players involved in games and skill practices.
- Consider laughter by your players a sign of enjoyment, not of waning discipline.
- Smile!

COACHING RESOURCES



YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION

Now you know what YMCA Youth Super Sports is and what our philosophy (the Seven Pillars of YMCA Youth Sports) is for conducting this unique sports program. You also know that YMCA Rookies emphasizes teaching children basic basketball skills and rules in a precompetitive environment. We'll ask you to teach your players how to play the game of basketball, but the emphasis will be on teaching, not on competing in contests.

YOUR DUTIES AS A COACH

You have seven duties as a YMCA Rookies basketball coach:

1. Teach the skills and tactics of basketball to the best of your ability.

We want you to teach children the physical skills and tactics to play the sport to the best of their ability. Children value the learning of these skills and tactics, and they respect those who can help them master them. Be a good teacher, but remember that not all children have the same ability to learn. A few have the ability to be outstanding, many have the ability to be competent, and a few have the ability to barely play the sport. We ask that you help them all be the best that they can be. We'll show you an innovative games approach to teaching and practicing these skills that children thoroughly enjoy. These games are designed to be developmentally appropriate for the children you will be teaching. You'll avoid monotonous drills where children stand in line waiting their turn; instead you'll be keeping everyone active practicing basic skills in game-like conditions. To help you, first we'll provide season plans in chapter 5. In chapter 6, we'll give you practice plans for four- to five-year-olds, and in chapter 7, we'll do the same for six- to seven- year-olds. In chapter 8, we'll review with you how to teach the basic skills and provide you with assistance in detecting and correcting errors.

2. Help your players learn the rules and traditions of basketball. We ask you to teach your players the rules of basketball as they learn the basic skills through the modified games of the sport. Beyond the rules, we also ask you to teach the basic traditions of the sport. By traditions we mean the proper actions to take to show courtesy and avoid injury—in short, to be a good sport. You'll find the rules and traditions for YMCA Rookies basketball in chapter 9.

3. Help your players to become fit and to value fitness for a lifetime.

We want you to help your players be fit so they can play basketball safely and successfully. But we also want more. We want you to do so in a way that your players learn to become fit on their own, understand the value of fitness, and enjoy training. Thus, we ask you not to make them do push-ups or run laps for punishment. Make it fun to get fit for basketball and make it fun to play basketball so they'll stay fit for a lifetime. In chapter 10, we'll give you some tips on basic fitness for your players.

4. Help your players develop character. Character development is teaching children the core values: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. These intangible qualities are no less important to teach than ballhandling or defensive skills. We ask you to teach these values to children by (1) conducting Team Circles, which are built into every practice plan, and (2) demonstrating and encouraging behaviors that express these values at all times. Chapter 11 will give you more suggestions about teaching character development.

5. Ensure the safety of your players. You are responsible for supervising every aspect of your players' participation in basketball. Make sure the field is clear of hazardous objects and that the children do not engage in activities that might injure themselves or others. You have not only a legal responsibility, but also a moral one to supervise them closely. See chapter 10 for more on safety.

6. Help each player develop a positive sense of self-worth. An essential goal in conducting YMCA Youth Super Sports programs is to help children gain a strong, positive sense of their worth as human beings. For each of us, our most important possession is our self-worth. Please teach our children basketball in a way that helps them grow to respect themselves and others.

7. Make it fun. Make learning the game a fantastic experience so that your players will want to continue playing for many years to come.

These are your responsibilities as a coach. But coaching becomes even more complicated when your child is a player on the team you coach. If this is the case, you'll have to take into account your roles as both a coach and a parent, and think about how those roles relate to each other.

BEING A GOOD COACH

Just what makes a good basketball coach?

- A person who knows the sport of basketball well. If you're not that familiar with the sport, be sure to attend the YMCA Rookies Basketball Coaches Course and study more about the sport. Refer to the list of useful books and videos in appendix A.

- A person who wants to teach basketball to young people, who cares. Excellent teachers are motivated, have a positive attitude, and give the time to do the job well.
- A person who understands young people, who possesses empathy. Empathy is caring about the young people you teach by showing you understand them.

We hope you'll do your best to be a good basketball coach for the children on your team. By doing so, you can help them develop their spirits, minds, and bodies, which is the goal for all YMCA programs.

COACHING RESOURCES

WHO ELSE DO I NEED TO COMMUNICATE WITH?

Coaching involves not only sending and receiving messages and providing proper feedback to players, but also interacting with parents, fans, game referees, and opposing coaches. If you don't communicate effectively with these groups of people, your coaching career will be unpleasant and short-lived. So try the following suggestions for communicating with these groups.

Parents

A player's parents need to be assured that their son or daughter is under the direction of a coach who is both knowledgeable about the sport and concerned about the youngster's well-being. You can put their worries to rest by holding a preseason parent-orientation meeting in which you describe your background and your approach to coaching. If parents contact you with a concern during the season, listen to them closely and try to offer positive responses. If you need to communicate with parents, catch them after a practice, give them a phone call, or send a note through the mail. Messages sent to parents through players are too often lost, misinterpreted, or forgotten.

Fans

The stands probably won't be overflowing at your contests, but that only means that you'll more easily hear the few fans who criticize your coaching. When you hear something negative said about the job you're doing, don't respond. Keep calm, consider whether the message had any value, and if not, forget it. Acknowledging critical, unwarranted comments from a fan during a contest will only encourage others to voice their opinions. So put away your "rabbit ears" and communicate to fans, through your actions, that you are a confident, competent coach. Prepare your players for fans' criticisms. Tell them it is you, not the spectators, they should listen to. If you notice that one of your players is rattled by a fan's comment, reassure the player that your evaluation is more objective and favorable—and the one that counts.

Contest Referees

How you communicate with referees will have a great influence on the way your players behave toward them. Therefore, you need to set an example. Greet referees with a handshake, an introduction, and perhaps some casual conversation about the upcoming contest. Indicate your respect for them before, during, and after the contest. Don't make nasty remarks, shout, or use disrespectful body gestures. Your players will see you do it, and they'll get the idea that such behavior is appropriate. Plus, if the referee hears or

sees you, the communication between the two of you will break down.

Opposing Coaches

Make an effort to visit with the coach of the opposing team before the game. During the game, don't get into a personal feud with the opposing coach. Remember, it's the kids, not the coaches, who are competing. And by getting along well with the opposing coach, you'll show your players that competition involves cooperation.

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TEACHING BASKETBALL RULES AND TRADITIONS

This chapter is where we'll introduce you to some of the basic rules and traditions of basketball. We won't try to cover all the rules of the game, but we'll give you what you need to work with four- to seven-year-old children. Some of the rules will be explained just so you understand the game better; those that should be taught to your players have been incorporated into the practice plans.

In this chapter, we'll give you information on ball and court size and markings, player equipment, player positions, actions to start and restart the game, fouls and violations, and scoring. In a short section, we'll show you the officiating signals for basketball. We also will talk briefly about a few of the unwritten rules or traditions of basketball, which good players follow to be courteous and safe.

EQUIPMENT, COURT, AND GAME LENGTH

Basketball requires very little player equipment. Players should wear basketball shoes so they have proper traction on the court. They should wear clothing such as athletic shorts and tank tops or loose-fitting shirts so they have the freedom of movement needed to run, jump, and shoot. Players may choose to wear safety glasses or goggles to protect their eyes from injury. Also, if desired, players who have conditions affecting the knees or elbows may want to wear soft pads to protect them. Players may not wear jewelry during games.

In table 14.1 we present rules that cover many of the basics of the game.

TABLE 14.1

Rules Modifications for Basketball

	8- to 9- year-olds	10- to 11- year-olds	12- to 13- year-olds
Players on team	9	9	9
Ball size	Junior (#5)	Women's (#6)	Regulation (#7)
Court size	Short court	Short court	Full court
Free-throw distance	9 ft	9 ft	12 to 15 ft
Game length*	24 min	24 min	32 min
Time-outs	4	4	4
Players on court	5 v 5	5 v 5	5 v 5
Basket height	7 ft	8 ft	9 to 10 ft

*Many leagues run the clock continuously. In such cases, instead of playing,

for example, a 12- minute half and stopping the clock, you might play a 16- to 20-minute half without stopping the clock.

BALL AND COURT CHARACTERISTICS

Because basketball is a game in which a ball is passed, dribbled, and shot with the hands, the size of the ball must be appropriate for participants. A regulation men's basketball is far too heavy and large for kids to handle. For YMCA Rookies, we recommend you use a #5 ball, and, if possible, supply balls in a variety of sizes and weights.

Basketball courts are normally 50 feet by 94 feet (84 feet in high school), but this size is much too large for children younger than eight. YMCA Rookies should play on smaller-sized courts, either half-court or a short court (the basket is at the side of the court). We also recommend that you lower the basket from the regulation 10 feet to 6 feet for the six- to seven-year-olds and to 5 feet for the four- to five-year-olds.

Figure 9.1 shows the standard basketball court markings. Those you will use most often in YMCA Rookies play are the sidelines, the midcourt line, and the free-throw lane (or *key*). Several areas of the court are referred to with special basketball terminology:

- *Frontcourt* refers to the half of the court where your team's offensive basket is located.
- *Backcourt* includes the midcourt line and the half of the court where your opponent's basket is located.
- The *three-second lane* is an area that extends from the baseline under the basket to the free-throw line; it's also called the *key*. The semicircle that extends beyond the free-throw line designates the *top of the key*. In regulation play, offensive players are not allowed to remain in the lane for more than three seconds. If they do, a violation is called, and the ball is given to the opposing team. This violation will not be called in YMCA Rookies, however.
- The area outside the three-second lane area is called the *perimeter*.
- The *three-point line* marks a semicircle that is 19 feet from the basket at all points. Shots that are made from behind this line count for three points instead of two.
- The square markings six feet from the baseline on each side of the lane are referred to as the *blocks*.

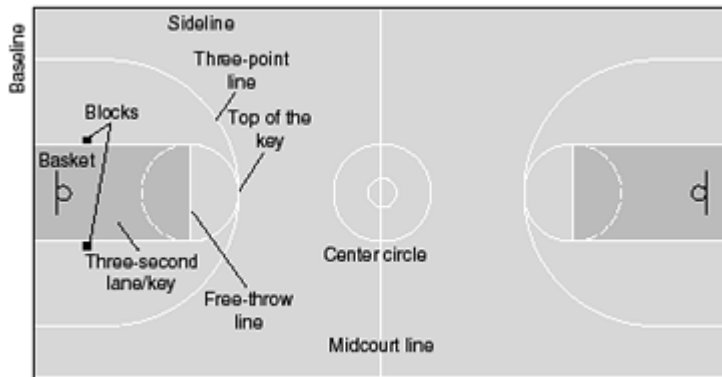


Figure 9.1 Basketball court markings.

PLAYER EQUIPMENT

Basketball requires very little equipment. Players should wear basketball shoes so they have proper traction on the court, and we recommend that they wear two pairs of athletic socks to avoid blisters. They should wear clothing such as athletic shorts and tank tops or loose-fitting shirts so they have the freedom of movement needed to run, jump, and shoot. Players may choose to wear safety glasses or goggles to protect their eyes from injury. Also, if desired, players who have conditions affecting the knees or elbows may want to wear soft pads to protect them.

PLAYER POSITIONS

Although in YMCA Rookies your players will only play 2 v 2 or 3 v 3, basketball is usually played with five players on a team. Each player is assigned a position, and each position is referred to by a number (1 through 5). The types of positions are guard, forward, and center.

Guards. Guards usually are the best ballhandlers and outside shooters on the team. They tend to be shorter and quicker than the other players and to have good dribbling and passing skills. Guards play farthest from the basket, on the perimeter.

A basketball team usually has two guards in the game at all times. The point guard, who is in the #1 position, is played by the team's best dribbler and passer. The second guard is the off guard, who is in the #2 position. He or she is often the team's best long-range shooter and second-best dribbler.

Forwards. Forwards typically are taller than guards and play near the basket. They should be able to shoot the ball accurately from within 12 feet of the basket and rebound the ball when shots are missed.

A team usually plays with two forwards in its lineup. The small forward (also referred to as the *wing*) is in the #3 position. This position often is filled by

the most versatile and athletic member of the team. The small forward must be able to play in the lane and on the perimeter on offense and to guard small and quick or big and strong opponents on defense. The other forward position is the big forward, the #4 position. This is a good spot to assign one of your bigger players and better rebounders who can also shoot the ball from anywhere in the lane area.

Center. The center, or #5 position (also called the *post position*), is frequently the tallest or biggest player on the team. That extra size is helpful in maneuvering for shots or rebounds around the basket. A tall center can also make it difficult for opposing teams to shoot near the basket. A center should have soft hands to catch the passes thrown into the lane area by guards and forwards. Most basketball teams designate one player on the court as their center.

STARTING AND RESTARTING THE GAME

In regulation play, a jump ball at center court is used to start games and overtime periods, which are played when teams are tied at the end of regulation time. During jump balls, the official tosses up the ball between two players, usually each team's center or best leaper. Each player attempts to tip the ball to a teammate (who must be outside of the center circle) to gain possession of the ball. Another jump ball situation occurs after simultaneous possession of the ball by players from opposing teams. In this case, teams alternate possession; the team that did not win the first jump ball takes the ball out of bounds in the next jump ball situation.

In YMCA Rookies, jump balls are not used to begin a game. Teams decide who starts the game by tossing a coin, guessing a number, or following some other fair procedure. Play stops when the ball goes out of bounds and when the coach calls a violation or a foul.

FOULS

Basketball can be a contact sport, with players often in close proximity and in constant motion. The rules of the game discourage rough play or tactics that allow a team to gain an advantage through brute force. Fouls are called when officials see illegal physical contact between two or more players based on these general principles:

- The first player to establish position (to become stationary or set) on the court has priority rights to that position.
- A body part cannot be extended into the path of an opponent.
- The player who moves into the path of an opponent, especially an airborne opponent, when contact occurs is responsible for the contact.
- All players have the right to the space extending straight up from their feet on the floor. This right is called the *principle of verticality*.

Types of Fouls

Based on the general principles concerning player contact, these specific fouls are called in a regulation game:

- *Blocking* is physically impeding the progress of another player who is still moving.
- *Charging* is running into or pushing a defender who is stationary.
- *Holding* is restricting the movement of an opponent.
- *Over-the-back* is infringing on the vertical plane of, and making contact with, a player who is in position and attempting to rebound.
- *Reaching in* is extending an arm and making contact with a ballhandler in an attempt to steal the ball.
- *Tripping* is extending a leg or foot and causing an opponent to lose balance or fall.

One other foul is an illegal screen, in which an offensive person tries to block a defender and makes contact. However, screens are not used in YMCA Rookies play.

The fouls just described are called *personal fouls*. This list covers most common ones, although there are others. Another type of possible foul is a *shooting foul*, in which a defender makes contact with a player who is shooting the basketball. (Other types of fouls exist, such as *intentional*, *technical*, and *flagrant*, but these relate to extreme behaviors by players and should not come up with YMCA Rookies players.) Emphasize to your players the importance of keeping hands off the shooter, establishing position, using the feet more than the arms to play defense, and not attempting to rebound over an opponent who has established position.

Consequences of Fouls

A team that fouls too much pays for it. Fouls carry with them increasingly severe penalties. A player who has five fouls is taken out of the game. In regulation play, a team that has more than a specified number of fouls in a quarter or half gives the opposing team a bonus situation: the member of the team who was fouled is allowed to shoot free throws (shoot from the free throw line with no opposition). If the foul is made on a player who is not shooting, that player shoots one free throw and, if he or she makes it, shoots a second one (this is called *one-and-one*). If the foul is made on a player who is shooting, that player shoots two free throws. Table 9.1 lists the types of fouls and their consequences.

TABLE 9.1

Fouls and Consequences

Type of foul	Team fouled in bonus?	Penalty
Shooting	Yes/No	Two free throws
Personal	No	Ball out of bounds
Personal	Yes	One-and-one free throws

Communicating After Fouls

How you discuss fouls with players is important. You want to discourage rough and dirty play, but you don't want to make players fearful of fouling. Hustling young players will inevitably pick up some fouls in each game. When a foul is called, point out to the player who fouled why the violation was called and explain to him or her how the foul could have been avoided with a more effective action. Although free throws are used in regulation play, they are not used in YMCA Rookies. Instead, treat fouls as violations, awarding the ball to the opposing team.

VIOLATIONS

Ballhandling violations occur more often than fouls in youth basketball. The *turnovers* (losses of the ball to the defense) caused by these violations will be one of your continuing frustrations as a basketball coach.

Types of Violations

These miscues are common among young ballhandlers:

- *Double dribble* is resuming dribbling after having stopped (when no defender interrupts the player's possession of the ball) or dribbling with both hands at the same time.
- *Charging*, which was described as a foul before, is also recorded as a turnover by the offense.
- *Over-and-back* is the return of the ball to the backcourt by an offensive player after he or she has crossed into the frontcourt.
- *Traveling* is taking more than one step without dribbling; it is also called *carrying the ball* or *palming the ball* when a player turns the ball a complete rotation in the hand between dribbles.

In YMCA Rookies play, double dribble and traveling rules are modified at first and gradually become closer to regulation rules. An over-and-back violation

cannot happen in YMCA Rookies play, because games are not played on a full court. In regulation play, violations can be called for various time restrictions, such as how long it takes to get the ball across the midcourt line or how long offensive players can stand in the lane. These violations are not called in YMCA Rookies play.

Table 14.3 shows our recommendations for modifying the rules for these violations.

TABLE 14.3

Modified Rules for Violations

Violation	8- to 9-year-olds	10- to 11-year-olds	12- to 13-year-olds
Double dribble	Allow one violation per player possession; gradually tighten up this allowance.	Allow one violation per player possession; gradually tighten up this allowance.	Call.
Over-and-back	Don't call.	Don't call.	Call.
Traveling	Give an extra step for starting and stopping; gradually tighten up this allowance.	Given an extra step for starting and stopping; gradually tighten up this allowance.	Call.
Inbounds (5-sec)	Don't call.	Give warnings early in season; call after mid-season.	Call.
Lane (3-sec)	Don't call.	Give warnings early in season; call after mid-season.	Call.
Backcourt (10-sec)	Don't call.	Give warnings early in season; call after mid-season.	Call.
Shot clock	Don't use.	Don't use.	Don't use.

Table 14.4 shows modified rules for defensive play.

TABLE 14.4**Modified Rules for Defensive Play**

Defense may . . .	8- to 9-year-olds	10- to 11-year-olds	12- to 13-year-olds
Use player-to-player defense	Yes	Yes	Yes
Use zone defense	No	No	No
Use full-court press	No	No	No
Strip ball handler of ball	No	Yes	Yes
Draw charges	No	No	Yes

Communicating After Violations

Basketball coaches generally distinguish between errors of commission and errors of omission when talking to their players. Errors of commission are mistakes associated with effort, such as a foul committed while hustling for a loose ball. Unless players are playing out of control, don't reprimand them after errors of commission. On the other hand, errors of omission, which are failures to perform assigned duties or within the rules, must be brought to players' attention. A player may simply be unaware of the role that was not fulfilled or the rule that was not followed. Whatever the case, calmly explain to him or her what is necessary to correct the performance.

SCORING

In regulation play, teams are awarded two points for every field goal. (When players are old enough to shoot successfully from behind the three-point line, they can earn three points.) A successful free throw is worth one point. The team that wins the most points over the course of the game is the winner.

In YMCA Rookies, you will find that we recommend that players be given some additional ways to score points, such as earning a point for keeping possession of the ball. This scoring system helps players focus on particular skills as they play.

OFFICIATING

Games are officiated by one or two officials who should know the rules and enforce them to ensure a safe, fair, and fun contest. Officials should also require good sporting behavior from all players and coaches. You can be a big help to officials by respecting their efforts and emphasizing to your players the need to play with respect for the rules. Figure 14.2a-t shows some common officiating signals. Familiarize yourself with these signals and explain them to your players.

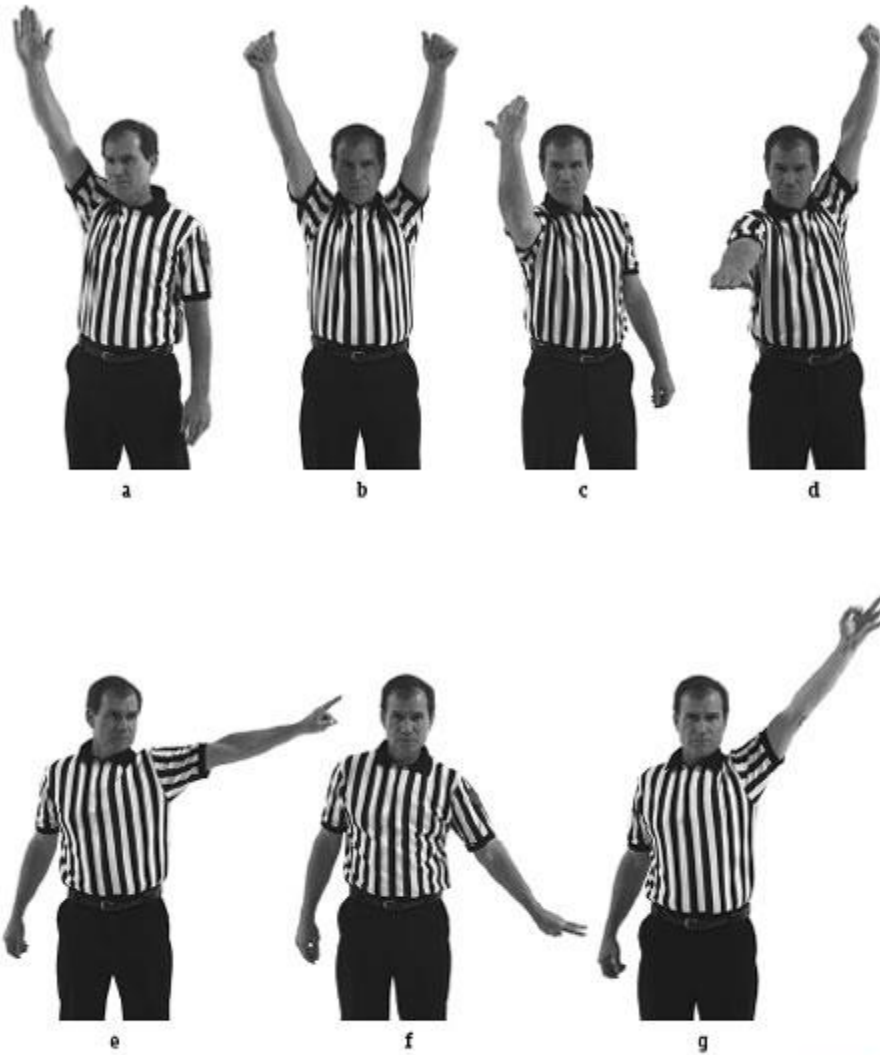
OFFICIATING SIGNALS

Even though your YMCA Rookies basketball practices won't be officiated, you may want to use the officiating signals to indicate fouls or violations. If you use the correct signals, the players will get used to the signals and their meaning. Figures 9.2 a-t (on pages 138-140) show some common officiating signals.

BASKETBALL TRADITIONS

Young children only need to know a couple of unwritten laws for basketball, and both of those are based on the core values. First, players should raise their hands if they know they've fouled someone. This admission is especially important in YMCA Rookies games because an official won't be watching. Admitting when you've committed a foul is an example of being honest.

Second, players should play cooperatively with those on their team and should show respect for their opponents. This is showing respect for others. They should shake hands with their opponents after the game to thank them for playing hard and providing a good game. Players usually line up on the sideline next to the benches to shake hands with each other.



(continued)

Figure 9.2 Officiating signals for (a) start clock, (b) stop clock for jump ball, (c) beckon substitute when ball is dead and clock is stopped, (d) stop clock for foul, (e) one point scored, (f) two points scored, (g) three points scored.



h



i



j



k



l



m

(continued)

Figure 9.2 *(continued)* Officiating signals for *(h)* blocking, *(i)* bonus situation (for second throw, drop one arm), *(j)* over-and-back or carrying the ball, *(k)* pushing, *(l)* illegal use of hands, *(m)* technical foul.

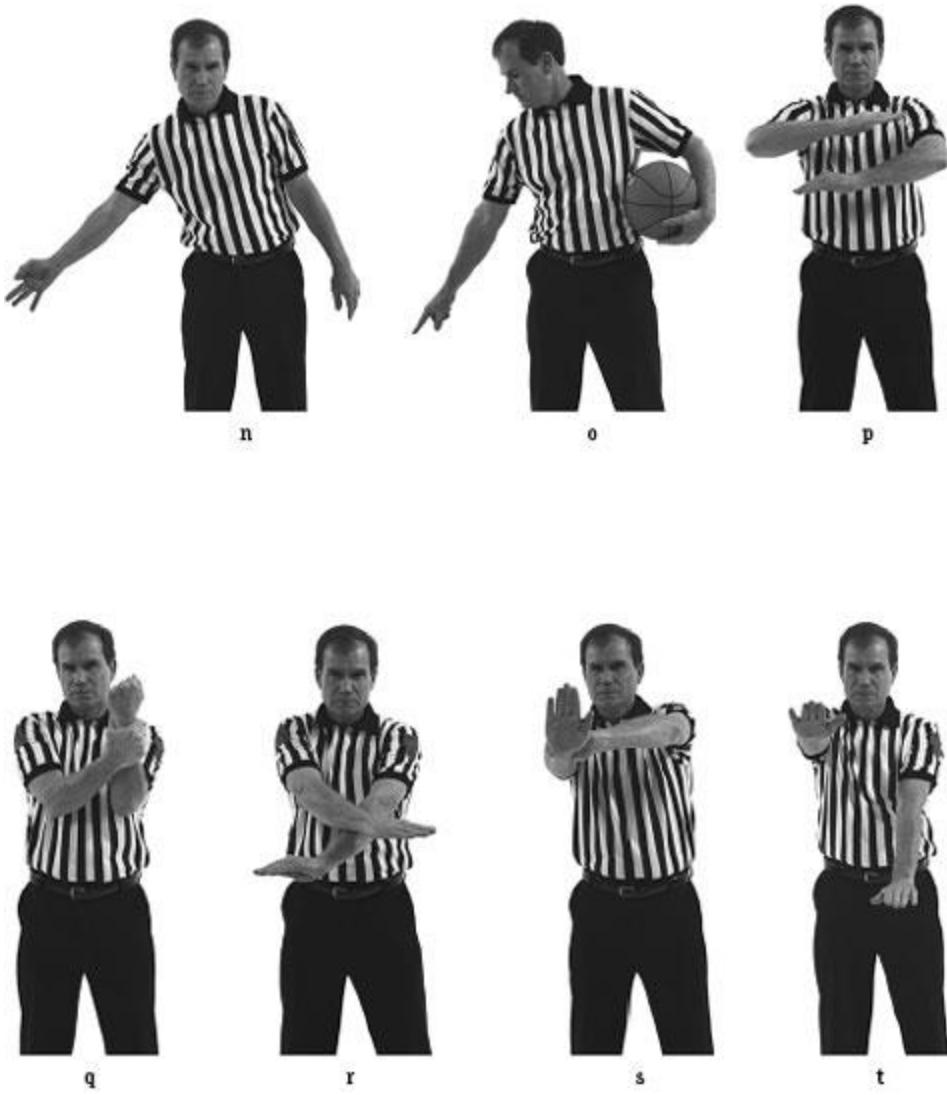


Figure 9.2 (continued) Officiating signals for (n) three-second violation, (o) designates out-of-bounds spot, (p) traveling, (q) holding, (r) no score, (s) hand checking, (t) illegal dribble.

