

Organizing Practice Sessions

This manual is designed to give ideas on what you can do in practice as a Little Jazz coach. Adapt to the needs of the kids on your team. Help them to learn and feel part of each practice and each game. Encourage parents to bring their children on time so you can make the most of your practice session. For practice ideas please refer to the drills and skills section of the manual.

Practice Session Worksheet

Date _____

Time

Equipment Needed

Warm-up (specific exercises)

Fundamentals (specific skill, teaching plan, drills to be used)

Scrimmage (specific skills, areas to emphasize)

Ball Handling Drills

King of the Court

(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This is a tremendous drill that teaches players to keep their head up & look around the court while dribbling.

Instructions

1. Have the players spread across the half of the court.
2. Players should try to knock the ball away from the other players.
3. If a player loses control of the basketball or another player touches their basketball, the player is then eliminated from the game.
4. When eliminated, the players go to the other half of the court and work on ball-handling drills.
5. As players are eliminated or certain amount of time passes, make the boundaries smaller.

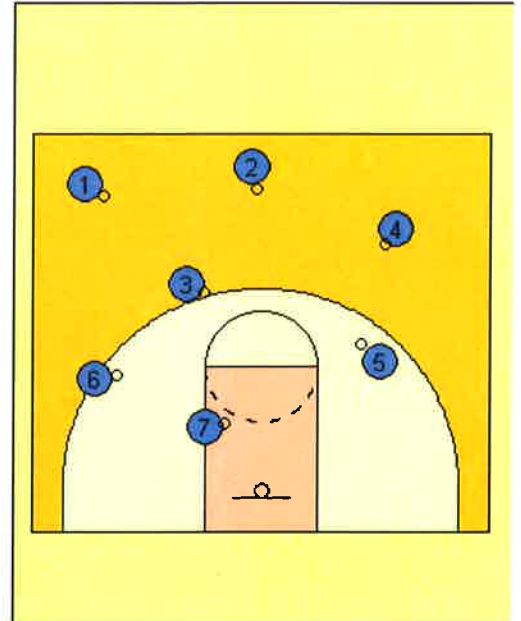
Point of Emphasis

- You want to make sure the players are using proper dribbling form. No carrying the ball, traveling, double-dribbling, etc. Make sure they are dribbling with their finger-tips (not with their palm), protecting the ball with the opposite arm, and scanning the court with their head up.

Motivation/Teaching Tips

Tip #1 - If a player, double dribbles, travels, etc., he is also eliminated. You want the players to practice the right way, so players do not develop or continue with bad habits.

Tip #2 - As a coach, you always want your ball-handlers to be "strong with the ball," because every little bump is not going to be called during a game. As a result, I allow some bumping during this drill. This will get players use to game-like situations where a foul may be missed or not called. By no means, do I mean that you should allow a player to tackle or even give a moderate shove to another player. This will cause a player to get injured and is not the right way to play the game. Make sure to let the players know that there is no fouling, and you can judge the amount of bumping or fouling you allow.



Dribble Relays

(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This drill is simple but it will help your players improve their ball-handling skills. It will teach them how to sprint up the court without losing control, and improve their endurance.

Instructions

1. Form at least 2 lines (If 12 or more players, form 3 lines).
2. Have the first two players in each line get a basketball.
3. On the whistle, each team starts.
4. The first player dribbles up and down the court as quickly as possible. (Dribble down with right hand, dribble back with left hand.)
5. When 1st player reaches the 2nd player in line. The 2nd player begins.
6. Continue this until the last person has finished.

Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- Keep your head up while dribbling.
- Keep your eyes looking forward.
- Keep your dribble at or below waist.
- Use your fingertips (do not use the palm of your hand to dribble).