COACHING RESOURCES



TEACHING AND SHAPING SKILLS

Coaching basketball is about teaching tactics, skills, fitness, values, and other useful things. It's also about "coaching" players before, during, and after contests. Teaching and coaching are closely related, but there are important differences. In this chapter we'll focus on principles of teaching, especially on teaching basketball skills. But many of the principles we'll discuss apply as well to teaching tactics, fitness concepts, and values.

TEACHING BASKETBALL SKILLS

Many people believe that the only qualification needed to teach a skill is to have performed it. It's helpful to have performed it, but there is much more than that to teaching successfully. And even if you haven't performed the skill before, you can still learn to teach successfully with the useful acronym IDEA:

- I - Introduce the skill.
- D - Demonstrate the skill.
- E - Explain the skill.
- A - Attend to players practicing the skill.

These are the basic steps of good teaching. Now we'll explain each step in greater detail.

INTRODUCE THE SKILL

Players, especially young and inexperienced ones, need to know what skill they are learning and why they are learning it. You should therefore take these three steps every time you introduce a skill to your players:

1. Get your players' attention.
2. Name the skill.
3. Explain the importance of the skill.

Get Your Players' Attention

Because youngsters are easily distracted, use some method to get their attention. Some coaches use interesting news items or stories. Others use jokes. And still others simply project enthusiasm to get their players to listen. Whatever method you use, speak slightly above the normal volume and look

your players in the eye when you speak. Also, position players so they can see and hear you. Arrange the players in two or three evenly spaced rows, facing you. (Make sure there's no distracting activity behind you.) Then ask if all of them can see you before you begin.

Name the Skill

Although you might mention other common names for the skill, decide which one you'll use and stick with it. This will help avoid confusion and enhance communication among your players.

Explain the Importance of the Skill

Although the importance of a skill may be apparent to you, your players may be less able to see how the skill will help them become better basketball players. Offer them a reason for learning the skill and describe how the skill relates to more advanced skills.

The most difficult aspect of coaching is this: Coaches must learn to let athletes learn. Sport skills should be taught so they have meaning to the child, not just meaning to the coach.

— Rainer Martens, founder of the American Sport Education Program

DEMONSTRATE THE SKILL

The demonstration step is the most important part of teaching sport skills to players who may never have done anything closely resembling the skill. They need a picture, not just words. They need to see how the skill is performed.

If you are unable to perform the skill correctly, have an assistant coach, one of your players, or someone else more skilled perform the demonstration. These tips will help make your demonstrations more effective:

- Use correct form.
- Demonstrate the skill several times.
- Slow down the action, if possible, during one or two performances so players can see every movement involved in the skill.
- Perform the skill at different angles so your players can get a full perspective of it.
- Demonstrate the skill with both the right and the left hands.

EXPLAIN THE SKILL

Players learn more effectively when they're given a brief explanation of the skill along with the demonstration. Use simple terms and, if possible, relate the skill to previously learned skills. Ask your players whether they understand your description. A good technique is to ask the team to repeat your explanation. Ask questions like "What are you going to do first?" and "Then what?" Watch for when players look confused or uncertain, and repeat your explanation and demonstration at those points. If possible, use different words so your players get a chance to try to understand the skill from a different perspective.

Complex skills often are better understood when they are explained in more manageable parts. For instance, if you want to teach your players how to perform the crossover dribble, you might take the following steps:

1. Show them a correct performance of the entire skill, and explain its function in basketball.
2. Break down the skill and point out its component parts to your players.
3. Have players perform each of the component skills you have already taught them, such as controlling the dribble at knee level, dribbling with the head up to see the rim, and protecting the ball with the body and the nondribbling hand.
4. After players have demonstrated their ability to perform the separate parts of the skill in sequence, reexplain the entire skill.
5. Have players practice the skill in gamelike conditions.

One caution: Young players have short attention spans, and a long demonstration or explanation of the skill will bore them. So spend no more than a few minutes altogether on the introduction, demonstration, and explanation phases. Then get the players active in a game that calls on them to perform the skill. The total IDEA should be completed in 10 minutes or less, followed by games in which players practice the skill.

ATTEND TO PLAYERS PRACTICING THE SKILL

If the skill you selected was within your players' capabilities and you have done an effective job of introducing, demonstrating, and explaining it, your players should be ready to attempt the skill. Some players may need to be physically guided through the movements during their first few attempts. Walking unsure athletes through the skill in this way will help them gain confidence to perform the skill on their own.

Your teaching duties don't end when all your athletes have demonstrated that they understand how to perform the skill. In fact, a significant part of your teaching will involve observing closely the hit-and-miss trial performances of your players. In the next section we'll guide you in shaping players' skills, and then we'll help you learn how to detect and correct errors, using positive feedback. Keep in mind that your feedback will have a great

influence on your players' motivation to practice and improve their performances.

Remember, too, that players need individual instruction. So set aside a time before, during, or after practice to give individual help.

HELPING PLAYERS IMPROVE SKILLS

After you have successfully taught your players the fundamentals of a skill, your focus will be on helping them improve that skill. Players will learn skills and improve upon them at different rates, so don't get too frustrated. Instead, help them improve by shaping their skills and detecting and correcting errors.

SHAPING PLAYERS' SKILLS

One of your principal teaching duties is to reward positive behavior—in terms of successful skill execution—when you see it. A player makes a good pass in practice, and you immediately say, "That's the way to extend! Good followthrough!" This, plus a smile and a "thumbs-up" gesture, go a long way toward reinforcing that technique in that player.

However, sometimes you may have a long, dry spell before you have any correct technique to reinforce. It's difficult to reward players when they aren't executing skills correctly. How can you shape their skills if this is the case?

Shaping skills takes practice on your players' part and patience on your part. Expect your players to make errors. Telling the player who made the great pass that she did a good job doesn't ensure that she'll make that pass the next time. Seeing inconsistency in your players' techniques can be frustrating. It's even more challenging to stay positive when your athletes repeatedly perform a skill incorrectly or lack enthusiasm for learning. It can certainly be frustrating to see athletes who seemingly don't heed your advice and continue to make the same mistakes. And when the athletes don't seem to care, you may wonder why you should.

Please know that it is normal to get frustrated at times when teaching skills. Nevertheless, part of successful coaching is controlling this frustration. Instead of getting upset, use these six guidelines for shaping skills:

1. **Think small initially.** Reward the first signs of behavior that approximate what you want. Then reward closer and closer approximations of the desired behavior. In short, use your reward power to shape the behavior you seek.

2. **Break skills into small steps.** For instance, in learning to dribble, one of your players does well in keeping the ball close to his body, but he's bouncing the ball too high and not shielding it with his body and nondribbling

hand. Reinforce the correct technique of keeping the ball close, and teach him how to dribble at knee level. When he masters that, focus on getting him to shield the ball from defenders.

3. Develop one component of a skill at a time. Don't try to shape two components of a skill at once. For example, in rebounding, players must first block their opponents out, then go for the ball. They should focus first on blocking out by putting their back against their opponent's chest, spreading a wide base, putting the hands up, and then going on for the ball. Athletes who have problems mastering a skill often do so because they're trying to improve two or more components at once. Help these athletes to isolate a single component.

4. As athletes become more proficient at a skill, reinforce them only occasionally and only for the best examples of the skill behavior. By focusing only on the best examples, you will help them continue to improve once they've mastered the basics.

5. When athletes are trying to master a new skill, temporarily relax your standards for how you reward them. As they focus on the new skill or attempt to integrate it with other skills, the old well-learned skills may temporarily degenerate.

6. If, however, a well-learned skill degenerates for long, you may need to restore it by going back to the basics.

Coaches often have more skilled players provide feedback to teammates as they practice skills. This can be effective, but proceed with caution: You must tell the skilled players exactly what to look for when their teammates are performing the skills. You must also tell them the corrections for the common errors of that skill.

We've looked at how to guide your athletes as they learn skills. Now let's look at another critical teaching principle that you should employ as you're shaping skills: detecting and correcting errors.

DETECTING AND CORRECTING ERRORS

Good coaches recognize that athletes make two types of errors: learning errors and performance errors. *Learning errors* are ones that occur because athletes don't know how to perform a skill; that is, they have not yet developed the correct motor program in the brain to perform a particular skill. *Performance errors* are made not because athletes don't know how to do the skill, but because they made a mistake in executing what they do know. There is no easy way to know whether a player is making learning or performance errors. Part of the art of coaching is being able to sort out which type of error each mistake is.

The process of helping your athletes correct errors begins with your observing and evaluating their performances to determine if the mistakes are learning or performance errors. For performance errors, you need to look for the reasons that your athletes are not performing as well as they know how. If the mistakes are learning errors, then you need to help them learn the skill, which is the focus of this section.

There is no substitute for knowing skills well in correcting learning errors. The better you understand a skill—not only how it is done correctly but also what causes learning errors—the more helpful you will be in correcting mistakes.

One of the most common coaching mistakes is to provide inaccurate feedback and advice on how to correct errors. Don't rush into error correction; wrong feedback or poor advice will hurt the learning process more than no feedback or advice. If you are uncertain about the cause of the problem or how to correct it, continue to observe and analyze until you are more sure. As a rule, you should see the error repeated several times before attempting to correct it.

Correct One Error at a Time

Suppose Jill, one of your forwards, is having trouble with her shooting. She's doing some things well, but you notice that she's extending her arm on too flat a trajectory, resulting in too low an arc, and not squaring up to face the basket on all of her shots. What do you do?

First, decide which error to correct first, because athletes learn more effectively when they attempt to correct one error at a time. Determine whether one error is causing the other; if so, have the athlete correct that error first, because it may eliminate the other error. In Jill's case, however, neither error is causing the other. In such cases, athletes should correct the error that will bring the greatest improvement when remedied—for Jill, this probably means squaring up to the basket. Correcting one error often motivates athletes to correct other errors.

Use Positive Feedback to Correct Errors

The positive approach to correcting errors includes emphasizing what to do instead of what not to do. Use compliments, praise, rewards, and encouragement to correct errors. Acknowledge correct performance as well as efforts to improve. By using the positive approach, you can help your athletes feel good about themselves and promote a strong desire to achieve.

When you're working with one athlete at a time, the positive approach to correcting errors includes four steps:

1. Praise effort and correct performance.

2. Give simple and precise feedback to correct errors.
3. Make sure the athlete understands your feedback.
4. Provide an environment that motivates the athlete to improve.

Let's take a brief look at each step.

Step 1: Praise Effort and Correct Performance. Praise your athlete for trying to perform a skill correctly and for performing any parts of it correctly. Praise the athlete immediately after he or she performs the skill, if possible. Keep the praise simple: "Good try," "Way to hustle," "Good form," "Good extension," or "That's the way to follow through." You can also use nonverbal feedback, such as smiling, clapping your hands, or any facial or body expression that shows approval.

Make sure you're sincere with your praise. Don't indicate that an athlete's effort was good when it wasn't. Usually an athlete knows when he or she has made a sincere effort to perform the skill correctly and perceives undeserved praise for what it is—untruthful feedback to make him or her feel good. Likewise, don't indicate that a player's performance was correct when it wasn't.

Step 2: Give Simple and Precise Feedback. Don't burden a player with a long or detailed explanation of how to correct an error. Give just enough feedback so the player can correct one error at a time. Before giving feedback, recognize that some athletes will readily accept it immediately after the error; others will respond better if you slightly delay the correction.

For errors that are complicated to explain and difficult to correct, try the following:

- Explain and demonstrate what the athlete should have done. Do not demonstrate what the athlete did wrong.
- Explain the cause or causes of the error, if this isn't obvious.
- Explain why you are recommending the correction you have selected, if it's not obvious.

Step 3: Make Sure the Athlete Understands Your Feedback. If the athlete doesn't understand your feedback, he or she won't be able to correct the error. Ask him or her to repeat the feedback and to explain and demonstrate how it will be used. If the athlete can't do this, be patient and present your feedback again. Then have the athlete repeat the feedback after you're finished.

Step 4: Provide an Environment That Motivates the Athlete to Improve. Your

players won't always be able to correct their errors immediately even if they do understand your feedback. Encourage them to "hang tough" and stick with it when corrections are difficult or they seem discouraged. For more difficult corrections, remind them that it will take time, and the improvement will happen only if they work at it. Look to encourage players with low self-confidence. Saying something like, "You were dribbling at a much better speed today; with practice, you'll be able to keep the ball closer to you and shield it from defenders," can motivate a player to continue to refine his or her skills.

Some athletes need to be more motivated to improve. Others may be very self-motivated and need little help from you in this area at all; with them you can practically ignore Step 4 when correcting an error. While motivation comes from within, look to provide an environment of positive instruction and encouragement to help your athletes improve.

A final note on correcting errors: Team sports such as basketball provide unique challenges in this endeavor. How do you provide individual feedback in a group setting using a positive approach? Instead of yelling across the court to correct an error (and embarrassing the player), substitute for the player who erred. Then make the correction on the sidelines. This type of feedback has three advantages:

- The player will be more receptive to the one-on-one feedback.
- The other players are still active, still practicing skills, and unable to hear your discussion.
- Because the rest of the team is still playing, you'll feel compelled to make your comments simple and concise—which, as we've said, is more helpful to the player.

This doesn't mean you can't use the team setting to give specific, positive feedback. You can do so to emphasize correct group and individual performances. Use this team feedback approach only for positive statements, though. Keep any negative feedback for individual discussions.

DEVELOPING PRACTICE PLANS

You will need to create practice plans for each season. Each practice plan should contain the following sections:

- Purpose
- Equipment
- Plan

Purpose sections focus on what you want to teach your players during each practice; they outline your main theme for each practice. The purpose should

be drawn from your season plan (see chapter 9). Equipment sections note what you'll need to have on hand for that practice. Plan sections outline what you will do during each practice session. Each consists of these elements:

- Warm-Up
- Game 1
- Skill Practice
- Game 2
- Cool-down and Review

You'll begin each session with about five minutes of warm-up activities. Then you'll have your players play a modified basketball game (look in chapter 8 for suggested games and chapter 9 for their use in season plans). You'll look for your cue to interrupt that game—your cue being when players are having problems with carrying out the basic goal or aim of the game. At this point you'll "freeze" the action, keeping the players where they are, and ask brief questions about the tactical problems the players encountered and what skills they need to solve those problems. (Review chapter 4 for more on interrupting a game and holding a question-and-answer session.)

Then you'll teach the skill the players need to acquire to successfully execute the tactic. During Skill Practice you'll use the IDEA approach:

- Introduce the skill
- Demonstrate the skill
- Explain the skill
- Attend to players practicing the skill

Your introduction, demonstration, and explanation of a skill should take no more than two to three minutes; then you'll attend to players and provide teaching cues or further demonstration as necessary as they practice the skill.

After the Skill Practices, you will usually have the athletes play another game or two to let them use the skills they have just learned and to understand them in the context of a game. During Game and Skill Practices, emphasize the importance of every player on the court moving and being involved in every play, whether they will be directly touching the ball or not. No player on the court should be standing around.

The Plan section continues with a cool down and stretching. As your players stretch you'll wrap up the practice with a few summary comments and remind them of the next practice or game day.

The games in chapter 8 include suggestions to help you modify the games. These suggestions will help you keep practices fun and provide activities for

players with varying skill levels.

Although practicing using the games approach should reduce the need for discipline, there will be times when you'll have to deal with players who are misbehaving in practice. In the next section we'll help you handle these situations.

DEALING WITH MISBEHAVIOR

Athletes will misbehave at times; it's only natural. Following are two ways you can respond to misbehavior: through extinction or discipline.

Extinction

Ignoring a misbehavior—neither rewarding nor disciplining it—is called *extinction*. This can be effective under certain circumstances. In some situations, disciplining young people's misbehavior only encourages them to act up further because of the recognition they get. Ignoring misbehavior teaches youngsters that it is not worth your attention.

Sometimes, though, you cannot wait for a behavior to fizzle out. When players cause danger to themselves or others or disrupt the activities of others, you need to take immediate action. Tell the offending player that the behavior must stop and that discipline will follow if it doesn't. If the athlete doesn't stop misbehaving after the warning, discipline.

Extinction also doesn't work well when a misbehavior is self-rewarding. For example, you may be able to keep from grimacing if a youngster kicks you in the shin, but he or she still knows you were hurt. Therein lies the reward. In these circumstances, it is also necessary to discipline the player for the undesirable behavior.

Extinction works best in situations in which players are seeking recognition through mischievous behaviors, clowning, or grandstanding. Usually, if you are patient, their failure to get your attention will cause the behavior to disappear.

However, be alert that you don't extinguish desirable behavior. When youngsters do something well, they expect to be positively reinforced. Not rewarding them will likely cause them to discontinue the desired behavior.

Discipline

Some educators say we should never discipline young people, but should only reinforce their positive behaviors. They argue that discipline does not work, that it creates hostility and sometimes develops avoidance behaviors that may be more unwholesome than the original problem behavior. It is true that discipline does not always work and that it can create problems when

used ineffectively, but when used appropriately, discipline is effective in eliminating undesirable behaviors without creating other undesirable consequences. You must use discipline effectively, because it is impossible to guide athletes through positive reinforcement and extinction alone. Discipline is part of the positive approach when these guidelines are followed:

- Discipline in a corrective way to help athletes improve now and in the future. Don't discipline to retaliate and make yourself feel better.
- Impose discipline in an impersonal way when athletes break team rules or otherwise misbehave. Shouting at or scolding athletes indicates that your attitude is one of revenge.
- Once a good rule has been agreed upon, ensure that athletes who violate it experience the unpleasant consequences of their misbehavior. Don't wave discipline threateningly over their heads. Just do it, but warn an athlete once before disciplining.
- Be consistent in administering discipline.
- Don't discipline using consequences that may cause you guilt. If you can't think of an appropriate consequence right away, tell the player you will talk with him or her after you think about it. You might consider involving the player in designing a consequence.
- Once the discipline is completed, don't make athletes feel they are "in the doghouse." Make them feel that they're valued members of the team again.
- Make sure that what you think is discipline isn't perceived by the athlete as a positive reinforcement—for instance, keeping a player out of doing a certain drill or portion of the practice may be just what the athlete desired.
- Never discipline athletes for making errors when they are playing.
- Never use physical activity—running laps or doing push-ups—as discipline. To do so only causes athletes to resent physical activity, something we want them to learn to enjoy throughout their lives.
- Discipline sparingly. Constant discipline and criticism cause athletes to turn their interests elsewhere and to resent you as well.

COACHING RESOURCES



THE GAMES APPROACH TO TEACHING BASKETBALL

Do you remember how as a child you were taught by adults to play a sport, either in an organized sports program or a physical education class? They probably taught you the basic skills using a series of drills that you found very boring. As you began to learn the basic skills, they eventually taught you the tactics of the game, showing you when to use these skills in various game situations. Do you remember how impatient you became during what seemed to be endless instruction, and how much you just wanted to play? Well, forget this traditional approach to teaching sports.

Can you recall learning a sport by playing with a group of your friends in the neighborhood? You didn't learn the basic skills first; there was no time for that. You began playing immediately. If you didn't know the basic things to do, your friends told you quickly during the game so they could keep playing. We're going to ask you to use a very similar approach, called the games approach, when you teach YMCA Rookies basketball. This approach knocks the socks off the traditional approach.

On the surface, teaching basketball by first teaching the basic skills of the sport and then the tactics of the game would seem to make sense, but we've discovered that this approach has two serious shortcomings. First, it teaches the skills of the sport out of the context of the game. Kids learn to pass and dribble the ball, but they find it difficult to learn how to use these skills within the game because they don't understand the tactics of the game. Second, learning skills by doing drills outside of the context of the game is so-o-o-o boring. The single biggest turnoff about adults teaching kids sports is that we over-organize the instruction and deprive kids of their intrinsic desire to play the game.

We're asking that you, as a YMCA Rookies coach, teach basketball the YMCA way, the games approach way. Clear the traditional approach out of your mind. Once you fully understand the games approach, you'll quickly see its superiority in teaching basketball. Not only will kids learn the game better, but you and they will also have much more fun. As a bonus, you'll have far fewer discipline problems.

With the games approach, all teaching of basketball skills begins by playing the game, usually a modified version of the game for younger children. As the children play the game, you help them learn what to do, what we call *tactical awareness*. When your players understand what they must do in the game, they are then eager to develop the skills to play the game. Now that players are motivated to learn the skills, you can demonstrate the skills of

the game, have players practice using game-like drills, and provide individual instruction by identifying players' errors and helping to correct them. In the traditional approach to teaching sports, players do this:

Learn the skill → Learn the tactics → Play the game

In the games approach players do this:

Play the game → Learn the tactics → Learn the skill

In the past we have placed too much emphasis on learning the skills and not enough on learning how to play skillfully—that is, how to use those skills during play. The games approach, in contrast, emphasizes learning what to do first, then how to do it. Moreover—and this is important—the games approach lets children discover what to do in the game, not by you telling them, but by them experiencing it. What you do as an effective coach is help them discover what they've experienced. In contrast to the "skill-drill-kill the enthusiasm" approach, the games approach is a guided discovery method of teaching. It empowers your children to solve the problems that arise in the game, and that's a big part of the fun in learning a game.

Now let's look more closely at the games approach to see the four-step process for teaching basketball:

1. Play a modified basketball game.
2. Help the players discover what they need to do to play the game successfully.
3. Teach the skills of the game.
4. Practice the skills in another game.

STEP 1. PLAY A MODIFIED BASKETBALL GAME

It's the first day of practice. Some of the kids are eager to get started; others are obviously apprehensive. Some have rarely dribbled a ball, most don't know the rules, and none know the positions in basketball. What do you do?

If you teach using the traditional approach, you start with a little warm-up activity, and then line them up for a simple dribbling drill and go from there. With the games approach, you begin by playing a modified game that is developmentally appropriate for the level of the players and also designed to focus on learning a specific part of the game.

Don't worry about modifying the game to be developmentally appropriate — we've done it for you. Our practice plans in part II are based on two- and three-player teams. We've also modified the size of the court, the height and

size of the basket, the ball, and the rules. We'll tell you more about these changes later.

Modifying the game to place emphasis on a limited number of situations in the game is one way you guide your players to discover certain tactics in the game. For instance, you have your players play a two-versus-one basketball game, making the objective of the game learning to play with a teammate. Players can dribble only three times before passing the ball. Playing the game this way forces players to think about what they have to do to pass and receive accurately.

STEP 2. HELP PLAYERS DISCOVER WHAT THEY NEED TO DO

As your players are playing the game, look for the right spot to "freeze" the action, step in, and hold a brief question-and-answer session to discuss problems they were having in carrying out the goal of the game. You don't need to pop in on the first miscue, but if they repeat the same types of mental or physical mistakes a few times in a row, step in and ask them questions that relate to the goal of the game and the necessary skills required. The best time to interrupt the game is when you notice that they are having trouble carrying out the main goal, or aim, of the game. By stopping the game, freezing action, and asking questions, you'll help them understand

- what the aim of the game is;
- what they must do to achieve that aim; and
- what skills they must use to achieve that aim.

After you've discussed the aim, you can begin the skill practice.

Here's an example of how to use questions in the games approach, continuing the example of the modified game we used earlier. Your players just played a game in which the objective was to play with a teammate. You see that they are having trouble doing this, so you interrupt the action and ask the following questions:

Coach: What would you do with the ball if you had a teammate?

Players: Pass to him or her.

Coach: What do you have to do to be successful at passing?

Players: Catch the ball and pass the ball right to my partner or teammate.

Coach: Why don't we try practicing passing and receiving?

Through the modified game and skillful questioning on your part, your players realize that accurate passing and receiving are essential to their success. Just as important, rather than telling them that these skills are

critical, you led them to that discovery through a well-designed modified game and through questions. This questioning, which leads to players' discovery, is a crucial part of the games approach. Essentially you'll be asking your players—usually literally—"What do you need to do to succeed in this situation?"

Asking the right questions is a very important part of your teaching. We've given you sample questions in each practice plan (see chapters 6 and 7) to help you know where to begin. At first, asking questions will be difficult because your players have so little experience with the game. If you've learned sports through the traditional approach, you'll be tempted to tell your players how to play the game and not waste time asking them questions. Resist this powerful temptation to tell them what to do, and especially, don't tell them before they begin to play the game.

If your players have trouble understanding what to do, phrase your questions to let them choose between one option versus another. For example, if you ask them "What's the fastest way to get the ball down the court?" and get answers such as "Run with it" or "Toss it," then ask "Is it passing or dribbling?"

Sometimes players need to have more time playing the game, or you may need to make a further modification to the game so that it is even easier for them to discover what they are to do. Using this discovery method takes more patience on your part, but it's a powerful way to learn. Don't be reluctant to change the numbers in the teams or some aspect of the structure of the game to aid this discovery. In fact, we advocate playing "lopsided" games (such as 3 v 1 or 3 v 2) in the second game of each practice; we'll explain this concept in a moment.

STEP 3. TEACH THE SKILLS OF THE GAME

Only when your players recognize the skills they need to execute the tactics they have come to learn from playing the game, do you want to teach the specific skills through focused drills. Now you can use a more traditional approach to teaching sports skills, called IDEA:

- I Introduce the skill.
- D Demonstrate the skill.
- E Explain the skill.
- A Attend to players practicing the skill.

Let's take a look at each part of the approach.

Introduce the Skill

Your players will already have some idea of what the skill is you want to teach because they've already tried it during a game and talked about it. Use

this opportunity to get them focused on the specific skill. You can do this in three ways:

- **First, get their attention.** Make sure your players are positioned where they all should be able to see and hear you, and ask them if they can before you begin. Be sure that they are not facing the sun, a bright light, or some other distraction. When you speak, be enthusiastic, talk slightly louder than normal, and look your players in the eye.
- **Next, name the skill.** If the skill is referred to by more than one name, choose one and stick with it. Using consistent names for skills helps prevent confusion and makes it easier for you and your players to communicate.
- **Finally, briefly review how the skill will help them in the game.** They should have some idea from your earlier questioning, but make sure they see how it fits in the game and describe how the skill relates to more advanced skills.

Demonstrate the Skill

Players, especially younger ones, can learn a lot more from seeing the skill performed rather than just hearing about it. The skill must be shown correctly, so if you don't feel you can demonstrate it well, have another adult or a skilled player do it. Keep these tips in mind when demonstrating a skill:

- Use correct form.
- Demonstrate the skill several times.
- During one or two performances, slow down the action so players can see every movement involved in the skill.
- Perform the skill at different angles so your players can get a full perspective on it.
- Demonstrate the skill with both the right and the left hands.

Explain the Skill

Help your players understand what they see in the demonstration by giving them a short and simple explanation. Relate the skill to previously learned ones, when possible. To see whether your explanation is working, ask your players whether they understand it. A good way to do this is to have them repeat the explanation back to you. Ask questions such as "What are you going to do first?" "Then what?" and watch for players who look confused or uncertain. Try to explain the skill using different words, which may give players a different perspective.

Because you are working with young children, who have short attention spans, take no more than 3 minutes to do the introduction, demonstration,

and explanation. Follow it immediately with practice.

Attend to Players Practicing the Skill

The practice plans in chapters 6 and 7 will provide you with specific ideas on how to run the practice, as well as cue words you should use during practice. Use these cues to help the players remember what to focus on during practice.

As your players practice, watch them closely to see which ones can use additional help. Some players will need you to physically guide them through the skill; this guidance will help them gain the confidence they need to try. Most will just need some feedback from you, and they'll be glad to get it—if you do it the right way.

Nobody likes to be yelled at, especially when they're supposed to be having fun! The young children you are working with have little or no prior experience with basketball or even sports in general. They also have not fully developed their motor skills, so you should expect to see more incorrect than correct movements during practice. If you lose your cool when a player makes a mistake, you're just teaching that player to stop trying or to get upset about errors—not exactly what you had in mind. Let your players know that making mistakes isn't the end of the world.

If you have to correct a player, be sure not to follow a positive statement with the word *but*. For example, don't say "Alesha, your dribbling is great, but you need to pass the ball more often." Saying it this way causes many kids to ignore the positive statement and focus on the negative one. Instead of the word *but*, use the word *and*. Say something such as "Alesha, your dribbling is great, and now let's work on passing."

Remember that praise from you is very motivational for your players. Be sure to tell them what they are doing right and help them correct what they are doing wrong.

STEP 4. PRACTICE THE SKILLS IN ANOTHER GAME

Once the players have practiced the skill, you then put them in another game situation—this time a lopsided game (such as 3 v 1 or 3 v 2). Why use lopsided teams? It's simple: As a coach, you want your players to experience success as they're learning skills. The best way to experience success early on is to create an advantage for the players. This makes it more likely that, for instance, in a 3 v 1 game, your three offensive players will be able to make four passes before attempting to score.

When you get to the practice plans in chapters 6 and 7, you'll see that we often use even-sided games (3 v 3) in the first games and lopsided games in the second games. The reasoning behind this is to first introduce players to a

situation similar to what they will experience in competition and let them discover the challenges they face in performing the necessary skill. Then you teach them the skill, have them practice it, and put them back in another game—this time a lopsided one to give them a greater chance of experiencing success.

As players improve their skills, you don't need to use lopsided games. At a certain point, having a 3 v 1 advantage will be too easy for the kids and won't challenge them to hone their skills. At that point you lessen the advantage to 3 v 2, or you may even decide that they're ready to practice the skill in even-sided competition. The key is to set up situations where your players experience success, yet are challenged in doing so. This will take careful monitoring on your part, but having kids play lopsided games as they are learning skills is a very effective way of helping them learn and improve.

So, that's the games approach. Your players will get to *play* more in practice, and once they learn how skills fits in with their performance and enjoyment of the game, they'll be more motivated to work on those skills, which will help them to be successful.

COACHING RESOURCES



Game-Day Coaching

Contests provide the opportunity for your players to show what they've learned in practice. Just as your players' focus shifts on contest days from learning and practicing to competing, so your focus shifts from teaching skills to coaching players as they perform those skills in contests. Of course, the contest is a teaching opportunity as well, but the focus is on performing what has been previously learned.

In the last chapter you learned how to teach your players basketball tactics and skills; in this chapter we'll help you coach your players as they execute those tactics and skills in contests. We'll provide important coaching principles that will guide you throughout the game day— before, during, and after the contest.

Before the Contest

Just as you need a practice plan for what you're going to do each practice, you need a game plan for what to do on the day of a game. Many inexperienced coaches focus only on how they will coach during the contest itself, but your preparations to coach should include details that begin well before the first play of the game. In fact, your preparations should begin during the practice before the contest.

Preparations at Practice

During the practice a day or two before the next contest, you should do two things (besides practicing tactics and skills) to prepare your players:

Decide on any specific team tactics that you want to employ, and discuss pregame particulars such as what to eat before the game, what to wear, and when to be at the gym.

Deciding Team Tactics

Some coaches see themselves as great military strategists guiding their young warriors to victory on the battlefield. These coaches burn the midnight oil as they devise a complex plan of attack. There are several things wrong with this approach, but we'll point out two errors in terms of deciding team tactics:

1. The decision on team tactics should be made with input from players.

2. Team tactics at this level don't need to be complex.

Perhaps you guessed right on the second point but were surprised by the first. Why should you include your players in deciding tactics? Isn't that the coach's role?

It's the coach's role to help youngsters grow through the sport experience.

Giving your athletes a chance to offer input here helps them to learn the game. It gets them involved at a planning level that often is reserved solely for the coach. It gives them a feeling of ownership; they're not just "carrying out orders" of the coach. They're executing the plan of attack that was jointly decided. Youngsters who have a say in how they approach a task often respond with more enthusiasm and motivation.

Don't dampen that enthusiasm and motivation by concocting tactics that are too complex. Keep tactics simple, especially at the younger levels. Focus on maintaining good court balance, penetrating the defense, setting screens to get players open, taking good shots on offense, and cutting off passing lanes on defense.

As you become more familiar with your team's tendencies and abilities, help them focus on specific tactics that will help them play better. For example, if your team has a tendency to stand around and watch the action, emphasize moving more and spreading out the attack. If they are active and moving throughout the game, but not in any cohesive fashion, focus them on setting screens, penetrating the defense, and looking to open up passing lanes.

If you're coaching 12- to 14-year-olds, you might institute certain plays that your team has practiced. These plays should take advantage of your players' strengths. Again, give the players some input into what plays might be employed in a game.

Discussing Precontest Particulars

Players need to know what to do before a contest: what they should eat on game day and when, what clothing they should wear to the game, what equipment they should bring, and what time they should arrive at the gym. Discuss these particulars with them at the practice before a contest. Here are guidelines for discussing these issues.

Pregame Meal. Carbohydrates are easily digested and absorbed and are a ready source of fuel. Players should eat a high-carbohydrate meal ideally about three to four hours before a game to allow the stomach to empty completely. This won't be possible for games held in early morning; in this case, athletes should still eat food high in carbohydrates, such as an English muffin, toast, or cereal, but not so much that their stomachs are full. In

addition, athletes' pregame meals shouldn't include foods that are spicy or high in fat content.

Clothing and Equipment. Instruct players to wear their team shirts or uniforms and suitable shoes.

Time to Arrive. Your players will need to adequately warm up before a game, so instruct them to arrive 20 minutes before a game to go through a team warm-up (see "The Warm-Up" on page 56).

Facilities, Equipment, and Support Personnel

Although the site coordinator and referees have responsibilities regarding facilities and equipment, it's wise for you to know what to look for to make sure the contest is safe for the athletes. You should arrive at the court 25 to 30 minutes before game time so you can check the court, check in with the site coordinator and referees, and greet your players as they arrive to warm up. The site coordinator and referees should be checking the facilities and preparing for the contest. If referees aren't arriving before the game when they're supposed to, inform the site coordinator.

A facilities checklist includes the following:

Gymnasium Facilities

- The stairs and corridors leading to the gym are well lit.
- The stairs and corridors are free of obstruction.
- The stairs and corridors are in good repair.
- Exits are well marked and illuminated.
- Exits are free of obstruction.
- Uprights and other projections are padded, including the basket standards or poles.
- Walls are free of projections.
- Windows are located high on the walls.
- Wall plugs and light switches are insulated and protected.
- Lights are shielded.
- Lighting is sufficient to illuminate the playing area well.
- The heating/cooling system for the gym is working properly and is monitored regularly.
- Ducts, radiators, pipes, and so on are shielded or designed to withstand high impact.
- Tamper-free thermostats are housed in impact-resistant covers.
- If there is an overhanging track be sure it has secure railings with a minimum height of three feet, six inches.
- The track has direction signs posted.
- The track is free of obstructions.
- Rules for the track are posted.
- Projections on the track are padded or illuminated.

- Gym equipment is inspected prior to and during each use.
- The gym is adequately supervised.
- Galleries and viewing areas have been designed to protect small children by blocking their access to the playing area.
- The gym (floor, roof, walls, light fixtures, etc.) is inspected on an annual basis for safety and structural deficiencies.
- Fire alarms are in good working order.
- Fire extinguishers are up to date, with note of last inspection.
- Directions are posted for evacuating the gym in case of fire.

Communicating With Parents

The groundwork for your communication with parents will have been laid in the parent orientation program, through which parents learn the best ways to support their kids'—and the whole team's—efforts on the court. As parents gather in the gym before a contest, let them know what the team has been focusing on during the past week and what your goals are for the game. For instance, perhaps you've worked on the "give-and-go" play in practice this week; encourage parents to watch for improvement and success in executing this play and to support the team members as they attempt all tactics and skills. Help parents to judge success not just based on the contest outcome, but on how the kids are improving their performances.

If parents yell at the kids for mistakes made during the game, make disparaging remarks about the officials or opponents, or shout instructions on what tactics to employ, ask them to refrain from making such remarks and to instead be supportive of the team in their comments and actions.

After a contest, briefly and informally assess with parents, as the opportunity arises, how the team did based not on the outcome, but on meeting performance goals and playing to the best of their abilities.

Help parents see the contest as a process, not solely as a test that's pass/fail or win/lose. Encourage parents to reinforce that concept at home.

Unplanned Events

Part of being prepared to coach is to expect the unexpected. What do you do if players are late? What if you have an emergency and can't make the game or will be late? What if the contest is postponed? Being prepared to handle out-of-the-ordinary circumstances will help you when such unplanned events happen.

If players are late, you may have to adjust your starting lineup. While this may not be a major inconvenience, do stress to your players the importance of being on time for two reasons:

Part of being a member of a team means being committed and responsible to

the other members. When players don't show up, or show up late, they break that commitment.

Players need to go through a warm-up to physically prepare for the contest. Skipping the warm-up risks injury. Consider making a team rule stating that players need to show up 20 minutes before a game and go through the complete team warm-up, or they won't start. An emergency might cause you to be late or miss a game. In such cases, notify your assistant coach, if you have one, or the league coordinator. If notified in advance, a parent of a player or another volunteer might be able to step in for the contest.

Sometimes a game will be postponed because of inclement weather or for other reasons (such as unsafe court conditions). If the postponement takes place before game day, you'll need to call each member of your team to let him or her know. If it happens while the teams are on the court preparing for the game, gather your team members and tell them the news and why the game is being postponed. Make sure all your players have rides home before you leave—be the last to leave to be sure.

The Warm-Up

Players need to both physically and mentally prepare for a game once they arrive at the court. Physical preparation involves warming up.

We've suggested that players arrive 20 minutes before the game to warm up. Conduct the warm-up similar to practice warm-ups, with some brief games that focus on skill practice and stretching.

Players should prepare to do what they will do in the game: dribble, pass, catch, shoot, defend, and rebound. This doesn't mean they spend extensive time on each skill; you can plan two or three brief practice games that encompass all these skills.

After playing a few brief games, your players should stretch. You don't need to deliver any big pep talk, but you can help your players mentally prepare as they stretch by reminding them of the following:

- The tactics and skills they've been working on in recent practices, especially focusing their attention on what they've been doing well.
- Focusing on their strengths.
- The team tactics you decided on in your previous practice.
- Performing the tactics and skills to the best of their individual abilities and playing together as a team.
- Playing hard and smart and having fun!

During the Contest

The list you just read goes a long way toward defining your focus for

coaching during the contest. Throughout the game, you'll keep the game in proper perspective and help your players do the same. You'll observe how your players execute tactics and skills and how well they play together. You'll make tactical decisions in a number of areas. You'll model appropriate behavior on the bench, showing respect for opponents and officials, and demand the same of your athletes. You'll watch out for your athletes' physical safety and psychological welfare, in terms of building their self-esteem and helping them manage stress and anxiety.

Proper Perspective

Winning games is the short-term goal of your basketball program; helping your players learn the tactics, skills, and rules of basketball, how to become fit, and how to be good sports in basketball and in life is the long-term goal. Your young athletes are "winning" when they are becoming better human beings through their participation in basketball.

Keep that perspective in mind when you coach. You have the privilege of setting the tone for how your team approaches the game. Keep winning and all aspects of the competition in proper perspective, and your young charges will likely follow suit.

Tactical Decisions

While you aren't called upon to be a great military strategist, you are called upon to make tactical decisions in several areas throughout a contest. You'll make decisions about who starts the game and when to enter substitutes, about making slight adjustments to your team's tactics, and about correcting players' performance errors or leaving the correction for the next practice.

Starting and Substituting Players

In considering playing time at the younger levels, make sure that everyone on the team gets to play at least half of each game. This should be your guiding principle as you consider starting and substitution patterns. We suggest you consider two options in substituting players:

Substituting Individually. Replace one player with another. This offers you a lot of latitude in deciding who goes in when, and it gives you the greatest mix of players throughout the game, but it can be hard to keep track of playing time (this could be made easier by assigning an assistant or a parent to this task).

Substituting by Quarters. The advantage here is that you can easily track playing time, and players know how long they will be in before they might be replaced.

Adjusting Team Tactics

At the 8 to 9 and 10 to 11 age levels, you probably won't adjust your team tactics too significantly during a game; rather, you'll focus on the basic tactics in general and emphasize during breaks which tactics your team needs to work on in particular.

However, coaches of 12- to 14-year-olds might have cause to make tactical adjustments to improve their team's chances of performing well and winning. As games progress, assess your opponents' style of play and tactics, and make adjustments that are appropriate—that is, that your players are prepared for. For example, if your opponent likes to run a lot and is beating your team on fast breaks, you might make sure you have at least a few quick players who can get back on defense.

However, don't stress tactics too much during a game. Doing so can take the fun out of the game for the players. If you don't trust your memory, carry a pen and notepad to note which team tactics and individual skills need attention in the next practice.

Correcting Players' Errors

In chapter 5 you learned about two types of errors: learning errors and performance errors. Learning errors are ones that occur because athletes don't know how to perform a skill. Athletes make performance errors not because they don't know how to do the skill, but because they make a mistake in executing what they do know.

Sometimes it's not easy to tell which type of error athletes are making.

Knowing your athletes' capabilities helps you to know whether they know the skill and are simply making mistakes in executing it or whether they don't really know how to perform the skill. If they are making learning errors—that is, they don't know how to perform the skills—you'll need to make note of this and teach them at the next practice.

Game time is not the time to teach skills.

If they are making performance errors, however, you can help players correct those errors during a game. Players who make performance errors often do so because they have a lapse in concentration or motivation—or they are simply demonstrating the human quality of sometimes doing things incorrectly. A word of encouragement to concentrate more may help. If you do correct a performance error during a contest, do so in a quiet, controlled, and positive tone of voice during a break or when the player is on the bench with you.

For those making performance errors, you have to decide if it is just the occasional error anyone makes or an expected error for a youngster at that

stage of development. If that is the case, then the player may appreciate your not commenting on the mistake. The player knows it was a mistake and knows how to correct it. On the other hand, perhaps an encouraging word and a "coaching cue" (such as "Remember to follow through on your shots") may be just what the athlete needs. Knowing the players and what to say is very much a part of the "art" of coaching.

Coach's and Players' Behavior

Another aspect of coaching on game day is managing behavior—both yours and your athletes'. The two are closely connected.

Your Conduct

You very much influence your players' behavior before, during, and after a contest. If you're up, your players are more likely to be up. If you're anxious, they'll notice and the anxiety can be contagious. If you're negative, they'll respond with worry. If you're positive, they'll play with more enjoyment. If you're constantly yelling instructions or commenting on mistakes and errors, it will be difficult for players to concentrate.

Instead, let players get into the flow of the game.

The focus should be on positive competition and on having fun. A coach who overorganizes everything and dominates a game from the sideline is definitely not making the contest fun.

So how should you conduct yourself on the bench? Here are a few pointers:

- Be calm, in control, and supportive of your players.
- Encourage players often, but instruct during play sparingly. Players should be focusing on their performance during a game, not on instructions shouted from the bench.
- If you need to instruct a player, do so when you're both on the bench, in an unobtrusive manner. Never yell at players for making a mistake. Instead, briefly demonstrate or remind them of the correct technique and encourage them.

Remember, you're not playing for an Olympic gold medal! In this program, basketball competitions are designed to help players develop their skills and themselves—and to have fun. So coach in a manner at games that helps your players do those things.

Players' Conduct

You're responsible for keeping your players under control. Do so by setting a good example and by disciplining when necessary. Set team rules of good behavior. If players attempt to cheat, fight, argue, badger, yell disparaging

remarks, and the like, it is your responsibility to correct the misbehavior. Consider team rules in these areas of game conduct:

- Players' language
- Players' behavior
- Interactions with referees
- Discipline for misbehavior
- Dress code for competitions

Players' Physical Safety

We devoted all of chapter 3 to discussing how to provide for players' safety, but it's worth noting here that safety during contests can be affected by how referees are calling the rules. If they aren't calling rules correctly, and this risks injury to your players, you must intervene. Voice your concern in a respectful manner and in a way that places the emphasis where it should be: on the athletes' safety. One of the referees' main responsibilities is to provide for athletes' safety; you are not adversaries here. Don't hesitate to address an issue of safety with a referee when the need arises.

Players' Psychological Welfare

Athletes often attach their self-worth to winning and losing. This idea is fueled by coaches, parents, peers, and society, who place great emphasis on winning. Players become anxious when they're uncertain if they can meet the expectations of others or of themselves when meeting these expectations is important to them.

If you place too much importance on the game or cause your athletes to doubt their abilities, they will become anxious about the outcome and their performance. If your players look uptight and anxious during a contest, find ways to reduce both the uncertainties about how their performance will be evaluated and the importance they are attaching to the game. Help athletes focus on realistic personal goals— goals that are reachable and measurable and that will help them improve their performance. Another way to reduce anxiety on game day is to stay away from emotional pregame pep talks. We provided guidance earlier in what to address before the game.

When coaching during contests, remember that the most important outcome from playing basketball is to build or enhance players' self-worth.

Keep that firmly in mind, and strive to make every coaching decision promote your athletes' self-worth.

Opponents and Referees

Respect opponents and referees. Without them, you wouldn't have a competition. Referees help provide a fair and safe experience for athletes

and, as appropriate, help them learn the game. Opponents provide opportunities for your team to test itself, improve, and excel.

You and your team should show respect for opponents by giving your best efforts. You owe them this. Showing respect doesn't necessarily mean being "nice" to your opponents, though it does mean being civil.

Don't allow your players to "trash talk" or taunt an opponent. Such behavior is disrespectful to the spirit of the competition and to the opponent.

Immediately remove a player from a contest if he or she disobeys your orders in this area.

Remember that referees are quite often teenagers—in many cases not much older than the players themselves. The level of officiating should be commensurate to the level of play. In other words, don't expect perfection from referees any more than you do from your own players.

Especially at the younger levels, they won't make every call, because to do so would stop the contest every 10 seconds.

After the Contest

When the game is over, join your team in congratulating the coaches and players of the opposing team, then be sure to thank the referees. Check on any injuries players sustained and let players know how to care for them. Be prepared to speak with the referees about any problems that occurred during the game. Then hold a brief Team Circle, as explained in a moment, to ensure your players are on an even keel, whether they won or lost.

Winning With Class, Losing With Dignity

When celebrating a victory, make sure your team does so in a way that doesn't show disrespect for the opponents. It's fine and appropriate to be happy and celebrate a win, but don't allow your players to taunt the opponents or boast about their victory. Keep winning in perspective. Winning and losing are a part of life, not just a part of sport. If players can handle both equally well, they'll be successful in whatever they do.

Athletes are competitors, and competitors will be disappointed in defeat. If your team has made a winning effort, let them know that.

After a loss, help them keep their chins up and maintain a positive attitude that will carry over into the next practice and contest.

Team Circle

If your players have performed well in a game, compliment them and

congratulate them immediately afterward. Tell them specifically what they did well, whether they won or lost. This will reinforce their desire to repeat their good performances.

Don't criticize individual players for poor performances in front of teammates. Help players improve their skills, but do so in the next practice, not immediately after a game.

The postgame Team Circle isn't the time to go over tactical problems and adjustments. The players are either so happy after a win or so dejected after a loss that they won't absorb much tactical information immediately following a game. Your first concern should be your players' attitudes and mental well-being. You don't want them to be too high after a win or too low after a loss. This is the time you can be most influential in keeping the outcome in perspective and keeping them on an even keel.

Finally, make sure your players have transportation home. Be the last one to leave in order to help if transportation falls through and to ensure full supervision of players before they leave.

COACHING RESOURCES

OFFENSIVE TACTICS

In basketball, the offensive team's primary objective is to move the ball effectively so that they can score. A secondary goal is to maintain ball possession so that the opposing team cannot score. The following tactics will help your team accomplish these goals.

CREATING PASSING LANES

To move the ball effectively, your team needs to move well without the ball and create passing lanes, which are spaces between offensive players where a pass can be made. Players create passing lanes by using cuts and screens, by maintaining space and court balance, by keeping the middle open, and by quickly moving to a vacated spot. We'll address cuts and screens later in this chapter. Here we'll take a closer look at maintaining court balance, keeping the middle open, and moving to a vacated spot.

- Maintaining court balance. Players should start in an open formation about 12 to 15 feet apart. They should be spaced high at the top, wide on the wing, and at the midpoint between the basket and corner on the baseline.
- Keeping the middle open. When a player cuts to the basket and doesn't receive a pass, he should continue through and fill an open spot on the side of the court with fewer players. This will keep the middle open and the floor balanced. Players shouldn't stay in the post area for more than one count.
- Moving to a vacated spot. The person who is the next player away from a cutting player should move quickly to the vacated spot (see figure 8.1). This is especially important when the player has cut from the point or top position. When replacing the player at the point, the new player should swing wide above the three-point line, creating a better passing angle from the wing.

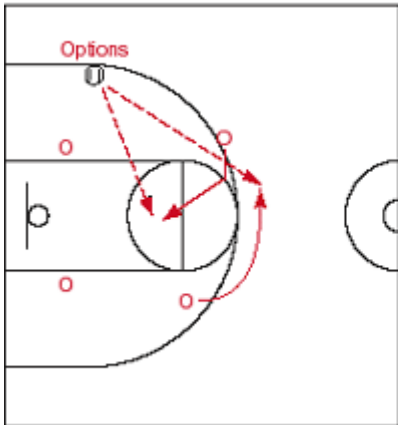


Figure 8.1 The player who is the next player away from a cutting player should quickly move to the vacated spot.

PASSING LANE GAME

ROOM TO MOVE

Goal

To create passing lanes and move to open space.

Description

Play 3 v 2. The offensive players move to open space. Players pass and then move to a place on the court—point, wing, baseline, low post—that is adjacent to the ball (see figure 8.2). The focus is on constant ball movement and moving to open space. Players can dribble, too, but the emphasis is on little dribbling and crisp passing. Players must make 10 passes; after the 10th pass, they can shoot and continue to shoot until they score or the defense rebounds.

Give one point for each pass successfully received and one point for a basket. Once a basket is made or the defense rebounds, begin again, this time with the two defenders moving to offense.

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 1.

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 3 v 3.
- Allow no dribbling.