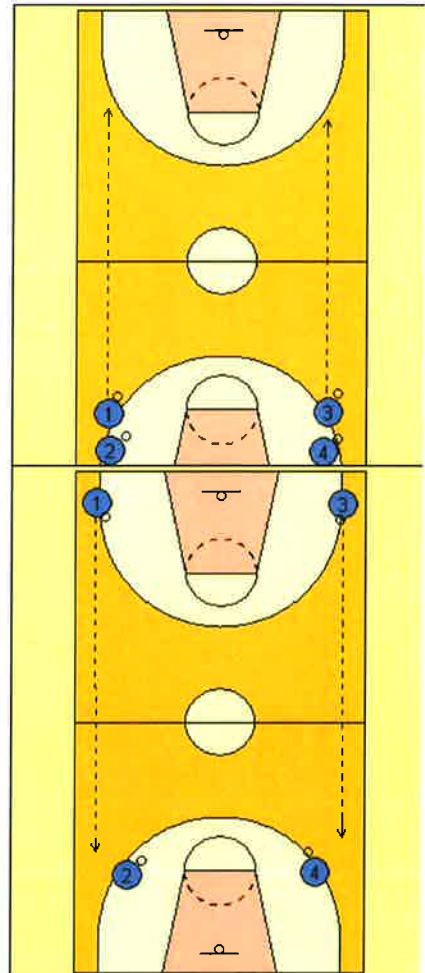
Motivation tips/ Teaching Tips

Tip #1 - If the players do not follow your points of emphasis, make them start over. **Don't let them settle for mediocrity.** Make them work to get it done right.

Tip #2 - If a player loses control of the ball, make sure he/she gets the ball and starts from the point where he/she lost control of the ball. Otherwise, players will fumble and kick the basketball down the court, and the drill will lose its purpose.

Tip #3 - To keep the players from looking at the ball, you could position yourself at one end of the court between the two lines and make sure the players maintain eye-contact with you.

Tip #4 - Let the players know that if they do this drill correctly (head up, etc.), **it will help them find open players, see the defense while dribbling, and decrease the number of turnovers.**



Dribble Drive

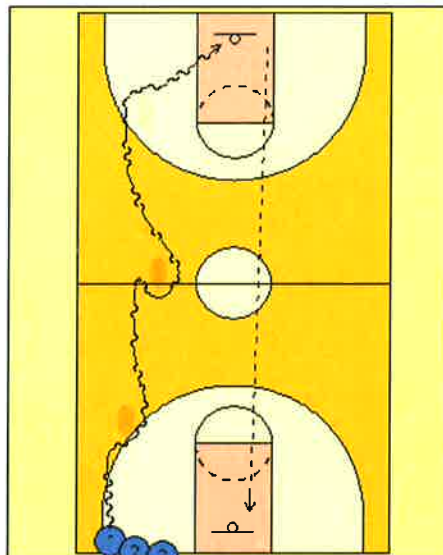
(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This drill is designed to teach players how to make moves to shake off defenders and keep their dribble under control.

Instructions

1. Players will all line up where the sideline and baseline meet. All of the players will have a basketball.
2. On the whistle, the first player in line will dribble up to a cone that is set up and make a move of their choice (behind the back, between the legs, crossover, spin move) and move on to the next cone.
3. As soon as the first player passes the first cone, the next player will begin. This process will continue until everyone is finished.
4. Two more cones will be set up at various points on the court, and different dribble moves of the player's choice will be executed at each cone.
5. When the player reaches the opposite baseline, they will sprint to the other end and make a lay-up and go to the back of the line.



Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- Mix up the dribble moves you do at each cone.
- Keep the ball under control!
- Shoot the lay-up with the correct hand (left side = left hand).
- Keep your head up and don't look at the ball.
- Keep your knees bent (don't stand upright) when making your move.

Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – Make your players perform this drill with their right hand and left hand, emphasizing the hand in which the player has the least confidence.

Tip #2 – Using a stationary defender instead of cones is always an option. If you want, have the defender challenge the dribbler a little bit, instructing them to take a swipe at the ball as the player goes by.

Tip #3 – Make sure your players are keeping their dribble below their waist at all times. If the players start dribbling the ball too high, it becomes much easier for a defender to steal the ball.

Shooting Drills

Form Shooting

(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This drill will improve shooting form and develop good shooting habits so once players get in a game, they will consistently use proper form without thinking about it. This simple drill is critical for youth player and can greatly improve shooting percentages for all types of players. All youth coaches should run this drill almost daily. First of all, it's important to understand that this drill requires you and all your players to pay very close attention to the details. It also requires a lot of repetitions. This is all about developing perfect shooting form, so once you get in a game you use the proper form without even thinking about it.

Instructions

Note: For the first time around, you'll need to demonstrate proper technique to all your players.

1. Each player needs to grab a basketball and find a basket. It works best to have three players (or less) at each basket; two players on each side of the basket and one in front.
2. Each player should stand about 2 feet from the basket. (Yes, it's only two feet. Do not stand farther back!)
3. For right handed shooters, your right foot should be centered with the basket and pointing directly towards the middle of the basket.
4. Your left foot should be positioned shoulder width apart in a comfortable position. Most players leave their left foot slightly behind the other foot. The left foot should be pointing in the relative area of the basket but probably should not be pointing directly at it. Most players feel the most comfortable with their left foot pointing just to the left of the basket.
5. Bend your knees, at a comfortable angle somewhere around 45 degrees.
6. Now if you're feet are aligned properly, the rest of your body should follow suit.
7. Hold the ball in your hand, palm facing up. Your non-shooting hand can dangle to the side.
8. Slowly bring the ball in and hold it as if you were shooting with one hand.
9. Your arm should form a 90 degree angle.
10. Your tricep should be parallel with the floor and directly above your right leg.
11. Your wrist should be bent with fingers spread out. The ball should be sitting on your finger pads, NOT your fingertips.
12. Your index finger should be in the center of the ball.
13. Pause. This is when you make sure your arm, feet, and everything is in the correct form.
14. Look at the front of the rim.
15. Proceed to shoot with one hand, leaving your off hand to the side. The player should use his legs on every shot. At the end of the shot, the player should be up on his toes. This is very important, because players generate most of their strength from their legs to shoot the ball to the basket.
16. Hold your follow through. Tell your players, "It's like reaching into a cookie jar."
17. Grab the ball and repeat the process.
18. Get the ball quickly, but don't hurry your shot! Take your time.
19. Each player should get a minimum of 20 repetitions, but 50 or 100 would be better.

Progression

As players master this skill, you can progress to other variations:

1. Use two hands instead of one. Just make sure the off hand is on the side of the ball and not used to propel the ball.
2. Do a jump shot. You should still stay two feet from the basket.
3. Flip the ball to yourself, pivot, and shoot a jump shot. Again, stay close to the basket and make sure you keep proper form, even though you are going slightly faster. Do not sacrifice form! For more advanced players, we commonly start with one-hand form shooting and progress all the way to pivots. We generally spend a few minutes on each progression and check all the players to make sure their form is not slipping.

Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- Hold your follow through.
- Take your time and always make sure your form is perfect.
- Bend your knees.
- Don't stand back too far! Stay just a couple feet from the basket.

Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – Tell your players, "Once you get good at it, don't think you can stop. There are NBA players that do form shooting everyday!"

Tip #2 – Assign a coach to each basket to make sure they are using proper form. Help them correct any problems. If they don't do it properly, this drill is a waste of time.

Tip #3 – Make sure your players do NOT dip one shoulder or lean too far forward. When shooting, you want your players to have an erect torso. I like to use the phrase "shoot tall."

Tip#4 – If you as a coach, don't know all the aspects of proper shooting form, consider picking up a good shooting video. We covered the basics above but there are more things to look for, like hand placement on the ball and so on.

Partner Shooting

(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This helps the players improve shooting off the pass. It simulates a shot being kicked out from the post.

Instructions

1. Player 2 passes the ball to Player 1.
2. Player 1 has the ball and shoots.
3. Player 1 runs after the rebound.
4. Player 2 positions them self somewhere on the court.
5. Player 1 passes the ball to Player 2.
6. Player 2 shoots, gets their rebound.
7. Player 1 repositions them self on the court to shoot.
8. Player 2 passes him the ball.
9. Player 1 shoots, gets their rebound, passes to Player 2.
10. Repeat this over and over.