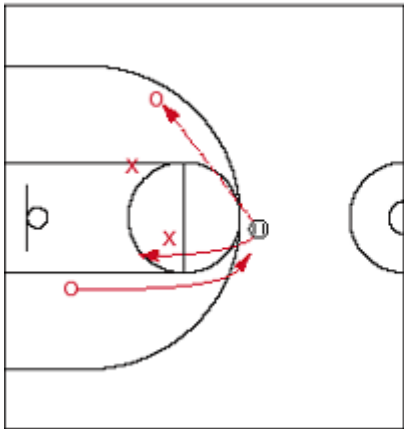


Figure 8.2 Creating passing lanes.

Setting Screens

Screens may be set for a player with or without the ball; they help players get open for passes and shots. An offensive player who sets a screen, or pick, positions herself as a stationary barrier on one side of a teammate's defender, blocking the defender's path as the teammate cuts around the screen to get open (see figure 8.3). The screening player stands erect with feet planted shoulder-width apart and arms down to the sides or crossed at the chest. The screen should be set perpendicular to the path of the defender. Against good defensive teams the cutter may often be covered, but the screener will often be open to receive a pass after setting the screen.

Direct players to "screen away" from the ball, meaning that they should set screens for teammates who are on the opposite (weak) side of the court from the ball. That way the player for whom the screen is set will be moving toward the passer after coming off the screen. Players should cut right by (actually brushing by) the screeners.

Error Detection and Correction for Screening

ERROR The player sets moving screens, which are illegal.

CORRECTION The player should use a wide, two-footed jump stop (see page 105) to avoid an illegal moving screen before his or her teammate cuts. The screener should keep his or her arms and knees in as the defender fights through.



Figure 8.3 Proper technique for setting a screen.

SETTING SCREENS GAME

SCREEN DOOR

Goal

To set effective screens to free up teammates.

Description

Play 3 v 2. The offense must complete three passes before attempting a screen. With the ball handler out on top with the ball, one teammate sets a screen for the other teammate, who cuts around the screen and looks for a pass from the ball handler (see figure 8.4). The ball handler can call out, "PR" (which signals to set a pick on the right side) or "PL" (which signals to set a pick on the left side), or the teammates can move on their own without the call. Give the offense five possessions, and give them two points for each successful screen and one point for each basket scored directly off the screen. (A screen is successful if it frees the teammate from her defender.) Reset the play after a shot is taken, whether the ball goes in or not.

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 1.
- Play a "cold" defense—one in which defenders are passive and moving at about half speed.

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 3 v 3.
- Play a "hot" defense—the defenders play all out.

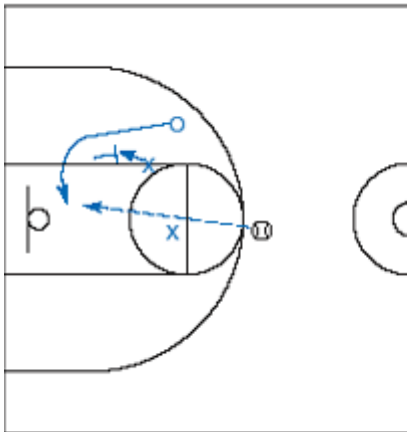


Figure 8.4 Setting a screen to free a teammate.

TRANSITION GAME

The fast break usually develops after a rebound, steal, or possibly after a made basket, and is the fastest way to make the transition from defense to offense. As soon as the defense gains control of the ball, they use the outlet pass or dribble to start the break—passing being the first option, because it moves the ball faster. On a rebound, the rebounder should pivot toward the wing area on that side of the court and hit the outlet (#1, #2, or #3 player). The player receiving the pass gets the ball to the middle of the court by either passing or dribbling; teammates should fill the lanes on either side as they proceed down the court. The player with the ball in the middle wants to get to the free-throw line under control before passing to either lane for a shot or short drive.

It's important to stay spread out and run at top speed under control during the fast break. The last two players down the floor are called trailers (usually #4 and #5). They cut directly to the blocks on either side, looking for a pass from one of the outside lanes. Trailers often get passes on the blocks from the right or left lane cutters when the defense moves out to cover them on the wings. An example of the fast break is shown in figure 8.5.

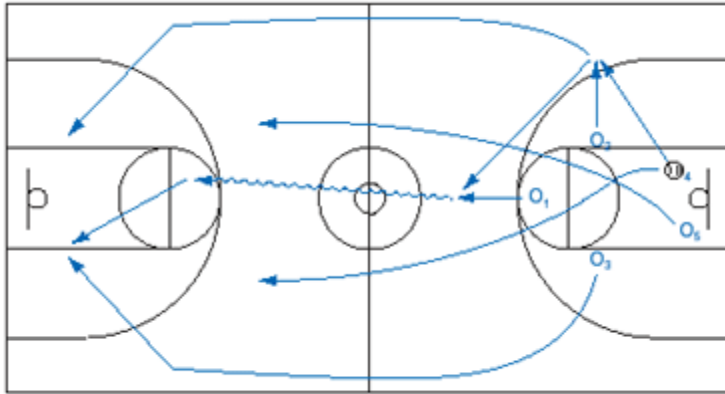


Figure 8.5 Fast break.

Error Detection and Correction for the Fast Break

ERROR Players anticipate that a teammate will gain possession, and they run away from the ball to start the fast break before obtaining possession.

CORRECTION Players must first gain possession of the ball before starting their fast break.

ERROR After rebounding, a player is trapped or is in a congested area and unable to make the outlet pass.

CORRECTION The player should use one or two power dribbles up the middle and then look to pass.

A point guard who sees that the rebounder is unable to make the outlet pass should come back to the rebounder to receive a short pass or handoff. The point guard should call out, "Ball!" to demand the ball.

TRANSITION GAME

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

Goal

To convert fast-break opportunities into baskets.

Description

Play 2 v 4. The defense allows one of the two offensive players to take a shot to begin the game. Instruct the offense to purposely miss the shot. (A made shot is given back to the offense to shoot again with no points scored.) The defense rebounds and runs a fast break, making the outlet pass and filling the lanes (see figure 8.6). The defense attempts to stop the fast break. Give two points for a well-executed break and an additional point for finishing it

off with a bucket. Then begin the game again at the end just scored on.

To make the game easier:

- Play 1 v 4 or 1 v 3.

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 3 v 4 or 4 v 4.
- Allow no dribbling.

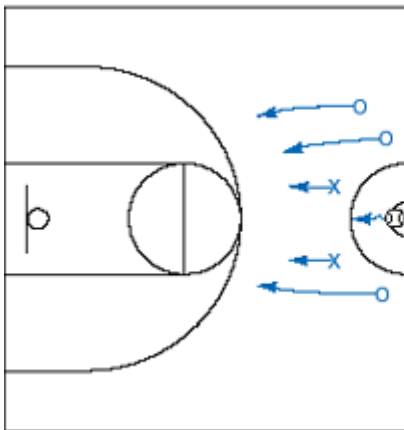


Figure 8.6 Filling the lanes on a fast break.

GIVE-AND-GO

The give-and-go is the most basic play in basketball. The name comes from the action: One player gives (passes) the ball to a teammate and goes (cuts) to the basket, looking to receive a return pass for a layup (see figure 8.7, page 84). The give-and-go exemplifies team play. By passing the ball and then moving without it, the player creates an opportunity to score on a return pass. If the player does not get open on the cut, the movement at least gives the teammate a better opportunity to initiate a one-on-one move, because the cutter's defender will be in a less advantageous position to give defensive help.

After a player initiates the give-and-go with a pass (see figure 8.7a), he or she reads the defender's position before cutting to the basket. If the defender moves with the passer, continuing to guard closely, the passer should simply make a hard cut to the basket. However, if the defender drops off, moving toward the ball on the pass, the passer should set the defender up with a fake before cutting (see figure 8.7b). The passer should fake by taking a step or two away from the ball, and then, as the defender moves with the passer, the passer should make a sharp cut in front of the defender toward the basket (see figure 8.7c). The passer can also fake by taking a step or two toward the ball, then make a sharp cut behind the defender. This

is called a backdoor cut. The key is for players to read their defenders to know which type of cut—a front cut or a backdoor cut—will be most effective.

Error Detection and Correction for the Give-and-Go

ERROR Players do not have enough space to get open.

CORRECTION At the point, start the give-and-go at least a step above the free-throw circle; on the wing, start the give-and-go a step above the foul line extended.

ERROR After passing, a player doesn't read defender's position and rushes his cut.

CORRECTION The player should read the defender's position; if he is closely guarded, he should cut hard. If the defender moves back and toward the ball, the player should fake away or toward the ball before cutting.

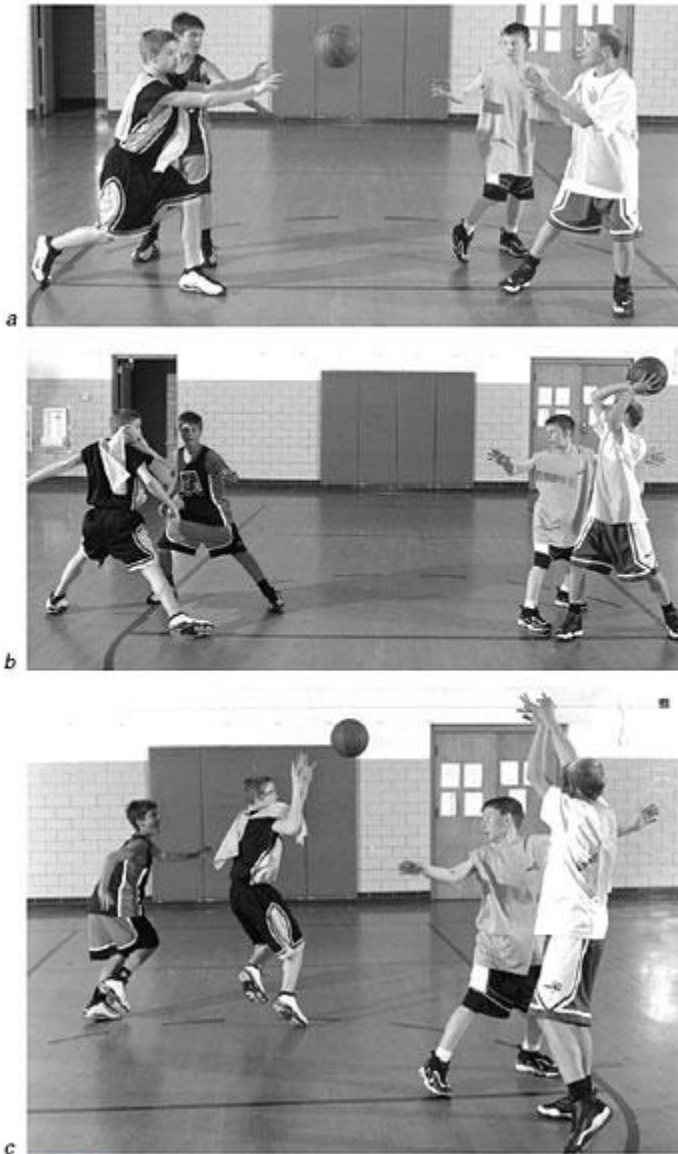


Figure 8.7 The give-and-go.

GIVE-AND-GO GAME

RETURN TO SENDER

Goal

To score off of the give-and-go play.

Description

Play 3 v 3. The offensive players look to pass and then cut to the basket, holding their hands up and looking for a return pass (see figure 8.8). Shots must be taken within five feet of the basket. Baskets scored directly off the

give-and-go count for two points; other baskets count one point. Reset the offense after each play. Give the offense five opportunities to run give-and-gos; then switch offense and defense.

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 2.
- Play a "cold" defense (passive, about half speed).

To make the game more challenging:

- Play a "hot" defense (aggressive and full speed).

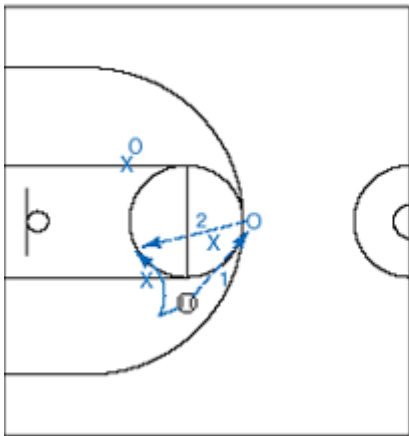


Figure 8.8 Executing the give-and-go.

PICK-AND-ROLL

The pick-and-roll is another basic play that has always been a part of basketball. Its name, like that of the give-and-go, comes from the action of the play. A player sets a pick (screen) for a teammate (see figure 8.9a) who dribbles by it for an outside shot or a drive. The screener then rolls toward the basket (see figure 8.9b), looking for a pass from the dribbler for a layup. It's important that the dribbler take at least two dribbles beyond the screen to create space for the pass to the screener who rolls to the basket.



a



b

Figure 8.9 The pick-and-roll.

Error Detection and Correction for the Pick-and-Roll

ERROR A player doesn't wait for the pick to be set. The player dribbles off the pick while her teammate is still moving, causing a foul on the teammate for setting an illegal moving block.

CORRECTION Before using the pick, the player must wait until a legal pick is set and until she has read the defender's position.

ERROR As a player rolls or cuts, he does not give a target with his lead hand.

CORRECTION After making a roll or cut, the player should get his lead hand up for a target (see figure 8.10).

PICK-AND-ROLL GAME

PICKIN' FOR POINTS

Goal

To score off of the pick-and-roll play.

Description

Play 3 v 2. The offense must complete three passes before attempting a pick-and-roll. With the ballhandler out on top with the ball, one teammate sets a screen for the other teammate, then rolls to the basket, hand up, to receive a pass (see figure 8.10). All shots must be shot off of a pick-and-roll.

Give the offense five possessions, and give them two points for each successful pick-and-roll that ends in a basket. Reset the play after a shot is taken, whether the ball goes in or not. Switch teams after five plays.

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 1.
- Play a "cold" defense (passive and about half speed).

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 3 v 3.
- Play a "hot" defense (all out).

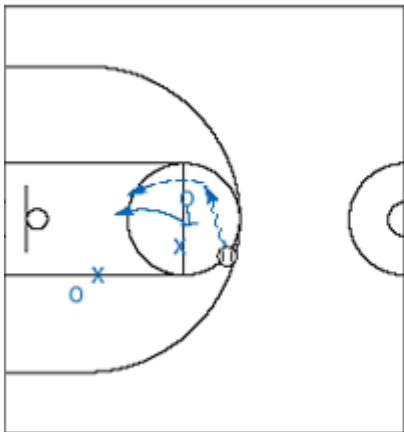


Figure 8.10 Executing the pick-and roll.

INBOUNDS PLAYS

Design most of your inbounds plays to create easy scoring opportunities when your team puts the ball in play from underneath your basket. Keep the plays simple and limit them to just a few. Consider aligning in the same manner for each play so that your players aren't confused about where to position themselves and the defense isn't tipped off by a change in formation.

Two options for offensive inbounds plays are shown in figure 8.11a and b. But you can design your own plays or use some from other coaches. The key is to have a good passer inbound the ball and for the rest of the team to cut

hard to their designated spots.

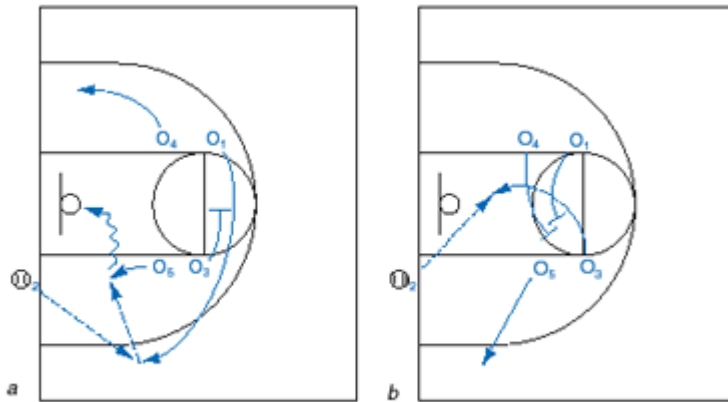


Figure 8.11 Offensive inbounds plays.

Error Detection and Correction for Inbounds Plays

ERROR Players aren't getting open for passes.

CORRECTION Players need to know their roles and make quick moves and sharp cuts, presenting targets with their hands to receive the ball.

INBOUNDS PLAY GAME

5 SECONDS TO GO

Goal

To score off of an inbounds play.

Description

Play 5 v 3. Run one or more of your inbounds plays. Give the offense five attempts to score on inbounds plays, and one point for each basket scored before five seconds elapse. Then switch teams.

To make the game easier:

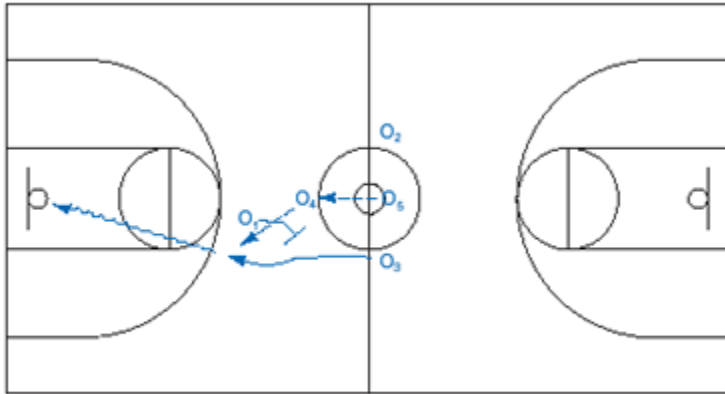
- Play a "cold" defense (passive and about half speed).

To make the game more challenging:

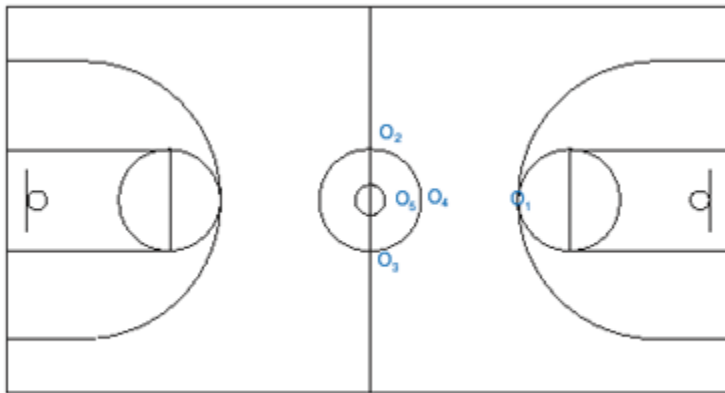
- Play 5 v 4 or 5 v 5.
- Play a "hot" defense (all out).

JUMP BALLS

How players are positioned for a jump ball depends on whether your team has the better chance of controlling the tip—that is, winning the jump ball. If the player jumping for you has the advantage, your team should align in an offensive formation and attempt to score off the play (see figure 8.12). If, however, it appears that the opposing team will gain possession, a defensive setup is appropriate (see figure 8.13). The jumper should tip the ball to an open spot where two teammates are next to each other without an opponent in between.



Figures 8.12 Offensive formation for a jump ball.



Figures 8.13 Defensive formation for a jump ball.

COACHING RESOURCES

DEFENSIVE TACTICS

Playing good defense involves using correct technique and working together with teammates. Good defense inhibits opponents by limiting the number of uncontested shots. Good team defense not only reduces scoring opportunities for the opponents, but it also opens them to your team.

Teams with less-than-average offensive talent can be successful by playing hard, intelligent team defense. Defense is more consistent than offense because it is based mostly on desire and effort. Players might have an off game in shooting, but they should never have an off game on defense, because they control their desire and effort.

In this section we'll focus on three aspects of defensive tactics: defending against screens, cutting off passing lanes, and helping out. Later in the chapter we'll address the individual skills of playing defense on the ball and off the ball.

DEFENDING AGAINST SCREENS

To defend against screens, players need to communicate and help one another. The defender on the opponent who is setting the screen must alert the defender being screened by calling out the direction of the screen: "Screen right!" or "Screen left!" Three ways to defend against a screen are to fight over the top of the screen, to slide behind it, and to switch.

Fight Over the Top

A player should fight over the top of a screen when there is room for the defender to get between the screener and the screener's teammate. The defender whom the screen was set on should let the teammate know to stay with his opponent by shouting, "Through!" or "Over!" The defender being screened should work to get through the screen by first getting a foot over the screen and then the remainder of the body (see figure 8.14).

Slide Behind

When an opponent sets a screen on a player guarding a quick driver or when the action is outside the opponent's shooting range (see figure 8.15a), the player being screened should slide behind the screen (see



Figure 8.14 Fighting over the top of a screen.

figure 8.15b). In this case the player being screened slides between the screener and the teammate guarding the screener (this teammate should step back to allow the player to slide through).



a



b

Figure 8.15 Sliding behind a screen.

Switch

When teammates are of equal size and defensive ability, they can switch opponents (see figure 8.16a). If size and defensive ability differ, switching should be the last option, as it allows the offense to take advantage of a mismatch. Players who switch should call out the screen by yelling, "Switch!" (see figure 8.16b). As players switch, one player must aggressively get in position to deny a pass to the cutter (the screener who rolls to the basket) while the other player gets in position on the ball side of the screener (see figure 8.16c).



a



b



c

Figure 8.16 Switching on a screen.

DEFENDING AGAINST SCREENS GAME

CUT OFF AT THE PASS

Goal

To defend against screens.

Description

Play 2 v 2, 3 v 3, or 4 v 4. The offense must use screens in setting up plays. If the defense defends well against a screen (that is, no advantage is gained; see figure 8.17), the defense is awarded one point. If the offense gains an advantage on the screen, the defense loses one point. If the offense scores directly off of the screen, the defense loses two points. A play ends after the screen is set (the offense can shoot directly off the screen). From that point the play is reset and the offense begins again.

After five plays, switch sides.

To make the game easier:

- Play 2 v 3 or 3 v 4.
- Allow defenders to call out, "Switch!" and then switch players on screens.

To make the game more challenging:

- Require defenders to fight through or slide behind screens—no switching.

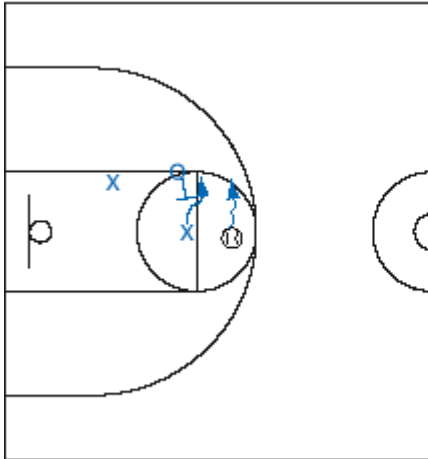


Figure 8.17 Defending against a screen.

CUTTING OFF PASSING LANES

The best defensive teams make it difficult for the offense to dribble and pass, much less shoot the ball. However, preventing passes is sometimes difficult.

The key to your players' denial of the opposition's passes is to have the off-ball defenders (those not guarding the ballhandler) maintain ball-player-self position (see figure 8.18). Help your players learn to use their peripheral vision so that they can see their players and the ball (without turning their heads) at all times. When the offense cuts toward the ball, good defenders try to beat them to the spot and cut them off from receiving the pass. Playing good team defense means trying to prevent your opponent from receiving the ball!

It's not easy; even pros have difficulty cutting off the passing lanes. Help your players adjust their positioning when their player is one or two passes away from the ball. They'll be a stronger defensive unit if they can understand this concept.



Figure 8.18 Ball-player-self position.

CUTTING OFF PASSING LANES GAME

NO PASSING ZONE

Goal

To cut off passing lanes and intercept passes.

Description

Play 3 v 3. The defense tries to cut off the passing lanes and intercept the ball (see figure 8.19). Each player on offense can dribble no more than three times before passing. Offensive players move to open spaces to receive passes and then look to hit open teammates with passes.

The offense controls the ball for one minute. Then the teams switch sides. Within each one-minute period, the defense returns the ball to the offense if the defense steals it. Each steal counts for one point. Give each team five one-minute periods on defense.

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 4.
- Do not allow dribbling.

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 4 v 3.

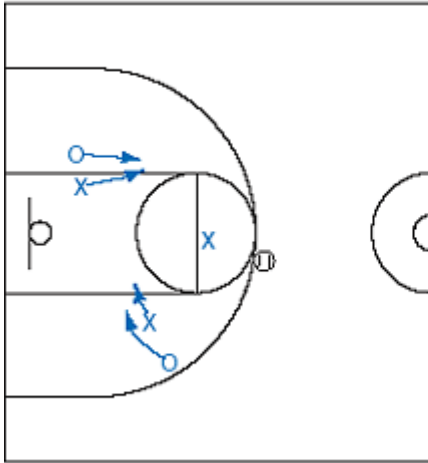


Figure 8.19 Cutting off a passing lane.

HELPING OUT

No matter how well your players position themselves and communicate on defense, an offensive player will at times spring free. Therefore, you must instruct your players on how to respond in these "help" situations.

Your instructions will vary depending on the type of help needed. For example, if one of your players spots an opponent wide open under the basket waving for a teammate to pass the ball, that defender should leave an assigned opponent who is farther from the basket and sprint to try to prevent the pass. On the other hand, if a dribbler gets by a defender and is headed for a layup, the defensive player closest to the dribbler between the dribbler and the basket should immediately move in to cut off the lane to the hoop (see figure 8.20). Whatever the case, the defender who has been beaten, or who loses an offensive player and sees that recovery is impossible, should shout, "Help!" All four teammates should be ready to respond if you have effectively taught them this very important defensive tactic.

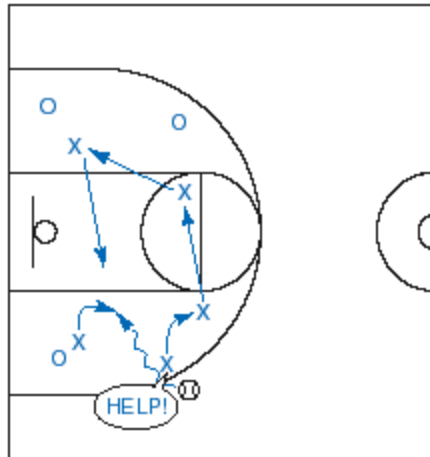


Figure 8.20 "Help" defense.

HELPING OUT GAME

HELPING HANDS

Goal

To provide help when a teammate calls for it.

Description

Play 3 v 3. Tape off a 3-foot-by-3-foot area about 15 to 20 feet from the basket from any angle on the court (see figure 8.21). This area is the "freeze zone", i.e., when a defender enters that zone, he must freeze. Instruct the offense to dribble so that the player guarding the dribbler enters the freeze zone. When this happens, the dribbler should dribble toward the basket (the other offensive players should not be clustered around this freeze zone or in the dribbler's path), and the "frozen" defender should call, "Help!" The defender's teammates respond appropriately, trying to cut off the dribbler and defend against passes to the dribbler's teammates.

If the defense successfully provides help, it gets one point. *Note:* If help is not provided well, but the offense misses its shot, the defense does not get a point. Successful help means cutting off the dribbler and not allowing an easy scoring opportunity.

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 4.
- Make the freeze zone farther away from the basket.

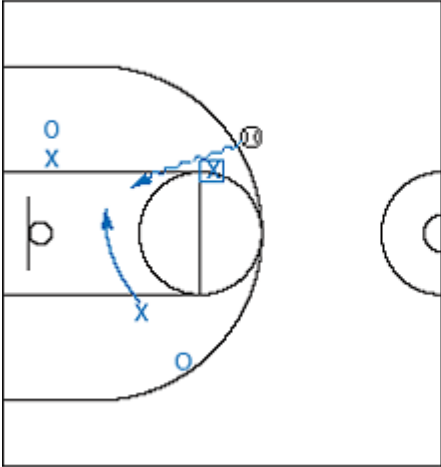


Figure 8.21 Providing help.

COACHING RESOURCES

INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

This section describes the basketball skills you'll want your players to learn during the season. The skills are categorized as follows:

- Footwork
- Dribbling
- Passing and catching
- Shooting
- Rebounding
- Playing defense

COACHING RESOURCES

FOOTWORK

Good footwork is important to both offense and defense. Offensive players have the advantage over defenders in knowing what moves they will make and when. Offensive players use footwork to fake defenders off balance, move off screens, cut to the basket, prevent charging into a defender, and to elude a blockout when going for a rebound. Next we'll look at six types of footwork: slides, cuts, pivots, jump stops, jab steps, and drop steps.

Slides

A defender must be able to slide her feet and maintain an arm's distance from her opponent who is attempting to drive or cut to the basket. Younger players tend to cross their feet when attempting to move sideways. Instruct the player to stand in the ready position and then move the leg nearest her intended direction about two feet to that side. Next she should slide the other foot until the feet once again are shoulder-width apart (see figure 8.22a-b). She should use short, quick steps, with her weight evenly distributed on the balls of her feet. Remind the player to keep her toes pointed forward and to never cross her feet. She'll be able to slide more quickly if she keeps her knees bent, rear down, and back erect.



Figure 8.22 Lateral slide.



Figure 8.23 Crossing the feet during a lateral slide prevents a player from being able to move quickly.

Error Detection and Correction for Slides

ERROR Players cross their feet, preventing themselves from changing direction or moving quickly (see figure 8.23).

CORRECTION Instruct players to never cross their feet or not bring them closer together than shoulder-width apart.

Cuts

The ability to change direction quickly and in balance—to "cut"—is important on both the offensive and the defensive end of the court. Offensive players will have trouble getting open for passes or shots if they cannot "lose" their opponents with quick cuts. Defenders will find it difficult to keep up with effective offensive players if they are unable to respond to various cuts.

A player executes a cut by planting one foot on the court at the end of a slightly shortened stride, then pushing off that foot to shift his momentum in another direction. For example, a player pushes off with the left foot to cut to the right. Then he turns the unplanted foot in the direction he wants to go

and leads with that leg as he bursts toward the new direction. When cutting, a player should bend his knees to lower his center of gravity and provide explosiveness from his legs. After cutting, he should get his lead hand up as a target for a pass.

Effective cuts are hard, sharp, and explosive. Three very effective cuts that offensive players use to get open are the L-cut, V-cut, and backdoor cut (see figure 8.24a-c). An offensive player should use an L- or V-cut when a defender has a foot and hand in the passing lane to deny the offensive player from catching the ball. In this case, the player should take the opponent to the basket, then sharply cut back to the outside. This is the most common way of getting open. A player should look to use a backdoor cut when a defender has a foot and hand in the passing lane to deny a pass from the outside. In this case, a player should move to the outside, then quickly cut behind his defender and toward the basket.

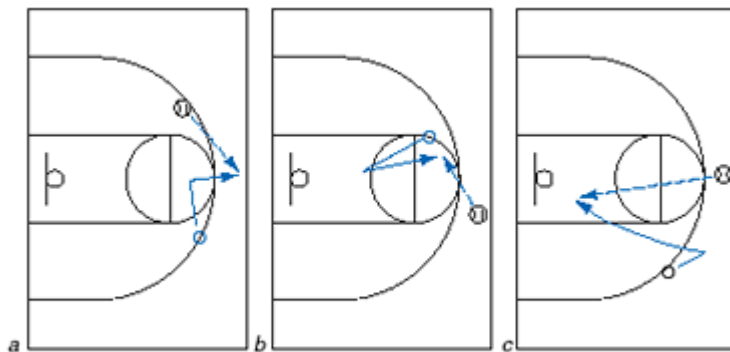


Figure 8.24 Cuts (a) L-cut, (b) V-cut, (c) backdoor cut.

Error Detection and Correction for Cuts

ERROR A player slows down with short steps before cutting and thus is not deceptive.

CORRECTION The player should focus on a two-count move: stepping first with the inside foot, using a slightly shortened step, and then with the outside foot, without crossing the feet.

ERROR A player circles on her cuts rather than making sharp cuts.

CORRECTION On the first step, the player should take a slightly shortened step, flex her knee to pivot sharply, and push off in the new direction. She should then shift her weight and take a long second step.

Pivots

Along with mastering the jump stop, learning to pivot correctly will give players a lot of confidence in their footwork. A pivot simply involves stopping,

then turning on one foot to move forward (front pivot) or dropping one foot backward (back pivot), all while keeping the ball of one foot on the court (see figure 8.25a-b).



Figure 8.25 Proper technique for the pivot.

Remind players that after using a jump stop they may choose either foot as a pivot foot, but they may not change that pivot foot while in possession of the ball. When attempting a pass or shot, they may lift the designated pivot foot—providing they release the ball before the pivot foot again hits the floor. Each time they receive the ball, they should assume the ready position, and then they may use the pivot foot to

- pivot to protect the ball from the defense,
- pivot to pass to a teammate, or
- pivot to make a move to the basket.

Error Detection and Correction for Pivoting

ERROR A player moves and switches the pivot foot while in possession of the ball.

CORRECTION Remind the player that once he chooses a pivot foot, he cannot lift that foot from the floor or slide it across the floor.

ERROR A player loses balance and lifts or drags the pivot foot.

CORRECTION The player should keep his weight on the ball of his pivot foot as he moves his nonpivot foot and maintains a balanced stance.

Jump Stops

One of the most common violations that younger players experience is traveling, usually because of poor stopping skills. You'll want to help your players learn how to start and stop with their bodies under control. They need to learn the jump stop so that they can stop after moving quickly either with or without the ball.

To practice the jump stop, players begin in the ready position, with arms relaxed and legs bent, feet shoulder-width apart, and weight shifted slightly forward to the balls of the feet (see figure 8.26).

Blow your whistle and have them sprint forward five or six steps. When they hear your whistle the second time, have them hop and stop quickly with both feet simultaneously hitting the floor, landing in a balanced and ready position.

By using the jump stop, a player is able to gather and control her forward momentum and may use either foot as a pivot foot for offensive moves. The jump stop is particularly advantageous when a player is moving under control without the ball, especially when she receives a pass while facing away from the basket in the low-post area (within eight feet of the basket).



Figure 8.26 Proper position for jump stop.

Error Detection and Correction for the Jump Stop

ERROR With his weight on his toes, a player loses balance, taking an extra step forward.

CORRECTION The player should shift his weight to the back of his feet, keeping the head up and over the waist.

Jab Steps

A jab step (also called a drive step) is a short (8 to 10 inches), quick step with the nonpivot foot straight toward the defender. The weight should be on the pivot foot, with the knees flexed and the upper body erect. A player uses a jab step to fake a drive and force her defender to react with a retreat step.

Drop Steps

The drop step, or reverse turn, is a basic pivoting move for pivoting backward. To perform a drop step, the player's back leads the way as he makes a reverse turn. The player should maintain a balanced stance, keep the weight on the ball of his pivot foot, and drop his nonpivot foot back (see figure 8.27a-b).



Figure 8.27 Proper technique for a drop step.

FOOTWORK GAME

TWO-STEPPIN'

Goal

To use pivots, drop steps, and jab steps to get free for shots.

Description

Play 3 v 3. When a player on the wing receives a pass, she does one of two things:

- Dribbles to the defender, stops, pivots, and shoots.
- Jabs or drop steps, then dribbles around a defender for a layup (see figure 8.28).

Award two points if the player performs the pivot, jab, or drop step correctly and gets a shot off; and an additional point for a made basket. Award one point for any made basket, whether made off of a pivot or jab or drop step.

To make the game easier:

- Play a "cold" defense (passive and about half speed).

To make the game more challenging:

- Award the two "performance" points only on made baskets.
- Don't award any points for baskets not made off of a pivot or jab or drop step.
- Play a "hot" (all-out) defense.

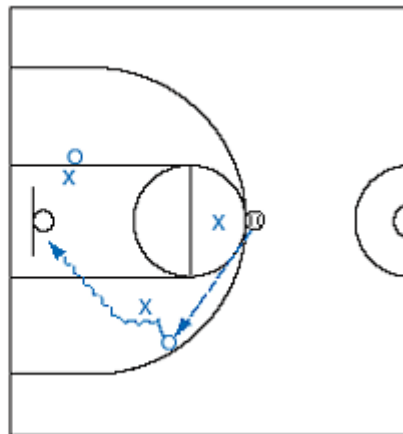


Figure 8.28 Using a jab or drop step to drive around a defender.

COACHING RESOURCES

DRIBBLING

Dribbling is an integral part of basketball and vital to individual and team play. To maintain possession of the ball while moving, a player must dribble (tap or bounce the ball on the floor). At the start of the dribble the ball must leave the hand before the player lifts his pivot foot from the floor. The player may not touch the ball simultaneously with both hands while dribbling or allow it to come to a rest in his hand.

Dribbling is the most misused fundamental skill in the game. A pass travels much faster than a dribble, so before she dribbles, a player should look to pass to an open teammate. If a player dribbles too much, her teammates will tend not to move, making the defense's job easier. Excessive dribbling can destroy teamwork and morale. Dribbling should have a purpose: to take the player somewhere.

The three most common errors in dribbling are slapping at the ball from the chest area and waiting for it to bounce back up; keeping the head down, with eyes riveted to each bounce; and using one hand exclusively to bounce the ball. The ability to dribble with the weak hand as well as the strong hand is a key to advancing a player's ability level. If a player only dribbles with his strong hand, he can be overplayed to that side and made to be virtually ineffective.

As you correct these dribbling errors and attempt to improve your players' dribbling skills, advise them to

- establish a feel for the ball with the pads of the fingers;
- maintain the ready position, keeping knees bent and rear down;
- keep the dribble under control and always bounce the ball below waist height and even closer to the floor when being guarded closely;
- bounce the ball close to the body and protect the dribble from the defender with the nondribbling hand and arm;
- keep the head up and see the rest of the court (and teammates!);
- learn how to dribble with the right and left hand; and
- keep practicing!

Correct dribbling technique is shown in figure 8.29.

Figure 8.29 Proper dribbling technique.



Dribbling Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- Keep the dribble "alive" until you have a shot or an open teammate to pass to.
- Vary the speed and direction of the dribble so that defenders are kept off guard.
- Protect the dribble from the defensive player by using the nondribbling arm when being closely guarded.
- Cross over or switch dribbling hands to protect the ball after dribbling past the defender.
- Stay in the middle of the court and away from the sidelines and corners to avoid being trapped.

Don'ts

- Don't automatically start dribbling after receiving a pass. Look to see what shooting or passing options are available after squaring up to the basket.
 - Don't pick up or stop dribbling with no other option (shot or pass) available.
 - Don't dribble into a crowd—the ball is more likely to be stolen.
 - Don't try to get fancy when good fundamental dribbling will do the job.
 - Don't hesitate. Be assertive and confident when dribbling the ball.
- Figure 8.29 Proper dribbling technique.

There are many types and uses of dribbling. We'll look at three: the power dribble, the crossover dribble, and driving to the basket.

Power Dribble

A power dribble is a hard dribble that brings the ball up high and allows the player to get the ball high and make a move in a close space. It calls on many of the same fundamentals as described earlier for dribbling, combined with an explosive first step toward the basket or in whatever direction the player is dribbling.

The power dribble is most often used on a drive to the basket, but it can also be used to get out of a congested area (such as when rebounding and being surrounded by defenders with no open teammate to pass to). It's important that a player using a power dribble keep her head up and see the rim so that she can see open teammates and defenders. She should dribble off her finger pads with fingertip control, flexing the wrist and fingers to impart force to the ball without pumping the arm. Figure 8.30 below shows a power dribble.

Crossover Dribble

The crossover dribble is important in the open court on a fast break, to get open on a drive to the basket, and to create an opening for a shot. A player should use a crossover dribble when his defender overplays him on the ball side. The effectiveness of the crossover dribble depends on how sharply the dribbler changes direction of the dribble.



Figure 8.30 Power dribble.

To execute the crossover dribble, the player should cross the ball in front of her at a backward angle, switching the dribble from one hand to the other. She should keep the dribble close to her body and around knee level. As she makes the change of direction, she should get her nondribbling hand up and change her lead foot and body position for protection (see figure 8.31a-c).



Figure 8.31 Crossover dribble.

Error Detection and Correction for Dribbling

ERROR A player looks at the ball when he's dribbling.

CORRECTION Tell the player to keep his head up and see the rim.

ERROR A player has trouble controlling the dribble.

CORRECTION Instruct him to use his fingertips for control.

ERROR A player doesn't protect the body while dribbling; he dribbles too high and far away from his body.

CORRECTION Instruct him to protect the ball by keeping his nondribbling hand up and his body between the ball and the defender. He should dribble at knee level, close to his body.

Error Detection and Correction for the Crossover Dribble

ERROR A player dribbles too high or wide as she changes direction.

CORRECTION She should dribble at knee level and close to her body.

ERROR A player does not protect the ball as she dribbles.

CORRECTION She should protect the ball with her body and by keeping her nondribbling hand up.

Driving to the Basket

A ball handler with an opening to the basket should take a longer step past his defender's lead foot, take a long dribble with his outside hand (the hand farthest away from the defender), and drive while keeping his head up and his eyes on the basket (see figure 8.32a). He should drive in a straight line to the basket, close to his defender, cutting off his defender's retreat by closing the gap between himself and the defender's retreat step (see figure 8.32b). After driving by a defender, the player should be alert for defensive help and see the basket. He should finish by going in strong for a layup or passing to an open teammate who can score (see figure 8.32c).



Figure 8.32 Proper technique for driving to the basket.

Error Detection and Correction for Driving to the Basket

ERROR A player makes her drive step too long, or she leans and puts weight on her drive-step foot (the right foot for a right-hander).

CORRECTION She should keep her weight on their pivot foot as she executes the drive step. This enables her to move her lead foot quickly to shoot, pass, or drive.

DRIBBLING GAMES

IN MY DUST

Goal

To use power dribbles and crossover dribbles to attack the basket.

Description

Play 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 full court. Emphasize good fundamentals in all aspects, but place a special emphasis on effective dribbling by awarding one point each for made baskets, power dribbles, and crossover dribbles (see figure 8.33). Players should use these types of dribbles (leaving their opponents "in their dust") only as appropriate within the game; don't award points for ineffective or inappropriate use.

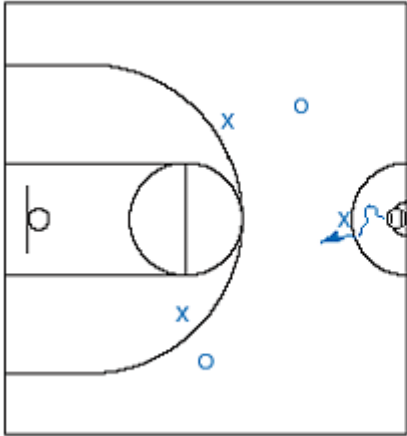


Figure 8.33 Using the crossover dribble to attack the basket.

DRIVE-THROUGH

Goal

To develop the ability to dribble under pressure.

Description

Play 3 v 3 or 4 v 4. Award the offense two points for scores off drives (see figure 8.34) and one point for other baskets.

To make the game easier:

- Play a "cold" defense (passive and about half speed).

To make the game more challenging:

- Play a "hot" (all-out) defense.

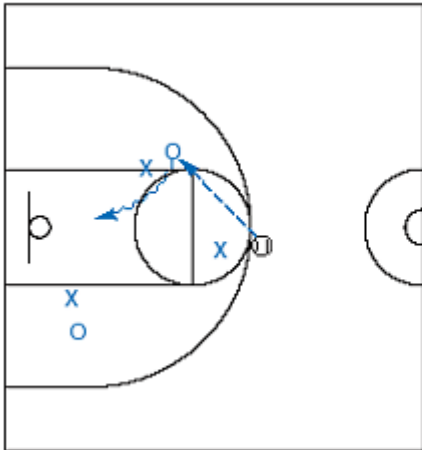


Figure 8.34 Driving to the basket.

COACHING RESOURCES

PASSING AND CATCHING

Passing and catching are the keys to moving the ball effectively into position to take high-percentage shots. We'll address passing skills first.

Players pass the ball to maintain possession and create scoring opportunities. Passes should usually be short and crisp, because long or slow passes are likely to be stolen. However, players should avoid throwing too hard or using passes that are difficult to control. A player should pass the ball above the waist and within easy reach of the receiver. If possible, passes should be thrown to the receiver's side that is farthest from her defender. More skilled players can work on faking passes one way, then passing another.

Here we'll focus on three types of passes:

- chest pass
- bounce pass
- overhead pass

Chest Pass

Chest passes can be used quickly and accurately from most positions on the floor. The chest pass is so named because the ball is thrown with two hands from the passer's chest to the receiver's chest area. A player should begin in the ready position and step toward his target to initiate the pass (see figure 8.35a). While all players need to see their targets, more advanced players should practice seeing their targets without looking at them by looking or faking away before passing. A player should step in the direction of the target, extending her legs, back, and arms. Emphasize forcing the weak hand through the ball; the strong hand tends to dominate (see figure 8.35b). Releasing it off the first and second fingers of both hands gives the ball backspin and direction. A player should follow through with his fingers pointed at the target, palms facing down (see figure 8.35c).

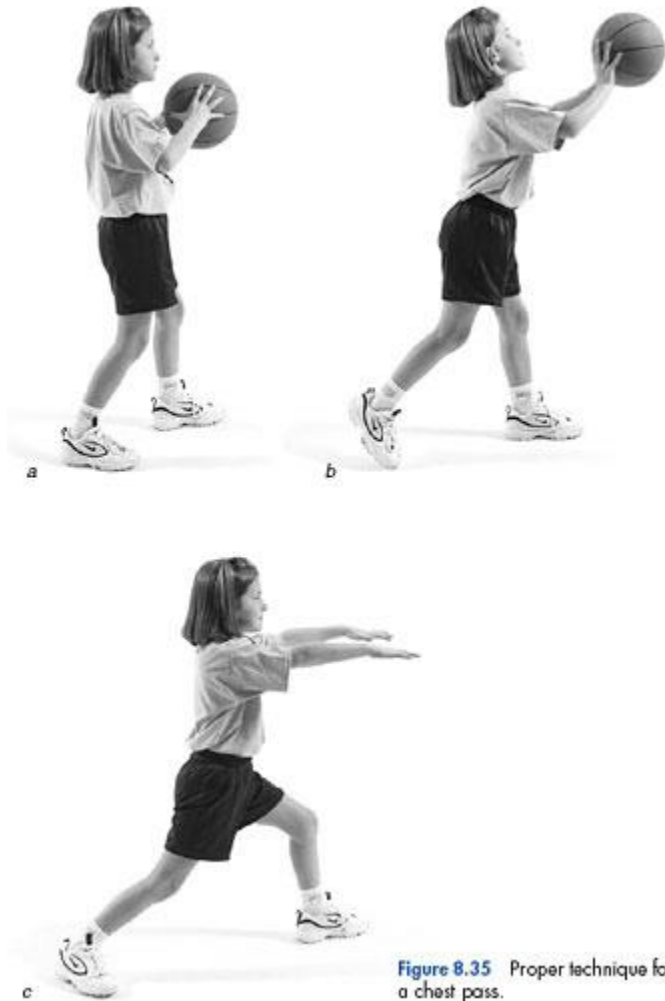


Figure 8.35 Proper technique for a chest pass.

Error Detection and Correction for the Chest Pass

ERROR A player's chest passes lack force.

CORRECTION Have the player start her passes with her elbows in and force her wrists and fingers through the ball.

ERROR A player's chest passes are not accurate.

CORRECTION She should point her fingers at the target. The pass will go where her fingers direct it.

Bounce Pass

Sometimes it is easier for a passer to get the ball to a teammate by bouncing the ball once on the court before it reaches the receiver. For example, a defender may be guarding a player with both hands overhead, preventing a pass through the air to a teammate. In that case a bounce pass may be the

only route to get the ball to a teammate. Players should use bounce passes when they are closely guarded and may not have the space to extend their arms in a chest pass.

Teach players to bounce the ball on the court two-thirds of the way between themselves and the receivers, as illustrated in figure 8.36. Remind them to use their legs and to step toward their targets. Snapping the thumbs down and together as the passer releases the pass gives the ball some backspin. Backspin slows the pass down a little as it hits the floor and gives the receiver a chance to catch the ball at waist level in ready position.



Figure 8.36 Proper technique for a bounce pass.

Error Detection and Correction for the Bounce Pass

ERROR Bounce passes are too high and too slow.

CORRECTION The player should start the pass from waist level and aim the ball's bounce closer to the receiver.

ERROR Bounce passes are too low.

CORRECTION Start the pass from waist level and aim it to bounce farther from the target so that the receiver can catch the ball at waist level.

Overhead Pass

Players use an overhead pass when they are closely guarded and have to pass over their defender—for instance, an outlet pass to start a fast break, or a lob pass to a player cutting backdoor to the basket. The overhead pass is also an option for feeding the low post. The player should start in a balanced stance, holding the ball above his forehead with elbows in and flexed at about 90 degrees (see figure 8.37a). The player should not bring the ball behind his head, because it takes longer to make the pass and the ball is easier to steal in that position. Direct the player to step in the direction of the target and extend his legs and back. He should quickly pass the ball, extending his arms and flexing his wrists and fingers, releasing the ball off the first and second fingers of both hands (see figure 8.37b). The player

follows through ends with fingers pointing at the target, palms facing down.



Figure 8.37 Proper technique for overhead pass.

Error Detection and Correction for the Overhead Pass

ERROR Overhead passes lack force.

CORRECTION Make sure the player doesn't bring the ball behind her head, because this tends to force her elbows out, leading to an incomplete follow-through. She should not break the plane of her body. Force comes from keeping the elbows in, flexing wrists and fingers, and extending legs, back, and arms.

PASSING GAME

PASSING FAD

Goal

To set up good shots through passing.

Description

Play 3 v 2 or 4 v 3. Award the offense one point for each successful pass and one point for a basket (see figure 8.38).

Occasionally vary the game by asking players to use only a certain type of pass: chest, bounce, or overhead (or slant the game by awarding more

points for a particular type of pass).

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 1 or 4 v 2.

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 3 v 3 or 3 v 4.
- Allow no dribbling.

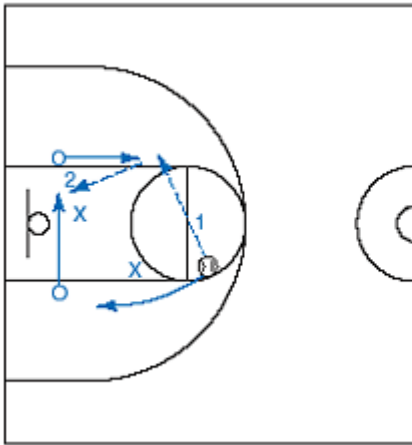


Figure 8.38 Passing to set up shots.

Catching

Even the best passes are of little value if they aren't caught. Sloppy receiving technique is often the cause of turnovers and missed scoring opportunities. Emphasize the following receiving techniques:

1. Show a target to the passer by putting an arm up or out to the side and call for the ball (see figure 8.39).
2. Move to meet the pass—step toward the ball, not away.
3. Watch the ball come into the hands (see figure 8.40).
4. Use two hands, palms facing the passer, thumbs together.



Figure 8.39 The receiver of a pass should put up a hand to give the passer a target.



Figure 8.40 Proper technique for catching a pass.

When possible, a player should come to a jump stop after receiving a pass with his feet positioned shoulder-width apart in ready position. From this position, the player should pivot to face the basket, looking for an open teammate, a shot, or a lane to dribble the ball to the basket.

Error Detection and Correction for Catching

ERROR A player fumbles passes.

CORRECTION Instruct the player to keep her hands up and see the ball all the way into her hands. She should keep her hands relaxed and give with the ball as she catches it.

Triple Threat Position

The triple threat position is a version of the ready position: the player holds the ball to the side on the hip with elbows out (see figure 8.41). This position gives the player the options of shooting, passing, or dribbling. Such a position makes the defender uncertain of what the ballhandler will do, and it gives the ballhandler a number of choices.

To keep a defender off guard, a player in the triple threat position should

move the ball between shooting, passing, and driving positions, keeping the ball close to the chest and never lower than the waist. The player's hands should remain in shooting position; a player must be a threat to shoot before the options of passing or driving become viable.



Figure 8.41 The triple threat position.

Error Detection and Correction for the Triple Threat Position

ERROR A player faces to the left or right, limiting his moves with the ball in that direction.

CORRECTION Instruct him to square up to the basket with his body facing the basket and the defender, in a good position to shoot, pass, or drive to the right or the left.

ERROR A player lowers the ball, limiting his moves to a drive, or he raises the ball above his head, limiting his moves to an overhead pass.

CORRECTION The player should keep the ball moving close to his chest so that he is a triple threat to shoot, pass, or drive.

COACHING RESOURCES

SHOOTING

Every player loves to put the basketball through the hoop. So your players will be highly motivated to learn proper shooting technique if you convince them that it will help them make more of their shots.

To instill the fundamentals of shooting and encourage your players to learn them, tell them they'll SCORE if they do these things:

- S - Select only high-percentage shots (shots that are likely to go in).
- C - Concentrate on the target.
- O - Order movements: square up, bend knees and elbows, cock wrist.
- R - Release and wave "good-bye" to the ball (have the shooting hand follow through).
- E - Extend the shooting arm up and out toward the basket.

Players can shoot the ball in a variety of ways, including set and jump shots, free throws, layups, and shooting off a dribble.

Set and Jump Shots

Although the most common shot at higher levels of play is the jump shot, young players who lack the leg strength and coordination to spring from the floor while shooting will more often shoot set shots. Teach younger players the mechanics of the set shot first, and they will be able to advance to the jump shot as they increase their strength and improve their coordination.

Teach your players these shooting mechanics in this sequence:

1. Lay the ball on the finger pads of each hand, with the shooting hand behind and slightly underneath the ball and the nonshooting hand balancing the ball from the side.
2. Focus on a specific target, usually the rim or backboard. The middle of the rim should be the target for most shots, but when you're at a 30- to 60-degree angle from the hoop, sight the corner of the square on the backboard for a bank shot (see figure 8.42a).
3. Align shoulders, hips, and feet square with (facing) the basket. The foot on the shooting-hand side can be up to six inches in front of the other foot so that the base of support is comfortable and balanced.
4. Bend the knees to get momentum for the shot. Let the legs, not the arms, be the primary power source for the shot.
5. Bend the shooting-arm elbow to approximately a 90-degree angle, keeping the forearm perpendicular to the floor and in front of the cocked wrist as the ball is brought up to the shooting position above the forehead (see figure 8.42b).

6. As you extend the legs, release the ball by extending the elbow, bringing the wrist forward, and moving the fingers of the shooting hand up and through the ball (see figure 8.42c). The nonshooting arm and hand should maintain their supportive position on the side of the ball until after the release.
7. Follow through after the release by landing on both feet, extending the shooting arm and dropping the wrist, pointing the index finger of the shooting hand directly at the basket.



Figure 8.42 Proper technique for a set shot.

Check that your players aren't shooting "line drives" at the hoop. Help them to see how important proper arch is in allowing the shot a reasonable chance to go in. Remind them to shoot the ball up, then out, toward the basket.

A jump shot is similar to shooting a set shot except for two adjustments:

1. You align the ball higher and shoot after jumping, rather than shooting with the simultaneous extension of your legs.
2. Because you jump first and then shoot, your upper body, arm, wrist, and fingers must generate more force.

The player should jump straight up off both feet, fully extending the ankles, knees, back, and shoulders (see figure 8.43). The height of the jump depends on the range of the shot. On shots close to the basket when the player is closely guarded, he will have to jump higher than his defenders. On longer-range jump shots, he will usually have more



Figure 8.43 Proper technique for a jump shot.

time and defenders are not quite as close. Therefore, the player doesn't have to jump as high for long-range shots. More force from the legs can be used for shooting the ball rather than for jumping high. Balance and control are

more important than gaining maximum height on a jump. Smooth rhythm and complete follow-through are also important.

Error Detection and Correction for Shooting Set and Jump Shots

ERROR Shots are short.

CORRECTION The player should generate more force from her legs. She may also need to speed up her rhythm or make it more evenpaced.

ERROR Shots are long.

CORRECTION The player needs to put more arc into the ball. Her shoulders should be relaxed and in a forward position; she should move her hands closer together if they are too far apart; and she should raise her shooting arm higher to provide more arc.

ERROR Shots hit the sides of the rim.

CORRECTION The player should square up to the basket, setting the ball on the shooting side of her head between her ear and shoulder with her elbow in. Her shooting arm, wrist, and fingers should go straight toward the basket.

SHOOTING GAME

BUCKETMANIA

Goal

To score as many baskets as possible.

Description

Play 3 v 2. Give the three players on offense five minutes to score as many baskets as possible against the defense (see figure 8.44). After

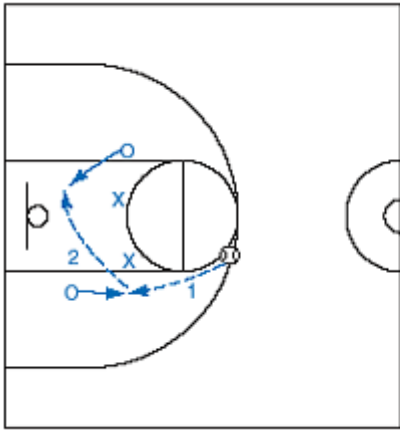


Figure 8.44 Moving the ball to get an open shot.

each made basket and defensive rebound, the ball is returned to the offense. After five minutes, switch the offense and defense, keeping one of the offensive players on offense so that it remains 3 v 2. Give the new offense five minutes to score as many baskets as possible. Compare the teams' totals.

Adapt this game to focus on different types of shots, if you want. Either call for only a certain type of shot (e.g., jump shot, layup, shot off a dribble), or award more points for baskets from one of those shots to emphasize that shot.

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 1 or 4 v 2.
- Play a "cold" defense (half speed, passive).

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 3 v 3 or 4 v 4.
- Play a "hot" defense (all out).

Free Throws

Success in free-throw shooting requires sound mechanics, a routine, relaxation, rhythm, concentration, and confidence. Routine, relaxation, and rhythm contribute to concentration and confidence.

A routine helps players relax, focus, and shoot with confidence and rhythm. A routine can include dribbling a set number, checking mechanics, using visualization to practice mentally shooting the free throw just before shooting it, and taking a deep breath to relax (see figure 8.45). The same form as described for the set shot should be used for free throws.



Figure 8.45 Having a routine before a free throw helps a player relax, focus, and shoot with confidence.

Error Detection and Correction for Shooting Free Throws

ERROR A player feels tense when shooting free throws.

CORRECTION Instruct her to breathe in deeply and exhale fully and to relax her shoulders, arms, hands, and fingers, letting them drop and loosen. She should focus on positive thoughts, such as, "I'm a good shooter," and visualize the ball going through the basket.

FREE-THROW SHOOTING GAME

ON THE LINE

Goal

To make free throws in game-winning situations.

Description

Split your squad into two even teams. The regulation "game" has ended in a tie score. It will be decided by free throws. Each player shoots two free throws: first a player from team A, then one from team B (see figure 8.46). Each team can determine its own shooting order. Continue in this fashion until all players have shot their two free throws, and total the points to determine the winner. If the game is still tied, keep the same order of players and have a "sudden-death" shoot-off, with the first player from team A shooting one free throw, followed by the first player from team B. The first time the tie is broken after a player from team B has shot in this shoot-off, the game is over.

To make the game easier:

- Move the free-throw line up a few feet.

To make the game more challenging:

- Require the winning team to make at least four consecutive free throws in addition to making more free throws than its opponent.

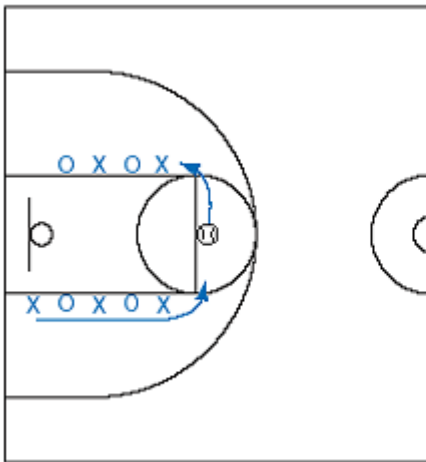


Figure 8.46 Rotation of players in free-throw game.

Layups

The highest-percentage shot, and therefore the most desirable shot, is a layup. A layup is a one-handed shot taken within three feet of the basket (see figure 8.47). Teach players to use their left hands when shooting layups from the left side of the basket and their right hands when shooting from the right side of the basket. The layup motion begins with the player striding from a 45- to 60-degree angle to the hoop and planting and exploding—much like a high jumper—off the foot opposite the shooting hand. The player explodes off the planted foot straight up into the air. At the top of the jump, the player releases the ball by bringing the shooting hand, which is underneath the ball and near the shoulder, up toward the basket. As in the set shot, the index finger of the shooting hand should be pointed directly at the basket or the appropriate spot on the backboard.

Your right-handed players are likely to find left-handed layups troublesome, just as your left-handed players are going to find right-handed layups difficult. Point out to them the reason for using the hand farthest from the basket to shoot the ball: The ball is more easily protected.



Error Detection and Correction for Shooting Layups

ERROR A player swivels the ball to the side before shooting, allowing it to be blocked or stolen.

CORRECTION Instruct the player to lift the ball straight up as he shoots.

ERROR The ball hits low on the backboard and, with slight contact on the arm, falls short.

CORRECTION The player should shoot high off the backboard so that the ball drops in the basket. This way, even if the player is fouled on the shot, the ball will have a chance to go in.

Shooting Off a Dribble

When shooting off a dribble, the player should pick up the ball while facing the basket in position to shoot. She shouldn't reach for the ball but should pick it up in front of her shooting knee with the knees flexed to gain balance for the shot.

When a player is dribbling to his strong-hand side, he should jump behind his

last dribble and pick the ball up in front of his shooting knee. When a player is dribbling to his weak-hand side, he should use a crossover dribble on his last dribble to pick the ball up in front of his shooting knee.

Error Detection and Correction for Shooting Off a Dribble

ERROR A player floats forward, backward, or to a side when shooting.

CORRECTION Have the player pick the ball up in front of her shooting knee with her knees flexed to gain balance for the shot.

COACHING RESOURCES

REBOUNDING

Possession of the ball comes more often from missed shots than any other way. The team that controls the backboards usually controls the game. Offensive rebounding adds to your team's chances to score, and defensive rebounding limits your opponent's scoring opportunities.

More than any other basketball skill, rebounding relies on a player's desire and courage. Good rebounders are able to anticipate missed shots and determine how hard or how soft, or to what side of the rim, the ball will rebound. They also know where their opponents are at all times, and they are able to "box out" their opposing player by getting between the opposing player and the basket and putting their rears in contact with the opponents (see figure 8.48).

A player may use a front or rear pivot to turn and box out his opponent. A front pivot allows the defense to turn while watching the offense move toward the rebound. A rear pivot is used to move into the path of the offense without the same visual contact. Encourage defenders to use whichever method gets them in position in front of the offense, sealing the offensive player away from the basket.



Figure 8.48 Boxing out.

A player should avoid reaching over an opponent when she gets boxed out; she'll get called for a foul if she does. Emphasize the importance of jumping straight up for the rebound. By jumping vertically, not only will a player achieve great height, but she'll also avoid needless fouls.

Here are some additional rebounding tips to share with your players:

- A shot taken from the side is likely to rebound to the opposite side of the basket. Therefore, players should try to get positioned on the opposite side of the basket when such a shot is taken.
- Once contact is established with an opposing player, the defensive rebounder wants to maintain that contact until releasing to jump for the rebound.
- After controlling a rebound, a player should keep the ball at chin level with her elbows out (see figure 8.49).

Use the following guidelines in coaching your players to rebound free throws:

- Have your best rebounders in the positions closest to the basket.

- Remind players to block out the players next to them when the opposing team is shooting.
- Designate a player to block out the shooter when the opposing team is shooting.
- Have one player near midcourt to prevent easy fast breaks by the opponents when your team is shooting.



Figure 8.49 Proper position after controlling a rebound.

Error Detection and Correction for Rebounding

ERROR Your players watch the ball, and their opponents gain position for the rebound.

CORRECTION Instruct players to locate their opponents first, get inside position, block out, and then go for the ball.

ERROR Players have trouble holding onto rebounds.

CORRECTION They need to catch rebounds firmly with two hands.

ERROR After gaining rebounds, a player has the ball stripped by an opponent.

CORRECTION The player must protect the ball, keeping it above her forehead with her elbows out and away from her opponent.

REBOUNDING GAME

CLEANING THE GLASS

Goal

To get the rebound.

Description

Play 2 v 2, with the coach as a nonplaying shooter. Each play begins with the coach shooting at the basket, intentionally missing the shot (see figure 8.50). The two players on offense try to rebound and score, and the defense also tries to rebound. If the offense makes a basket or the defense gets the ball, the play is over. Give the offense five straight plays, and then switch offense and defense. Each rebound is worth one point, as is each basket. Keep track of points and compare them at the end.

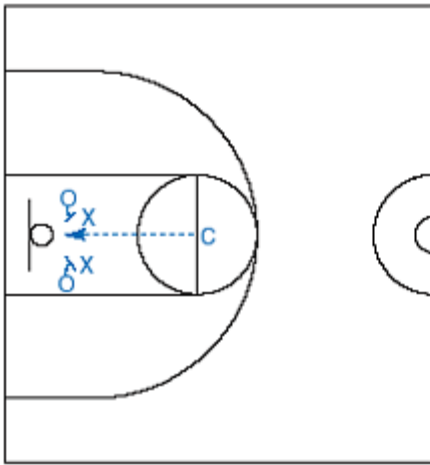


Figure 8.50 In position to rebound.

COACHING RESOURCES

PLAYING DEFENSE

Individual defensive skills are sometimes less appreciated than individual offensive techniques, but they are just as important. Your players need to learn the basics of player-to-player defense, both on the ball and off the ball, to compete successfully.

On the Ball

Defenders can best keep their opponents (the players with the ball) from scoring by staying between the opponents and the basket. Defenders should try to maintain an arm's distance from the offensive player with the ball.

Tell your players to consider these things about their bodies and court positions when guarding a player with the ball:

Body position

- Am I in ready position and alert?
- Am I arm's distance from my player (the ballhandler) and able to put pressure on his ability to shoot, pass, or drive?

Court position

- Is my player close enough to attempt a good shot?
- Am I close enough to the player to prevent an easy shot?
- Am I too close, so the opponent can drive around me?
- Will a teammate be able to help me if the player beats me with the dribble?

Have your players focus on the opponent's midsection (see figure 8.51a). If defenders watch the ball or their opponent's head or feet, the defenders are likely to react to a fake that will put them out of position. As the offensive player begins to dribble, the defender should react by sliding the feet and maintaining an arm's distance from the opponent, trying to beat the offensive player to the spot that the player wants to reach (see figure 8.51b). If the defender can get the offensive player to stop and pick up the ball, the defender can then move closer and crowd the offensive player by blocking the passing lanes, applying extensive pressure with the arms (see figure 8.51c).



Figure 8.51 Proper technique for defending a player with the ball.

More advanced defenders can focus on four defensive strategies when playing defense on the ball:

1. **Turning the dribbler.** Defenders who establish position a half body ahead of the dribbler can force the dribbler to turn or reverse direction.
2. **Forcing the dribbler to the sideline.** When a defensive player forces the dribbler to dribble toward the sideline, the dribbler can pass in only one direction. A defender can do this by working for position a half body to the inside of the court, with the inside foot (the one closer to the middle of the court) forward and the outside foot back.
3. **Funneling the dribbler to the middle.** By taking position a half body to the outside of the court, a defender can force a dribbler to the middle. This strategy will move the dribbler toward one of the defender's teammates off the ball.
4. **Forcing the dribbler to use the weak hand.** By overplaying the strong hand, defenders can force the dribbler to use the weak hand. Defenders can overplay the strong hand by being a half body to the dribbler's strong-hand side.

ON THE BALL DEFENSE GAME

PICKIN' POCKETS

Goal

To steal the ball or otherwise create turnovers.

Description

Play 3 v 4 or 2 v 3. The offense must complete four passes before shooting. The object is for the defense to use their defensive positioning to force a turnover or steal (see figure 8.52). The defense is on defense for two minutes; then switch offense and defense. Award two points to the defense for each turnover. As an option, you might also want to award a single point for any of these actions:

- Forcing a dribbler to a sideline
- Funneling a dribbler to the middle (assuming defensive teammates are in the middle to help out)
- Forcing a dribbler to use the weak hand

To make the game easier:

- Play 3 v 5 or 2 v 4.

To make the game more challenging:

- Play 3 v 3 or 4 v 4.

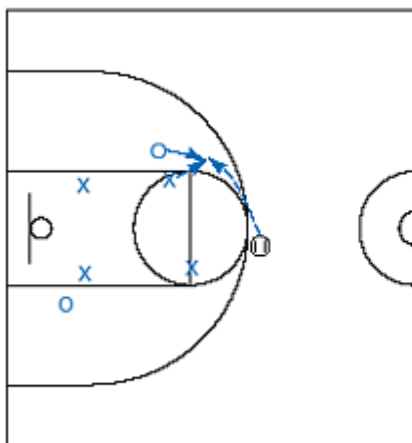


Figure 8.52 Going for the steal.

Off the Ball

Defending an opponent without the ball is just as important as guarding a player with the ball, but it is a bit more complicated. Whether an opponent is one pass or two passes away from the ball, defensive players need to apply the defensive concept of ball-player-self (see figure 8.53). Defenders should position themselves so that they can see the ball (and know if they need to come and help a teammate on a pass or drive), and they must keep track of a moving opponent (their player), who may be trying to get open to receive a pass. The closer an opponent is to the ball, the closer the defender should be to that opponent. The farther the ball is from an opponent, the farther away a defender can play that opponent and be able to give help to the teammate guarding the ball.

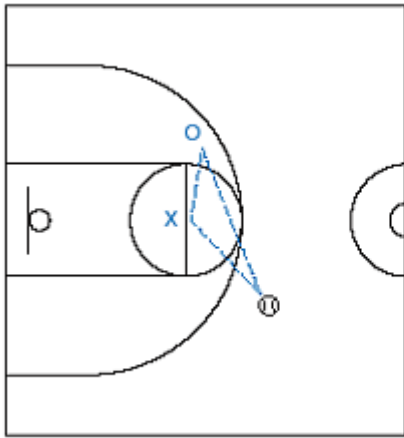


Figure 8.53 Proper position for defending a player off the ball.

Error Detection and Correction for Guarding Off the Ball

ERROR Defenders off the ball lose track of their offensive player.

CORRECTION Position players to see the ball and their player without turning their head. They should establish and maintain the ballplayer-self relationship. Have the player point at the ball with one hand and at his player with the other. The player must adjust position as the offensive player or ball changes position. A player two or more passes away needs to be alert to help out on a drive or deflect a long pass attempt to his opponent in the corner (see figure 8.54).

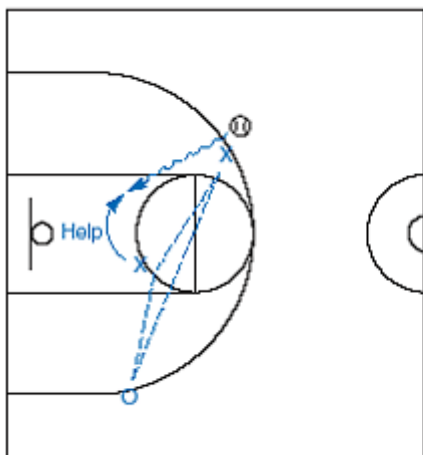


Figure 8.54 Proper ball-player-self positioning.

Denial Position. A player should use the denial position when her opponent is one pass away from the ball. The space between two offensive players where a pass can be made is called the passing lane. A defender wants to have an arm and leg in the passing lane when guarding a player who is one pass away (see figure 8.55). This denial position allows the defender to establish the ball-player-self relationship and discourages the offensive player with the ball from attempting a pass.

Open Position. When offensive players are two or more passes away from the ball, the defensive player wants to establish an open position that still maintains the ball-player-self relationship. In the open position the defender is farther away from the offensive player, pointing to the ball with one hand and the opponent with the other hand (see figure 8.56). Using peripheral vision, the defender moves to react as the ball penetrates toward the basket (to help out on the drive) or into denial position if the offensive player cuts hard to receive a pass. In both the denial and open positions, the key is remembering always to maintain the ball-player-self relationship.












Figure 8.55 Denial position.



Figure 8.56 Open position.

COACHING RESOURCES

KEY TO DIAGRAMS

player with ball	
offensive player	
defensive player	
coach	
pass	
dribble	
move	
shoot	
screen or box out	

COACHING RESOURCES



TEACHING FITNESS AND SAFETY

As a coach, you have a great opportunity to teach your players not only about basketball, but also about fitness and health. The attitudes and the knowledge they learn now can be a foundation for their future fitness. And you don't have to be a fitness expert to do this. We've supplied you with ideas for discussion in the Fitness Circles in the practice plans.

To give you more background information, we'll discuss some basics of health and fitness in this chapter. We'll begin with the components of fitness and continue with some general training principles and how they relate to fitness. We'll end this section by listing some healthy habits children should develop.

You also are responsible for the safety of your players while they are under your care, so we'll mention some specific precautions you can take. Because accidents may happen no matter how careful you are, though, we also list the steps you should take to prepare for injuries to players and describe some first aid procedures for minor injuries and heat illnesses. We conclude the chapter with a brief summary of the legal duties you must fulfill as a coach.

COMPONENTS OF FITNESS

The main components of fitness you need to know about as a YMCA Rookies coach are these:

- Cardiorespiratory fitness
- Muscular strength and endurance
- Flexibility

Cardiorespiratory Fitness

As you might guess from the name, *cardiorespiratory fitness* is fitness of the heart (cardio) and circulatory system and the lungs (respiratory). It's also known as *aerobic fitness*. Training for cardiorespiratory fitness involves moving large muscle groups such as legs and arms in a rhythmic activity that is sustained for at least several minutes and uses large amounts of oxygen. Activities such as running, swimming, or bicycling are examples. Such training improves the transport of oxygen through the blood to working muscles by making the heart and lungs more efficient and the body better

able to use the oxygen when it reaches the muscles. Someone who has cardiorespiratory fitness can engage in endurance activities without feeling winded or getting tired easily.

You can communicate some of the concepts related to cardiorespiratory fitness to young children. The following are some good examples:

- Physical activity (such as basketball) is good for fitness.
- The heart is a muscle that pumps our blood. Exercise makes it stronger.
- Our hearts beat faster when we exercise.

Encourage your players to be active at home, whether with basketball or other forms of physical activity.

Muscular Strength and Endurance

Muscles can be fit in two ways: They can be strong, and they can have endurance:

- *Strength* is the ability of a muscle to exert force against resistance, such as a weight. We use strength to perform everyday tasks, such as lifting a grocery bag or opening a door.
- *Endurance* is the ability of a muscle to exercise for an extended period of time without too much fatigue. It's useful in performing tasks that require repeated movements, such as vacuuming a carpet or washing a car.

Muscular strength and endurance can be improved with strength training, but, unless you have players who are so unusually weak that they have difficulty playing basketball, strength training is not necessary for children this age. Such training is more appropriate for older youth who want to train more seriously for the sport.

Your players will be able to understand these concepts related to muscular strength and endurance:

- We use arm and leg muscles when we play basketball.
- Playing basketball may strengthen leg muscles.
- Practicing dribbling strengthens arm muscles.

Flexibility

Flexibility involves the joints and muscles. It is the ability of the muscles around a joint to allow the joint its full range of motion. Being flexible makes

movement easier.

For adults, stretching helps make muscles more flexible. Although it's not known if stretching is effective for children, we do advocate devoting a small amount of time to stretching before and after play. In this way, children learn the following proper techniques for stretching:

- Warm up with 5 to 10 minutes of low-intensity aerobic activity.
- Perform two repetitions of each stretch.
- Stretch to the point of a gentle pull, and then hold for 10 counts without bouncing.
- For cooling down, walk around to allow the heart and breathing rates to return to normal. Then perform three to five repetitions of each stretch before the muscles cool.

TRAINING PRINCIPLES

You need to know just a few principles of training to work with players at this age level:

- The warm-up/cool-down principle
- The overload principle
- The reversibility principle
- The specificity principle

Warm-Up/Cool-Down Principle

Before beginning strenuous activity, players should perform some moderate warm-up activity that will increase body temperature, respiration, and heart rate and help prevent muscle and tendon strains and ligament sprains. Warmup activities could be calisthenics, stretching, any games with small numbers of players, or skill drills that are not strenuous but include a lot of movement. Try to use warm-up activities that are interesting to your players.

After the strenuous activity is over, players should then slow down gradually with a cool-down activity. Stopping heavy activity abruptly can cause blood to pool in the legs and feet and can slow the removal of waste products created by muscle use. Light activity, such as walking or stretching, helps to keep blood circulating.

Overload Principle

Luckily for us, our bodies are very adaptable. We can present them with a workload a bit higher than what we've done before, and they will, over time, adapt to it. Each time our bodies adapt, we can then add more to what we've done before. This is how we can improve our fitness.

The body can be overloaded in three different ways:

- Increasing frequency by doing an activity more often
- Increasing intensity by putting more effort into an activity
- Increasing time by doing an activity longer

To remember these methods of overloading, think of the acronym FIT (frequency, intensity, and time). Increasing one or more of these aspects of activity or exercise will put a heavier load on the body. This principle can be used in all kinds of training. A weightlifter could add more weight as she grows stronger, adding intensity. A runner might add more miles or hours of training, adding time. Either one might choose to exercise more often during the week, increasing the frequency.

Overloading stimulates the body to make changes. Such changes involve the nervous system, which becomes able to recruit more muscle fibers; the circulation, which becomes better at distributing the blood to the working muscles; and the muscles, which produce new protein to meet working demands.

One caution about overloads—don't increase them too quickly, or you may cause injuries. A gradual approach is always safer.

Reversibility Principle

To state the reversibility principle briefly: Use it or lose it! Just as the body can make adaptations when given an overload, it can also lose its capabilities when it is not used. It takes three times as long to gain endurance as it does to lose it. If you stayed in bed for a week, you would lose nearly 10 percent of your aerobic fitness. Your strength would also decline, although not as fast. For this reason, you should encourage your players to be active both during and after the basketball season.

Specificity Principle

The specificity principle means that the type of training a person chooses to do should relate to his or her goal. For example, heavy weight training will not make a runner run faster. Bicycling will not improve swimming performance as much as additional swimming would. Performance improves most when the training done is specific to the desired activity.

HEALTHY HABITS

One of the better things you can do for your players is to instill healthy habits. Being healthy is a lot easier when it becomes a routine part of life. Talk to your players about the benefits of being fit and eating well.

General Fitness

With all the distractions of video games and TV, many children are less active than they might otherwise be. Make a point of explaining to your players that being active will help them be healthier and feel better. It also may help their basketball game! Also discuss how other good health habits can help them, such as getting enough sleep, brushing their teeth and washing well, and saying no to tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.

Good Nutrition

Good nutrition is not the first thing most young children think about when they choose foods. At this age, they may not even know which foods are good for them and which are not. You can start to make them aware of which foods will make them healthier and why good nutrition is important.

A simple guide for a good diet is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food pyramid (see figure 10.1). This guide encourages us to eat lots of breads, cereals, rice, pasta, vegetables, and fruits; a smaller amount of meat, cheese, eggs, dried beans, or nuts; and only a very little bit of fats, oils, and sweets. Eating this way cuts down on the amount of fats in the diet and helps ensure an adequate amount of vitamins and minerals.

A serving of the foods in these groups is equal to the following:

- One-half cup of fruit or vegetable
- Three-fourths of a cup of juice
- One slice of bread
- One cup of milk
- One average piece of fruit
- One cup of salad greens
- One-half cup of cooked pasta
- Lean meat about the size of a deck of cards

According to Kalish (1996), the number of servings children should eat depends on their age, height, weight, and level of physical activity. One exception is milk; children need to have three milk group servings a day.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

As a coach, you're morally and legally responsible for the safety of your players during practice sessions and games, so you need to take some regular

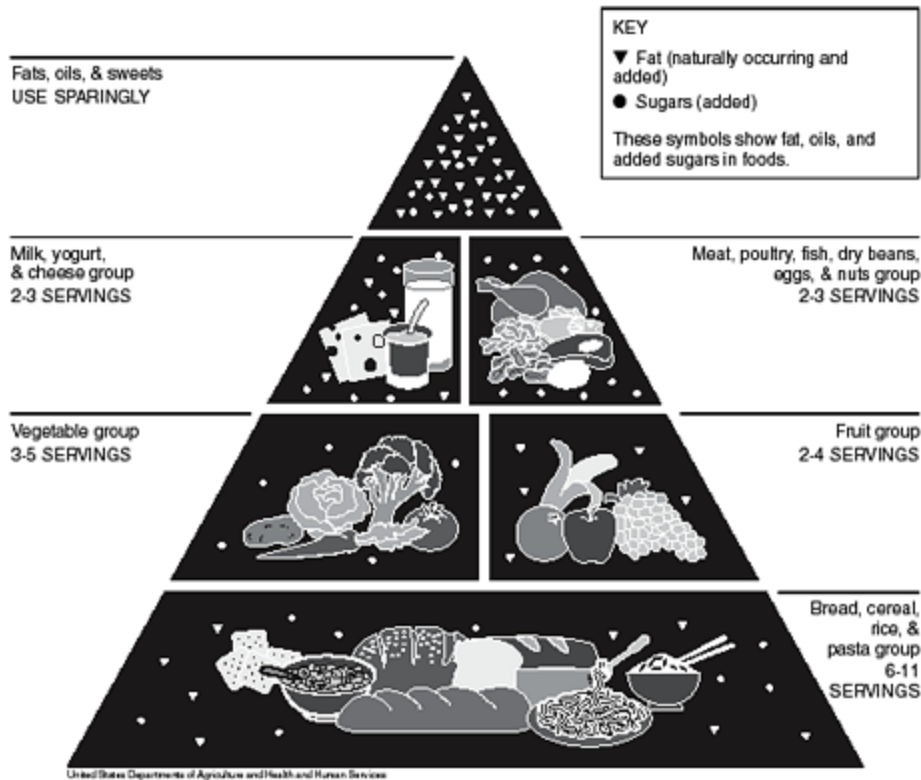


Figure 10.1 The food guide pyramid.

precautions to protect their safety. Some simple ways that you can protect your players from harm are requiring a preseason physical exam, regularly inspecting equipment and facilities, matching athletes by maturity, warning players and their parents of the potential for injury, supervising properly and keeping good records, and adjusting practices or games according to environmental conditions.

Preseason Physical Examination

We recommend that your players have a physical examination before participating in YMCA Rookies basketball. The exam should address the most likely areas of medical concern and identify youngsters at high risk. We also suggest that you have players' parents or guardians sign a participation agreement form and a release form to allow their children to be treated in case of an emergency. See appendix B, "Preparticipation Screening for YMCA Youth Sports Programs," for specific information on what should take place during the preseason physical examination.

Regular Inspection of Equipment and Facilities

Check the quality and fit of all of the protective equipment used by your players at the beginning of the season and inspect the equipment regularly during the season. Slick-soled, poor-fitting, or unlaced basketball shoes;

unstrapped eyeglasses; and jewelry are dangerous on the basketball court—both to the player wearing such items and to other participants. Encourage players to switch into their basketball shoes when they reach playing sites so that the soles of their shoes are free of mud and moisture.

Remember, also, to examine regularly the court on which your players practice and play. Wipe up wet spots, remove hazards, report conditions you cannot remedy, and request maintenance as necessary. If unsafe conditions exist, either make adaptations to avoid risk to your players' safety or stop the practice or game until safe conditions have been restored.

Matching Athletes by Maturity

Children of the same age may differ in height and weight by up to 6 inches and 50 pounds. That's why, in contact sports or sports in which size provides an advantage, coaches must match players against opponents of similar size and physical maturity. Such an approach gives smaller, less physically mature children a better chance to succeed and avoid injury, and it provides larger children with more of a challenge.

Informing Players and Parents of Inherent Risks

You are legally responsible for warning players of the inherent risks involved in playing basketball. "Failure to warn" is one of the most successful arguments in lawsuits against coaches. You must thoroughly explain the inherent risks of basketball and make sure each player knows, understands, and appreciates those risks.

The preseason parent orientation meeting is a good opportunity to explain the risks of the sport to parents and players. It also is a good occasion on which to have both the players and their parents sign waivers releasing you from liability should an injury occur. Such waivers do not relieve you of responsibility for your players' well-being, but lawyers recommend them.

Proper Supervision and Record Keeping

With young children, simply being present in the area of play is not enough; you must actively plan and direct team activities and closely observe and evaluate players' participation. You're the watchdog responsible for the players' well-being, so if you notice a player limping or grimacing, give him or her a rest and examine the extent of the injury.

As part of your supervision duties, you are expected to foresee potentially dangerous situations and to help prevent them from occurring. As a coach, you're required to know and enforce the rules of the sport (especially safety rules), prohibit dangerous horseplay, and hold practice or games only under safe weather conditions (see the next section). These specific supervisory activities will make the play environment safer for your players and will help

protect you from liability if a mishap does occur.

As a general rule, the more dangerous an activity is, the more closely you should be supervising players. This suggests that you need to directly supervise younger, less-experienced players, especially in riskier situations such as when they are learning new skills, are violating rules, or are tired or look unwell.

For further protection, keep records of your season plans, practice plans, and players' injuries. Season and practice plans come in handy when you need evidence that players have been taught certain skills, whereas accurate, detailed accident report forms offer protection against unfounded lawsuits. Ask for these forms from your YMCA and hold on to these records for several years so that an old basketball injury of a former player doesn't come back to haunt you.

Environmental Conditions

Although most basketball games may be played indoors, the following information is provided to inform coaches of the effects that environmental conditions can have, and to prepare them in the event that practice is held outdoors. Most problems due to environmental factors are related to excessive heat or cold, though you should also consider other environmental factors such as severe weather and pollution. Giving a little thought to potential problems and spending a little effort to ensure adequate protection for your players will prevent most serious emergencies related to environmental conditions.

Heat

On hot, humid days the body has difficulty cooling itself. Because the air is already saturated with water vapor (humidity), sweat doesn't evaporate as easily, and the body retains extra heat. Hot, humid environments make athletes prone to heat exhaustion and heatstroke (see more on these in "Providing First Aid" on pages 153-156). If you think it's hot or humid, it's worse on the kids, not just because they're more active, but because youngsters under the age of 12 have a more difficult time than adults regulating their body temperature.

To provide for players' safety in hot or humid conditions, take the following preventive measures:

- Monitor weather conditions and adjust practices or games accordingly. Figure 10.2 shows the specific air temperatures and humidity percentages that can be hazardous.
- Acclimatize players to exercising in high heat and humidity. Players can make adjustments to high heat and humidity over 7 to 10 days.

During this time, hold practices at low to moderate activity levels and give the players water breaks every 20 minutes.

- Switch to light clothing. Players should wear shorts and white T-shirts.
- Identify and monitor players who are prone to heat illness. Those players who are overweight, heavily muscled, or out of shape will be more prone to heat illness, as will be those who work excessively hard or who have suffered heat illness before. Closely monitor these players and give them water breaks every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Make sure players replace water lost through sweat. Encourage your players to drink one liter of water each day, to drink eight ounces of water every 15 minutes during practice or games, and to drink four to eight ounces of water 15 minutes before practice or games.
- Replenish electrolytes lost through sweat, such as sodium (salt) and potassium. The best way to replace these nutrients is by eating a healthy diet that contains fresh fruits and vegetables. Bananas are a good source of potassium. The normal American diet contains plenty of salt, so players don't need to go overboard in salting their food to replace lost sodium.

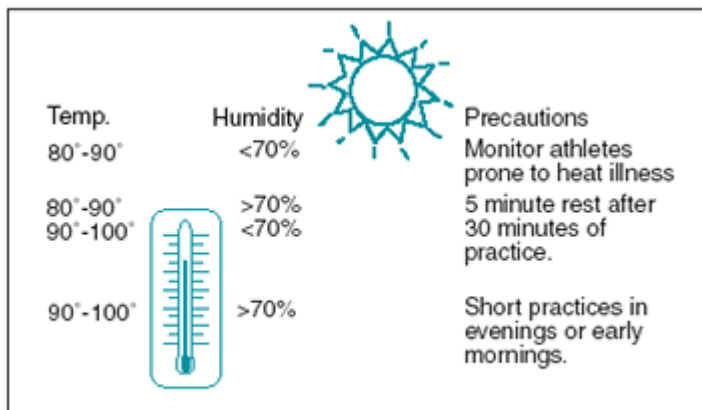


Figure 10.2 Air temperatures and humidity percentages.

Encourage players to drink plenty of water before, during, and after practice or games. Because water makes up 45 to 65 percent of a youngster's body weight, and water weighs about a pound per pint, the loss of even a little bit of water can have severe consequences for the body's systems. The weather doesn't have to be hot and humid for players to become dehydrated, nor do players have to feel thirsty. In fact, by the time they are aware of their thirst, they are long overdue for a drink.

Cold

When a person is exposed to cold weather, the body temperature starts to drop below normal. To counteract this drop, the body shivers and reduces the blood flow to gain or conserve heat. But no matter how effective the

body's natural heating mechanism is, the body will better withstand cold temperatures if it is prepared to handle them. To reduce the risk of cold-related illnesses, make sure players wear appropriate protective clothing, and keep them active to maintain body heat. Also monitor the windchill (see figure 10.3 on page 150).

Severe Weather

Severe weather refers to a host of potential dangers, including lightning storms, the potential for tornadoes, hail, heavy rains (which can cause injuries by creating sloppy court conditions), and so on. Lightning is of special concern because it can come up quickly and can cause great harm or even kill. For

		Temperature (°F)								
		0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40
		Flash may freeze within 1 minute								
Wind speed (mph)	40	-55	-45	-35	-30	-20	-15	-5	0	10
	35	-50	-40	-35	-30	-20	-10	-5	5	10
	30	-50	-40	-30	-25	-20	-10	0	5	10
	25	-45	-35	-30	-20	-15	-5	0	10	15
	20	-35	-30	-25	-15	-10	0	5	10	20
	15	-30	-25	-20	-10	-5	0	10	15	25
	10	-20	-15	-10	0	5	10	15	20	30
5	-5	0	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	
		Windchill temperature (°F)								

Figure 10.3 Windchill index.

each five-second count from the flash of lightning to the bang of thunder, lightning is one mile away. A flash-bang of 10 seconds means lightning is two miles away; a flash-bang of 15 seconds indicates lightning is three miles away. You should stop a practice or competition for the day if lightning is three miles away or less (15 seconds or less from flash to bang).

Safe places in which to take cover when lightning strikes are fully enclosed metal vehicles with the windows up, enclosed buildings, and low ground (under cover of bushes, if possible). It's *not* safe to be near metallic objects, such as flag poles, fences, light poles, and metal bleachers. Also avoid trees, water, and open fields.

Cancel practice or a game when under either a tornado watch or warning. If for some reason you are playing when a tornado is nearby, you should get players inside a building, if possible. If not, have them lie in a ditch or lowlying area or crouch near a strong building, and use their arms to protect the head and neck.

The keys with severe weather are caution and prudence. Don't try to get that last 10 minutes of practice or a game in if lightning is on the horizon. Don't continue to play in heavy rains. Many storms can strike both quickly and ferociously. Respect the weather and play it safe.

Air Pollution

Poor air quality and smog can present real dangers to your players. Both shortand long-term lung damage are possible from participating in sports in unsafe air. Although participating in clean air is not possible in many areas, restricting activity is recommended when the air quality ratings are worse than moderate or when there is a smog alert. Your local health department or air-quality control board can inform you of the air-quality ratings for your area and whether they recommend restricting activities.

EMERGENCY CARE

No matter how good and thorough your prevention program, injuries may occur. When an injury does strike, chances are you will be the one in charge. The severity and nature of the injury will determine how actively involved you'll be in treating the injury, but regardless of how serious the injury is, you are responsible for knowing what steps to take. Let's look at how to prepare to provide basic emergency care to your injured players and how to take appropriate action when a minor injury or heat illness does occur.

Being Prepared

Being prepared to provide basic emergency care involves three steps: being trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid; having an appropriately stocked first aid kit on hand at practices or games; and having an emergency plan.

CPR and First Aid Training

We recommend that all YMCA Rookies coaches receive CPR and first aid training from a nationally recognized organization (the National Safety Council, the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross, or the American Sport Education Program, for example). You should be certified based on a practical and written test of knowledge. CPR training should include pediatric and adult basic life support and obstructed airway. *First Aid Kit*

Be sure to have a first aid kit available at all practices and games. A wellstocked first aid kit should include the following:

- List of emergency phone numbers
- Change for a pay phone
- Face shield (for rescue breathing and CPR)

- Bandage scissors
- Plastic bags for crushed ice
- Three-inch and four-inch elastic wraps
- Triangular bandages
- Sterile gauze pads: three-inch and four-inch squares
- Saline solution for eyes
- Contact lens case
- Mirror
- Insect sting kit
- Safety pins
- Eighth-inch, quarter-inch, and half-inch foam rubber
- Penlight
- Tongue depressors
- Cotton swabs
- Butterfly strips
- Bandage strips in assorted sizes
- Alcohol or peroxide
- Antibacterial soap
- First aid cream or antibacterial ointment
- Petroleum jelly
- Tape adherent and tape remover
- 1 1/2-inch white athletic tape
- Prewrap
- Sterile gauze rolls
- Disposable surgical gloves
- Thermometer

Emergency Plan

An emergency plan is the final step in preparing to take appropriate action for severe or serious injuries. The plan calls for three steps:

1. Evaluate the injured player. Your CPR and first aid training will guide you here.

2. Call the appropriate medical personnel. If possible, delegate the responsibility of seeking medical help to another calm and responsible adult who is on hand for all practices and games. Write out a list of emergency phone numbers and keep it with you. Include the following phone numbers:

- Rescue unit
- Hospital
- Physician
- Police
- Fire department

Take each player's emergency information card to every practice and game (see appendix C). This information includes who to contact in case of an emergency, what types of medications the player is using, what types of drugs he or she is allergic to, and so on.

Give an emergency response card (see appendix D) to the contact person calling for emergency assistance. This card provides the information the contact person needs to convey and will help keep the person calm, knowing that everything he or she needs to communicate is on the card. Also complete an injury report form (see appendix E), and keep it on file for any injury that occurs.

3. Provide first aid. If medical personnel are not on hand at the time of the injury, you should provide first aid care to the extent of your qualifications. Although your CPR and first aid training will guide you here, the following are important notes:

- Do not move the injured player if the injury is to the head, neck, or back; if a large joint (ankle, knee, elbow, shoulder) is dislocated; or if the pelvis, a rib, or an arm or leg is fractured.
- Calm the injured player and keep others away from him or her as much as possible.
- Evaluate whether the player's breathing is stopped or irregular, and if necessary, clear the airway with your fingers.
- Administer artificial respiration if breathing has stopped. Administer CPR if the player's circulation has stopped.
- Remain with the player until medical personnel arrive.

Your emergency plan should follow this sequence:

1. Check the player's level of consciousness.
2. Send a contact person to call the appropriate medical personnel and to call the player's parents.
3. Send someone to wait for the rescue team and direct them to the injured player.
4. Assess the injury.
5. Administer first aid.
6. Assist emergency medical personnel in preparing the player for transportation to a medical facility.
7. Appoint someone to go with the player if the parents are not available. This person should be responsible, calm, and familiar with the player. Assistant coaches or parents are best for this job.
8. Complete an injury report form while the incident is fresh in your mind.

Providing First Aid

Proper CPR and first aid training, a well-stocked first aid kit, and an emergency plan help prepare you to take appropriate action when an injury occurs. In this section, we'll look at how to provide first aid both for minor injuries and for heat illnesses, which can be more serious. Keep in mind that some injuries are too severe for you to treat: head, neck, and back injuries; fractures; and injuries that cause a player to lose consciousness. In these cases, you should follow the emergency plan outlined on pages 152-153. Provide first aid *only to the extent of your qualifications*. Don't play doctor with injuries; sort out minor injuries that you can treat from situations in which you need to call for assistance.

Minor Injuries

Although no injury seems minor to the player who has it, most injuries are neither life-threatening nor severe enough to restrict participation. When such injuries occur, you can take an active role in their initial treatment. Most of the injuries you will see will be scrapes and cuts, strains and sprains, and bumps and bruises.

Scrapes and Cuts. When one of your players has an open wound, the first thing you should do is put on a pair of disposable surgical gloves or some other effective blood barrier. Don't let a fear of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) stop you from helping a bleeding player. You are only at risk if you allow contaminated blood to come in contact with an open wound, so the blood barrier that you wear will protect you. Check with your director or the YMCA of the USA for more information about protecting yourself and your players from AIDS.

After you are wearing gloves, follow these four steps:

1. Stop the bleeding by applying direct pressure with a clean dressing to the wound and elevating it. The player may be able to apply this pressure while you put on your gloves. Do not remove the dressing if it becomes soaked with blood. Instead, place an additional dressing on top of the one already in place. If bleeding continues, elevate the injured area above the heart and maintain pressure.
2. Cleanse the wound thoroughly once the bleeding is controlled. A good rinsing with a forceful stream of water, and perhaps light scrubbing with soap, will help prevent infection.
3. Protect the wound with sterile gauze or a bandage. If the player continues to participate, apply protective padding over the injured area.
4. Remove the gloves and dispose of them carefully to prevent you or

anyone else from coming into contact with blood.

For bloody noses not associated with serious facial injury, have the athlete sit and lean slightly forward. Then pinch the player's nostrils shut. If the bleeding continues after several minutes, or if the player has a history of nosebleeds, seek medical assistance.

Strains and Sprains. The physical demands of playing basketball often result in injury to the muscles or tendons (strains) or to the ligaments (sprains). When your players suffer minor strains or sprains, immediately apply the PRICE method of injury care (see figure 10.4).

P Protect the player and injured body part from further danger or trauma.
R Rest the area to avoid further damage and foster healing.
I Ice the area to reduce swelling and pain.
C Compress the area by securing an ice bag in place with an elastic wrap.
E Elevate the injury above heart level to keep the blood from pooling in the area.

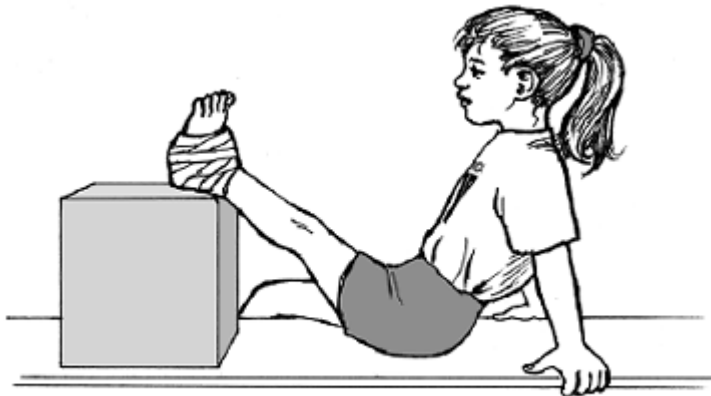


Figure 10.4 The PRICE method.

Bumps and Bruises. Inevitably, basketball players make contact with each other and with the court. If the force of a body part at impact is great enough, a bump or bruise will result. Many players continue playing with such sore spots, but if the bump or bruise is large and painful, you should act appropriately. Use the PRICE method of injury care and monitor the injury. If swelling, discoloration, and pain have lessened, the player may resume participation with protective padding; if not, a physician should examine the player.

Heat Illnesses

In case your team ever has to play under hot conditions, you also should know how to handle two types of heat illnesses: heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Heat Exhaustion. Heat exhaustion is a shock-like condition caused by dehydration and electrolyte depletion. Symptoms include headache, nausea, dizziness, chills, fatigue, and extreme thirst (see figure 10.5 for heat exhaustion and heatstroke symptoms). Signs include pale, cool, and clammy skin; rapid, weak pulse; loss of coordination; dilated pupils; and profuse sweating (this is a key sign).

A player suffering from heat exhaustion should rest in a cool, shaded area; drink cool water; and have ice applied to the neck, back, or stomach to help cool the body. You may have to administer CPR if necessary or send for emergency medical assistance if the player doesn't recover or his or her condition worsens. Under no conditions should the player return to activity that day or before he or she regains all the weight lost through sweat. If the player had to see a physician, he or she shouldn't return to practice until released by the physician.

Heatstroke. Heatstroke is a life-threatening condition in which the body stops sweating and body temperature rises dangerously high. It occurs when dehydration causes a malfunction in the body's temperature control center in the brain. Symptoms include the feeling of being on fire (extremely hot), nausea, confusion, irritability, and fatigue. Signs include hot, dry, and flushed or red skin (this is a key sign); lack of sweat; rapid pulse; rapid breathing; constricted pupils; vomiting; diarrhea; and possibly seizures, unconsciousness, or respiratory or cardiac arrest. (See figure 10.5 for heat exhaustion and heatstroke symptoms.)

Send for emergency medical assistance immediately and have the player rest in a cool, shaded area. Remove excess clothing and equipment from the player, and cool his or her body with cool, wet towels or by pouring cool water over him or her. Apply ice packs to the armpits, neck, back, stomach, and between the legs. If the player is conscious, have him or her drink cool water. If the player is unconscious, place the player on his or her side to allow fluids and vomit to drain from the mouth. A player who has suffered heatstroke can't return to practice until he or she is released by a physician.

LEGAL LIABILITY

When one of your players is injured, naturally your first concern is his or her well-being. Your concern for children, after all, is what made you decide to

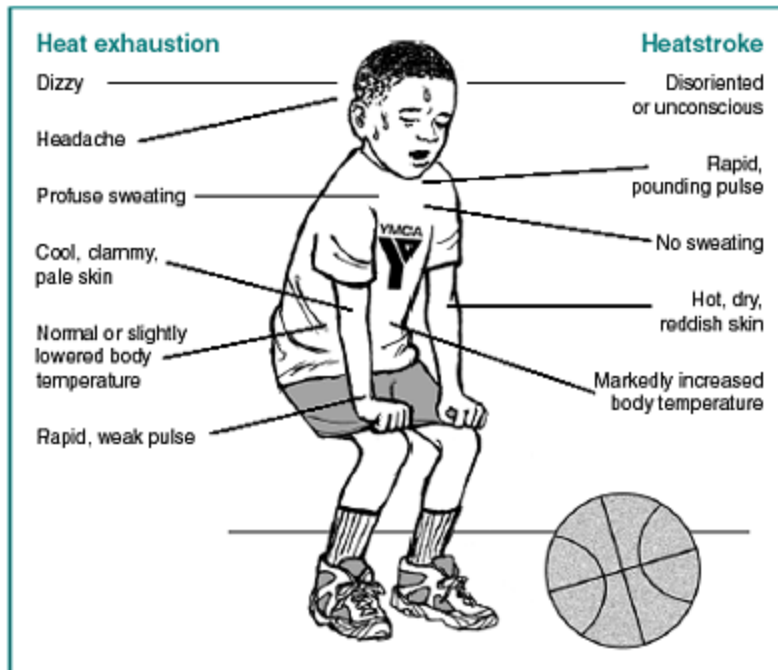


Figure 10.5 Symptoms of heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

coach. Unfortunately, you must also consider something else: Can you be held liable for the injury?

From a legal standpoint, a coach has nine duties to fulfill. In this chapter we've discussed all of them but planning (see chapters 5 through 7).

1. Provide a safe environment.
2. Properly plan the activity.
3. Provide adequate and proper equipment.
4. Match or equate athletes.
5. Warn of inherent risks in the sport.
6. Supervise the activity closely.
7. Evaluate athletes for injury or incapacitation.
8. Know emergency procedures and first aid.
9. Keep adequate records.

In addition to fulfilling these nine legal duties, you should check your YMCA's insurance coverage and your own personal coverage to make sure you are protected from liability.

COACHING RESOURCES



Figure 15.1 Shoulder stretch.



Figure 15.2 Triceps stretch.



Figure 15.3 Elbow and forearm stretch.

Figure 15.4 Quadriceps stretch.



Figure 15.5 Piriformis stretch.



Figure 15.6 Hamstring stretch.



Figure 15.7 Hip flexor stretch.



Figure 15.8 Calf stretch.



Figure 15.9 Trunk stretch.



Figure 15.10 Lower back stretch.

COACHING RESOURCES

NOT USING TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, AND OTHER DRUGS

Neither sports participation nor, to a lesser extent, age insulates kids from tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use. Alcohol is the most widely used drug at the upper ages (14 to 16) of YMCA Winners. In the past 30 days (30-day use is commonly used as an indicator of current drug use), 26 percent of eighthgraders will have used alcohol, 17 percent will have smoked cigarettes, 7 percent will have used smokeless tobacco, and 5 percent will have smoked marijuana. The good news is that athletes are less likely to smoke cigarettes than nonathletes. But even among athletes, cigarette and alcohol use tends to double in the off-season. This is one more good reason to encourage remaining active in the off-season: Those who remain active are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.

While these facts pertain to kids at the upper levels of YMCA Winners, the risks of using tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs permeates all ages of kids in YMCA Winners. It's to your advantage to understand why kids use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, and to be able to tell your players the benefits of not using these substances.

Why Kids Use Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Drugs

There are many reasons why kids use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, but here are five important motives:

- **To experience pleasure.** Certain drugs give pleasurable feelings. Young athletes may like these feelings associated with drug use and may find that drugs quickly produce these desired sensations.
- **To take risks.** Some athletes are more likely to have a thrill-seeking personality, looking for excitement and stimulation through physical activity. This same quest for adventure may encourage some athletes to choose other risky behaviors, including the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- **To belong.** People often emulate the standards and actions of their peers. Young athletes may use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs to fit in with others.
- **To be like their heroes.** Beer is advertised extensively during televised sporting events. Champagne corks pop in locker-room celebrations on TV. Major league baseball players come to bat with the unmistakable imprint of a smokeless tobacco canister showing in their back pocket. Major league baseball players and managers are often seen in public—sometimes even in the dugout!—smoking cigarettes. Tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs are very closely linked to professional sports in a number of ways, leading perhaps to the idea that usage must not be so bad.

- **To cope with stress.** Many people use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs to cope with stress or to escape from stressful situations. As we've mentioned earlier in this chapter, youngsters feel stress just as adults do.

Benefits of Not Using

If you want to make an impact on kids, don't just tell them that tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs are bad for them. Tell them about the benefits of *not* using tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Following are some of the benefits of not using:

- Their performance—not just in sports, but in academics and all other activities—won't be hampered.
- They won't encounter legal problems because of underage use of tobacco, alcohol, or illicit drugs.
- They are less likely to encounter the numerous health problems associated with usage.
- They won't become dependent or addicted.
- They will be less likely to be involved in accidents.
- They can better develop their skills in managing stress and solving problems.
- They will achieve normal physiological and hormonal growth and development.
- They can develop honest relationships.

Of course, it's of utmost importance that you be a good role model here. You have two choices: Either abstain from tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use, or use those substances moderately, appropriately, and legally. However, understand that as a YMCA Winners coach, you must abstain from the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs (other than prescription or over-the-counter drugs) while coaching your team.

COACHING RESOURCES

Teaching Character Development

This final chapter will deal with character development, the teaching of values to players. At the YMCA, teaching values is as important a part of the basketball program as teaching game skills. As a YMCA coach, you take on the responsibility to help children learn about and use four core values that the YMCA has chosen to emphasize: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

You can teach these values in several ways:

- Communicate to your players that sporting behavior is an important part of the program.
- Teach the four values to players so they know what those values mean. Give them examples.
- Include the values in each practice session (character development discussions appear in each practice plan).
- Consistently model those values in your own behavior so players can see what those values look like.
- Celebrate those values and hold them up to players as what is right in order to help them learn to believe in the values.
- Ask players to practice the values over and over again.
- Consistently reinforce and reward behaviors that support the values, using the specific value word that is relevant: "Cindy, thanks for helping Kolicia find the ball. That shows caring."
- Consistently confront a player whose behavior is inconsistent with the values, but do so in a way that does not devalue him or her.
- Be prepared to talk to parents about the character development portion of the basketball program.

Teaching values involves a somewhat different approach than teaching skills:

- First, it requires you to be a good role model. You should set an example with your words and actions.
- Second, you need to understand at what level your players are capable of understanding and applying values. Younger children do not think about moral decisions in the same way as adults. Children gradually develop the ability to understand values as they grow.
- Third, you need to learn to identify situations during practice that relate to the four values. Many everyday occurrences provide a chance for you to demonstrate to players that values are relevant to their daily lives.
- Finally, you can use the Team Circle discussions suggested in the practice plans or find activities of your own, ones that emphasize values and make players think about them.

Being a Good Role Model

Most of us believe in the YMCA's core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, but we don't always follow our own beliefs. Our character is measured by our behavior. We judge ourselves by our good intentions. Other people judge us only by our behavior. Consider the following lists of coaching behaviors for each value. These lists aren't meant to be comprehensive; they're meant to get you thinking about what being a good role model means, in practical terms, as it applies to these four important values.

Caring

- You spend time after practice helping a player learn a skill.
- You comfort a player who is dejected after a loss.
- You help a player who is stressed manage that stress.
- You inform your players of the benefits of good nutrition.

Honesty

- You tell a player that she's not executing a skill correctly and you'll help her.
- You tell a player when you don't know a rule (but you'll find out).
- You tell a player when you make a mistake, such as misinterpreting who instigated minor misbehavior during practice.
- You tell your team that you haven't been as physically active in the offseason as you'd like to be, but you're trying to improve.

Respect

- You don't blow your cool when players misbehave.
- You listen to players attentively when they are talking.
- You bring the same energy and enthusiasm for teaching skills to all your players, no matter how skilled they are.
- You don't criticize players in front of their teammates.

Responsibility

- You show up on time and prepared for all practices and contests.
- You provide appropriate first aid for injured players.
- You supervise all practice activities closely.
- You intervene when players are misbehaving.

Understanding Children's Moral Reasoning

As you work with children on character development, you need to keep in mind how they think about moral questions. They approach such questions much differently than an adult would, and their perspective changes as they grow. One researcher, Kohlberg (Bee 1995; Crain 1992), has developed a set of stages for thinking about moral questions that he believes children move through as they mature.

Children up through the age of nine generally think about moral questions in terms of obedience and punishment. They assume that fixed rules are set by powerful adults who can enforce those rules by punishment. Children are doing right when they obey the rules unquestioningly. Actions are judged by their outcomes, not by the person's intentions. Moral reasoning for children nine and younger is very black-and-white. In basketball, you might expect to see children interpret an opponent's personal foul as an intentional attack when it is most likely unintentional and a result of poor skill or lack of experience.

Around the age of 10, most children think about moral questions in terms of what works best for them. The right thing is the thing that brings pleasant results. They also think about making deals with others—if I do something for you, then you may, in turn, do something for me. Making fair deals is important. A 10- or 11-year-old may agree to congratulate the opponent on good plays or at the end of a game because he or she knows that the behavior pleases most adults and most other children. If the opponent doesn't congratulate his or her good play in return, however, he or she may stop that behavior because it doesn't generate a pleasant or fair result.

Near 16, most players have started thinking about moral questions in terms of how those questions relate to the expectations of their family and community.

The key focus is behaving in good ways and having good motives and good feelings toward others. At this point, players also start to take into account people's intentions when judging actions.

These players can better understand their roles as representatives of their team or their YMCA and as role models for younger players, particularly when their coaches, parents, and teammates encourage them. Such encouragement would be likely to cause them to modify their game behaviors to fulfill others' expectations.

Moving from one type of thinking about morality to another happens gradually and may occur at different ages for different children. This outline gives you some broad guidelines for how the majority of the players on your team may look at character development questions when you bring them up in

Team Circles or during practice or games.

Using Teachable Moments

During practices, you may find that a situation arises that gives you a chance to point out how values apply. This type of situation is known as a teachable moment, and it might be something like one team's behavior toward an opponent, one player's behavior toward another, or a violation of team rules.

Use teachable moments when they occur. Stop a skill practice or game to comment on an incident. Don't do this too frequently, but using this approach can be effective when a good opportunity arises to illustrate a value discussed earlier.

A teachable moment can be triggered by either good or bad actions; you can praise an individual's or group's supportive, fair behavior or stop an activity briefly to talk about negative behavior. Try to balance positive and negative instances; don't use just negative situations. Here are some examples:

- If one player yells at another for a mistake in play, talk to that player about respect.
- If a player does something dangerous during a game, have a brief discussion with that player about responsibility and caring for others.
- If a player helps another child who is hurt, praise the player for being caring.
- If a player raises her hand to admit committing a foul that wasn't called, congratulate that player for being honest.

Teachable moments are occasions on which you can hold up the right value and explain why it is the acceptable thing to do. Doing this illustrates to players what values look like beyond the words and how values are a part of our everyday lives.

Using Values Activities

Each practice plan includes a Team Circle, which gives you a topic for brief discussion of one or more of the core values. Just as practice drills focus on physical skills, Team Circles focus on character development. They help players realize that participation in basketball also teaches them about themselves and others.

Try using these tips when leading Team Circle discussions:

- Begin discussions by reviewing the YMCA House Rules: speak for yourself, listen to others, avoid put-downs, take charge of yourself, and show respect. (Repeat these rules in your first three or four Team Circles; after that, you'll probably only need to reinforce these House Rules occasionally.)
- Be yourself. Children respect an adult who listens to them and who talks honestly.
- As a role model for your players, be willing to admit mistakes; it will make players more likely to be open about themselves.
- Give players a chance to respond, but allow them to pass if they want to.

- Reinforce their responses with a nod, smile, or short comment like "Thanks," "Okay," "That's interesting," or "I understand." Give the player speaking your undivided attention.
- After all players have had a chance to respond to your Team Circle question, briefly summarize the responses and add your own comments. Try not to lecture.

You might also include activities of your own that reinforce values. The YMCA of the USA has created a number of character development resources; ask your YMCA if they can make those available to you. These ideas were taken from the YMCA Character Development Activity Box (YMCA of the USA, 1997):

- Tell your players that one way to demonstrate caring is to do kind things for others. Ask the players to brainstorm ideas of things they could do to be kind to the other members of their families. Some ideas might be washing dishes, cleaning their rooms, or telling a story to a younger brother or sister. Encourage each player to do one kind act for each member of his or her family during the next week, and discuss what they did during the next week's practice.
- Point out that on a team, all players must respect their teammates, because they are not a team without every one of them. Divide the team into two equal groups. Have each group line up in single file as fast as they can in the order you tell them to. They can race to see which group can line up the fastest. First, say, "I want you to line up from shortest to tallest." After both groups have done that, indicate who won and congratulate both groups. Then say, "Now line up by birthday month, with January in the front and December in the back." Next, say, "Line up by biggest foot to smallest." Finish by saying, "Okay, everybody have a seat back in the circle." Ask, "Now, in that game, who were the most important players: the short ones or the tall ones? That's right, all were equally important. The same is true for when you were born or how big your foot is. The fact is that every person is important on a team and worthy of your respect. Teamwork is when everyone does his or her part, no matter what that is or how much attention it gets."
- Discuss with your players the idea of cooperation versus competition. Point out that the other team makes the game possible. Ask the players to brainstorm ways they might show respect to the other team. These might include saying positive things to the opposing players, congratulating them for outstanding plays, and shaking hands at the end of a game. Encourage your players to do these things when they play.

Any activities you use should meet these criteria:

- Be age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate.

- Account for varied personal backgrounds and differing views on values.
- Attempt to change players' attitudes as well as actions.
- Focus on long-term results.
- Be planned and intentional.
- Fit logically with what you are doing.
- Be positive and constructive, not putting players down.
- Be inclusive.
- Be meaningful, not trivial or corny.
- Be fun!

COACHING RESOURCES

The Season Plans

If you're feeling a bit overwhelmed by the job you've taken on, don't worry. In this chapter, we give you specific guidance on what to teach. This chapter will give you an overview of the curriculum for each of the two age groups; chapters 6 and 7 provide practice plans for each group.

The season plans we've laid out have five components:

- Purpose
- Tactics and skills
- Rules and traditions
- Fitness concepts
- Character development concepts

Here's a brief description of each component:

- **Purpose.** The purpose of the practice is your main focus.
- **Tactics and skills.** Tactics are knowing what to do during the game (and when to do it), and they require an understanding of the problems faced by each team during the game and how those problems can be solved. Ways to maintain possession of the ball would be tactics. Skills are the physical skills traditionally taught, such as passing or shooting the ball or controlling the ball during play.
- **Rules and traditions.** You will teach the rules of the sport to young children gradually, as part of playing games and learning skills. Traditions are those unwritten rules that players follow to be courteous and safe, such as raising your hand when you foul someone or playing cooperatively with the others on your team.
- **Fitness concepts.** Even young children can understand some simple concepts about health and fitness, such as the idea that exercise strengthens your heart, so some of these are suggested as the focus for brief discussions during practice.
- **Character development concepts.** The four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility—can all be related to many situations that arise while playing basketball. For example, playing cooperatively with teammates shows that you care about them. Again, we'll suggest some specific ideas for briefly discussing character development values.

Basketball Curriculum for Six and Seven-Year-Olds

Using a small number of players on a team with the three-versus-three game allows players to continue to have many tactical options without the pressure of large numbers of opponents. This arrangement makes it more likely that

players will attempt to pass, dribble, or shoot as the need arises. Progressing from the four- and five-year-old age group, players can now revisit the tactical components of possession and attack while adding a closer look at defending. The outline on page 32 provides a weekly guide that shows the tactical and skill components, as well as the rules and character development components. These components will all be detailed in the practice plans. Boys and girls should still play together at this age level.

YMCA Rookies Basketball Season Plan					
Six- to Seven-Year-Olds					
Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1	Keeping possession of the ball	Ball handing and dribbling under control Play cooperative defense	Start and restart rules Modified rules	General fitness Being active leads to fitness.	Four core values The four core values are introduced.
2	Keeping possession of the ball	Dribbling under pressure Dribbling and passing to a partner	Unwritten rule: Being a good sport Modified traveling rule	Flexibility Stretching muscles makes them flexible.	Responsibility Learn the team motto: Play hard, play fair, and have fun!
3	Attacking the basket	Shooting with basic technique Shooting close to basket	Modified double dribble rule	Cardiorespiratory fitness The heart is a special muscle that pumps blood.	Respect for others It's important to be a good sport.
4	Keeping possession of the ball Attacking the basket Dribbling and driving to shoot	Starting, stopping and changing direction quickly while dribbling Jump stop		Cardiorespiratory fitness Our heartbeat increases with exercise.	Honesty Raise your hand when you commit a foul.
5	Keeping possession of the ball	Dribbling under pressure		Cardiorespiratory fitness Your heart gets stronger when you exercise and play.	Responsibility Mistakes are okay. Don't make excuses for your play.
6	Playing a 3 v 2 game Keeping possession of the ball	Pass, receive, and support under pressure Play active defense	Possession rule	Flexibility Stretching muscles makes them flexible.	Caring Take turns with teammates.
7	Defending your own space	Defending an opponent	Modified foul rule	Muscle strength and endurance Physical activity gives you strong legs and arms.	Responsibility Keep control of yourself during practice and games.
8	Defending your own space Pressing the ball handler	Pressuring the ball handler Stealing the ball	Principle of verticality Regular half-court rules	General fitness We need to keep active every day, even days we have no practice.	Responsibility to team It's important to value teamwork.
9	Attacking the basket	Shooting within 5-8 feet of basket Receiving a pass and shooting accurately		General fitness Healthy eating habits give you more energy.	Caring Forgive mistakes; they are part of the game.
10	Playing a 3 v 3 game Maintaining possession of the ball	Passing quickly and accurately Supporting the ball handler	Field goal is two points	General fitness Eat good foods rather than junk foods.	Respect for game Realize it takes years to master some skills.

Season Plan for 8- to 9-Year-Olds

At this age, kids will begin to explore tactics that help them keep possession of the ball, attack the basket, create space, and play good defense. The following grid provides an overview of each component of practice from Week 1 through Week 12. The specific practice plans for 8- to 9-year-olds are found in chapter 10.

8- to 9-Year-Olds

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1A	To play a 2 v 2 game, focusing on boundaries and rules	Dribbling, passing, and receiving	Inbounds; double dribble; traveling	General fitness Physical activity makes you fit, contributing to cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility.	Four core values We'll stress four core values: caring, honesty, respect, responsibility.
1B	To maintain possession of the ball using the triple threat position	Triple threat position; receiving passes	Holding, tripping	Safety It's important to notify your coach whenever you hurt yourself, even if you think it's a minor injury.	Honesty You need to play by the rules and be honest if you break one.
2A	To attack the basket by receiving a pass, squaring to the basket, and scoring	Shooting	Lane violation	General fitness It's important both to warm up and cool down.	Responsibility Working and playing as a team works better than playing as a bunch of individuals.
2B	To maintain possession of the ball by supporting teammates	Creating passing lanes	Jump ball	Flexibility Stretch until you feel a pull but no pain; hold for 10 seconds.	Respect Respect opponents by shaking or slapping hands at the end of a game.
3	To create space in the attack by creating passing lanes	Using L-cuts and V-cuts to elude the defender	Personal and technical fouls	Healthy habits Drink enough water during practice.	Responsibility Cheer for your teammates when you're on the sideline.
4	To attack the basket by using a power dribble	Drop step and drive to the basket; jump stop	Charging and blocking fouls; raise your hand when you foul	Safety Stay in your own space.	Caring Compliment players—even opponents—on good plays.
5	To use space in the attack by creating passing lanes and repositioning for a pass	Drop step and drive to the basket; creating passing lanes		Cardiorespiratory fitness Aerobic endurance is important for health.	Caring Share the ball—don't be a ball hog!
6	To win the ball through on-the-ball defense	Defensive positioning on the ball		Cardiorespiratory fitness As your heart beats faster, it pumps blood and delivers oxygen to muscles faster.	Respect Celebrate victories in ways that don't embarrass opponents.
7	To win the ball through off-the-ball defense	Defensive positioning on the ball		Muscular strength and endurance Muscles adapt to harder work by getting stronger.	Respect Respect officials, and thank them at the end of games.
8	To win the ball by rebounding	Boxing out to rebound	Over-the-back fouls	Training and conditioning Improve your physical conditioning by practicing/playing longer.	Responsibility Teamwork means helping each other.
9	To attack the basket through the give-and-go	The give-and-go play		Muscular strength and endurance The longer you play before your muscles tire, the more muscular endurance you have.	Caring Everyone gets a chance to learn and play.
10	To maintain possession of the ball and use space in the attack	Creating passing lanes; Triple threat position; ball fakes and jab steps		Healthy habits Check off your healthy habits as you do them.	Caring Forgive teammates for mistakes.

Season Plan for 10- to 11-Year-Olds

As youngsters grow, so does the game: the ball grows larger, the basket becomes taller, the free-throw line retreats farther from the basket. Players continue to work on the tactics and skills they developed as 8- to 9-year-olds, but the tactics become a little more complex as they delve deeper into creating and using space to attack. In addition, they learn how to set screens and how to defend against screens, and they hone their skills in maintaining possession and defending space. The following outline provides an overview of each component of practice from Week 1 through Week 12. The specific practice plans for 10- to 11-year-olds are found in chapter 11.

10- to 11-Year-Olds

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1A	To create space in the attack by creating passing lanes	Creating passing lanes	Inbounds; traveling; double dribble	General fitness The difference between physical fitness and physical activity.	Four core values We'll stress caring, honesty, respect, responsibility.
1B	To attack the basket by receiving a pass, squaring to the basket, and scoring	Shooting	Lane violation	General fitness It's important to warm up before physical activity.	Caring Always help both teammates and opponents if they are hurt or if you have fouled them.
2A	To create space in the attack by creating passing lanes	Using L-cuts and V-cuts to elude the defender		Cardiorespiratory fitness The heart transports oxygen through the body.	Responsibility It's responsible to be ready for practice and games.
2B	To attack the basket by using a power dribble	Drop step and drive to the basket; Jump stop	Charging and blocking fouls; raise your hand when you foul	Cardiorespiratory fitness Cardiorespiratory fitness is improved by running.	Respect Always show respect for your opponents as well as your teammates.
3	To win the ball through on-the-ball defense	Defensive positioning on the ball	Holding, reaching in, tripping; technical fouls	General fitness You need to exercise every day, not just the days you have practice.	Respect Respect officials, and thank them at the end of games.
4	To win the ball through off-the-ball defense	Defensive positioning off the ball	Hand-checking, pushing	Muscular strength and endurance Different muscles perform different activities.	Honesty Strive to be honest and avoid dishonesty.
5	To win the ball by rebounding	Boxing out to rebound	Over-the-back fouls	Flexibility Stretching improves flexibility and helps prevent injury.	Responsibility It's every player's responsibility to try to get into position to help teammates.
6	To attack the basket through the give-and-go	The give-and-go play		Safety It's important to use safety equipment to prevent injury.	Caring Compliment your teammates and opponents when they make good plays.
7	To create space in the attack by setting screens	Setting screens; attacking the basket off a screen	Setting moving screens	Training and conditioning If you work your body a little harder than last time, it will adapt and become stronger.	Respect It's important to respect yourself and your teammates by always playing safely.
8	To defend space against screens	Defending against screens		Flexibility You should feel a slight pull but no pain when stretching.	Caring It's important to behave in ways that show you care about your teammates.
9	To win the ball on jump balls	Defensive and offensive positioning for jump balls	Jump ball	Training and conditioning An emphasis on training the specific muscles you use for your sport is called "specificity training."	Responsibility Work to improve your skills.
10	To create space in the attack by using off-the-ball screens	Screening off the ball		Healthy habits Try to choose meals from the bottom of the food pyramid.	Honesty Good players look honestly at themselves and think of ways to improve.
11	To defend space by communicating and playing good defense	Fighting through screens; communicating on defense		Healthy habits You need a balance of good foods for good health.	Responsibility We win as a team and we lose as a team.
12	To use space in the attack by rolling	Pick-and-roll		Training and conditioning	Caring It's important to

Season Plan for 12- to 13-Year-Olds

The players build upon the tactics and skills they learned in the previous 2 years. The following outline provides an overview of each component of practice from Week 1 through Week 12. The specific practice plans for 12- to 13- year-olds are found in chapter 12.

12- to 13-Year-Olds

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1A	To attack the basket by using a power dribble	Drop step and drive to the basket; jump stop; crossover dribble	Charging and blocking fouls; raise your hand when you foul	General fitness We'll work to improve our cardiorespiratory fitness, flexibility, and muscular strength and endurance.	Four core values We'll stress caring, honesty, respect, responsibility.
1B	To create space in the attack by creating passing lanes	Using L-cuts and V-cuts to elude the defender	Traveling; double dribble; lane violation; inbounds	General fitness Work on improving your overall fitness by doing a variety of exercises.	Respect Play with respect no matter how your opponents are playing.
2A	To attack the basket through the give-and-go	The give-and-go play	Technical fouls	Overload principle FIT stands for Frequency, Intensity, and Time.	Respect Show respect for your opponents after the game no matter what happened during the game.
2B	To win the ball through off-the-ball defense	Defensive positioning off the ball	Holding, tripping, hand checking	Overload principle Do other physical activities away from practice to improve and maintain your fitness level.	Responsibility Remember to bring and use proper equipment.
3	To win the ball by rebounding	Boxing out to rebound	Over-the-back fouls	Overload principle Overload the work your body does by increasing intensity.	Honesty Be honest even when others don't see what happens.
4	To create space in the attack by setting screens	Setting screens; Attacking the basket off a screen	Setting moving screens	Flexibility It's important to stretch and get limber before physical activity.	Respect Show opponents respect at the end of the game.
5	To defend space against screens	Defending against screens	Pushing	Flexibility Stretch your muscles every day and always before any activity—this will help reduce the chance of injury.	Responsibility Always pay attention at practice and don't distract others.
6	To attack the basket by setting screens	Setting and using screens	Setting moving screens	Muscular strength and endurance Work on improving each of the three areas of fitness.	Caring Encouraging each other with positive comments shows you care about your teammates.
7	To create space in the attack by using off-the-ball screens	Screening off the ball		Cardiorespiratory fitness You need to feel a little tired when exercising to improve cardio-respiratory fitness.	Respect Respect officials, and thank them at the end of games.
8	To use space in the attack by rolling off a screen toward the basket	Pick-and-roll		Cardiorespiratory fitness Use the "talk test" during aerobic exercise to determine how hard you're working.	Caring Encourage your teammates rather than getting angry or impatient with them.
9	To defend space by communicating and play good defense	Fighting through screens; communicating on defense		Healthy habits Drink water often; drink before you get thirsty.	Respect Respect your body by practicing healthy habits.
10	To win the ball and use space in the attack by making a quick transition from defense to offense	Rebound and outlet; transition from defense to offense		Healthy habits Choose healthy foods rather than junk foods.	Responsibility Each player has responsibility to play together and put the team first.
11	To win the ball by rebounding free throws	Rebounding free throws	Free-throw lane violations	Healthy habits Brush your teeth, get enough sleep, and	Caring Support your teammates.