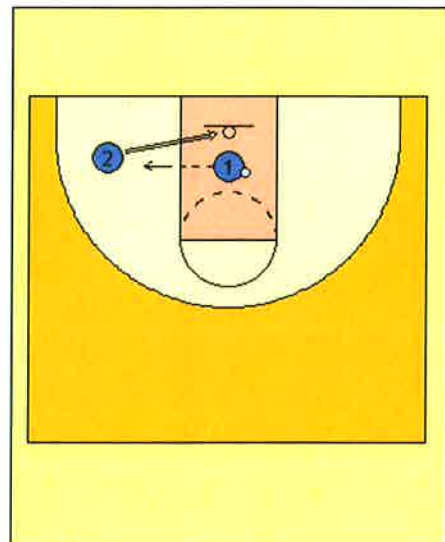
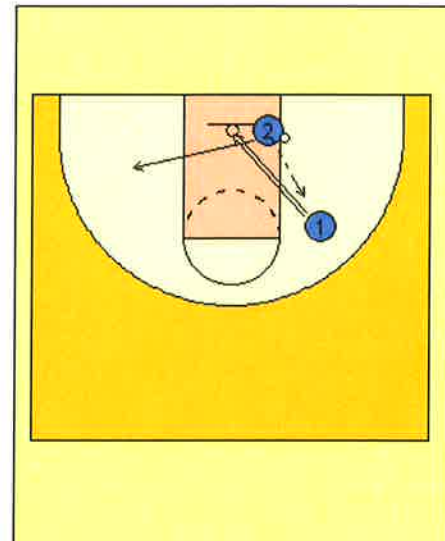
Points of Emphasis

- Make sure players are moving to different spots on the floor. Emphasize good fundamentals on the shot and the pass.

Motivation/Teaching Tips

Tip #1 - See which two players can make the most shots in 30 to 60 seconds.

Tip #2 - You could also add the variable after a Player 1 passes the ball to Player 2. Player 1 goes to block out Player 2 after they shoot (only for a brief second). This will help work on shooting and blocking out (rebounding).



Knockout

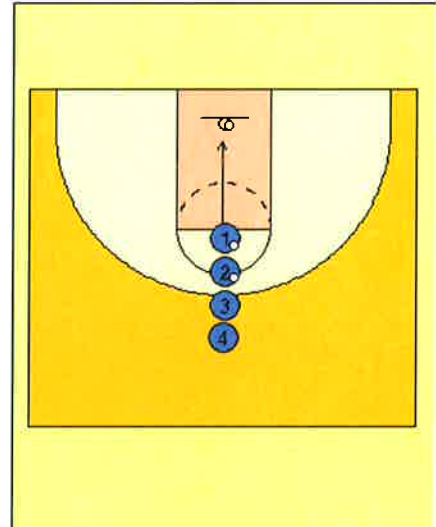
(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

Your players will love this drill! This is a great drill to break up the monotony of practice while also helping your players deal with pressure situations, namely, free throws late in the game. Hitting free throws down the stretch can be the difference between a win and a loss.

Instructions

1. Line your players up at the free throw line in single file. Give the first two players in the line a basketball.
2. On your whistle, the first player in line will shoot a free throw. If they make it, they will retrieve the ball and pass it to the next person in line without a basketball. If they miss, they must retrieve the ball and make a lay-up.
3. The next player in line is allowed to shoot a free throw as soon as the previous player's ball hits the rim or goes through the net. If the previous player misses, the next player is attempting to make a free throw (or rebound shot) before that player makes their rebound shot.
4. If the scenario in step 3 occurs, the previous player has to sit out for the rest of the drill.
5. This process continues until only one player remains.



Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

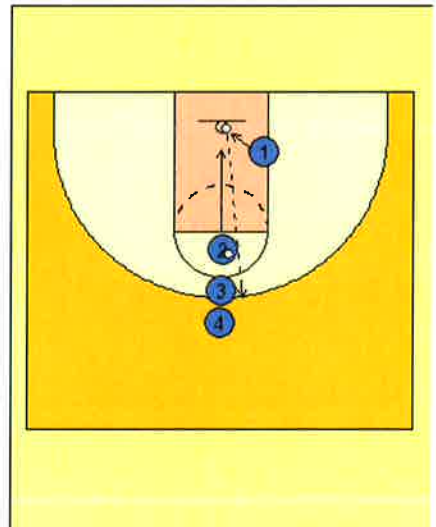
- Stay behind the free throw line before shooting.
- Wait until the ball hits the rim on the free throw before going to rebound it.
- Avoid rushing too much to prevent ruining your shooting mechanics.

Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – This drill is a great way to keep your players from getting bored. Use this drill as a break from some of the more necessary, tedious parts of practice.

Tip #2 – Set up a situation for them – for example, if a player makes this free throw, tell them there will be no running at the end of practice – just to put a little added pressure on the individuals.

Tip #3 – If you notice some of your players starting to cheat, (shooting in front of the free throw line, knocking another player's ball away) make them sit out until the next game.



Half Moon

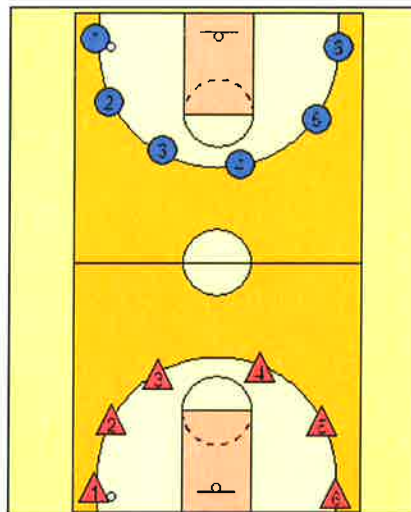
(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This is a fun drill that does it all -- it teaches players how to catch and shoot, follow their shot, slide out to a shooter, and make good passes.

Instructions

1. Divide your squad into two teams. Scatter your players around the three point line on each end of the court. (Youth – 10 to 15 feet away from hoop).
2. Give the ball to one player in the corner (on each end of the court).
3. On the whistle, the player on each side of the court that has the ball will take a shot. They will follow their shot and pass it to the next player.
4. The first shooter will then slide out and put token pressure on the new shooter.
5. This process will continue until one team reaches a set number of baskets and is declared the winner.



Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- Get the shot off quickly by getting prepared before you catch the ball (make sure your knees are bent and feet are square to the basket before catching the ball).
- Refrain from sacrificing good shooting form for taking a quick shot.
- Go straight up with the jump shot – don't start going after the rebound before the ball leaves their hand!
- Focus on jumping straight up and down.

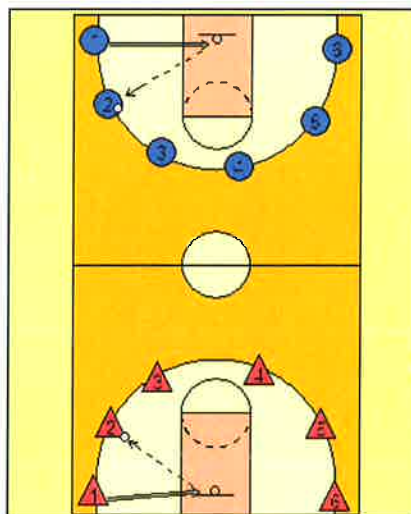
Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – It is very important to make sure your players are always using good shooting form and technique. Continually watch them and immediately fix any problems! Feet should be square to the basket, knees bent on the catch, follow through, and so on.

Tip #2 – Make sure you players jump straight up and land exactly from the point they jumped. It makes the player's shot difficult to block. If you find the players lunging forward or not landing where they first jumped, tell them they can not cross the 3-point line until the ball hits the rim.

Tip #3 – After the first game, have the players switch sides of the court.

Tip #4 – Make it a best of 3 or 5 series to add extra intensity to the drill. Make it more competitive by rewarding the winner.



Rebounding Drills

1-on-1 Rebounding

(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This drill works great to improve players' footwork for blocking out and also teaches players to maintain contact while blocking out.

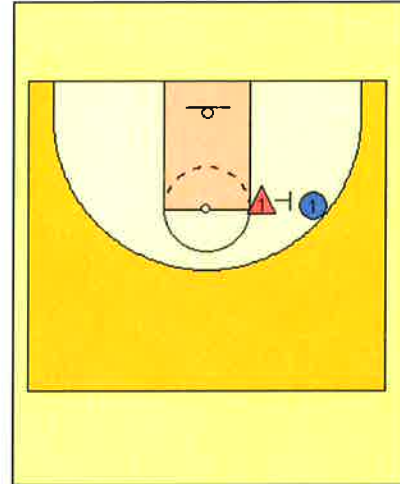
Instructions

1. Player 1 is facing Player 2 - About 2 to 3 feet of separation is appropriate.
2. A Ball is placed about 5 to 10 feet behind player 1.
3. On either the whistle or when you say go. Player 1 will try to keep player 2 from getting the ball for 3 seconds.

Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- When blocking out, make sure player 1 takes his left foot and steps across his body to put it on the outside of player 2's foot. (Outside of Player 2's left foot)
- Then player 1, does a drop-step with his right foot to maintain to create full contact while blocking out. (Player 1's right foot should be outside of Player 2's right foot)
- Make sure the player stays low and wide. Player 1's feet should be wider apart than Player 2. He should stick both his elbows straight out (BUT DO NOT SWING ELBOWS). The arms should stay in a stationary position.
- Player 1 needs to slide his feet to maintain contact with Player 2.



Motivation/ Teaching Tips

Tip #1 - If the defensive player does not keep the player away from the ball for 3 seconds, have the defensive player either do push-ups, sit-ups, or run.

Tip #2 - While doing this drill make sure that offensive player DOES NOT DIVE!!!!!! In my first year of coaching, I had a player lose his two front teeth diving after the ball. Players also landed on each other's heads, legs, arms, etc. That's how broken arms, fingers, and legs occur.

The Rebound Game

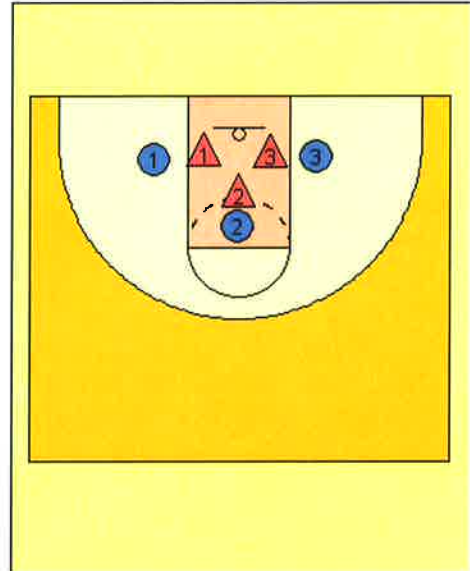
(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This drill is designed to teach your players the proper way of boxing out while on the defensive end.

Instructions

1. Divide your squad into groups of three and have two of those groups come to the paint area. One group is the defense, the other, offense.
2. Two coaches or players not in the drill will stand at either elbow. One of the coaches/players will have a ball.
3. On the whistle, the defensive players will block the offensive players out. The coaches/players will pass the ball between each other until eventually one takes a shot.
4. If the defense secures the rebound, they earn a point. Then the defense rotates out, the offense rotates to defense, and new group comes in on offense.
5. If the offense gets the rebound, the teams will not rotate, the defense needs to secure a rebound before they can sit out.



Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- Get in good blocking out position.
- Be aggressive – go to the floor to get the ball if they have to.

Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – Make sure the elbow coaches/players are moving the ball amongst each other so players have to adjust to the ball being in a different location. This will help make the point of keeping their eyes on their player and the ball.

Tip #2 – If you have 12 players, you could have two groups at a hoop, and two groups at another hoop. You could still make the defense secure a rebound before they rotate to offense. You could also add a scoring system. The offense gets one point for a put-back. Defense gets one point for securing a rebound.

Tip #3 – Before you shoot, make sure your players are in proper defensive position (up the line, seeing man and ball, etc)! This will better simulate game situations and develop good habits!

Defense & Agility Drills

Defensive Slide

(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This drill will improve defensive form and quickness.

Instructions

1. Have the desired number of players line up on opposite sides of the lane, with the same number of players in each lane, if possible.
2. When the whistle blows, the first player in each line will sprint to the free throw line and make a 180 degree turn, thus facing the baseline. He/she will then do foot fires (tap his/her feet in place) as fast as possible until the whistle is blown again.
3. When the whistle is blown again, the first group will slide to the sideline closest to them. The second group will repeat what the first group did in step 2.
4. The whistle is blown again, and the first group will slide to the mid-court line. The second group will repeat what group 1 did in step 3, and group 3 will do what group 2 did in step 3.
5. Repeat this process until all groups have arrived at the mid-court line, and then start all over again if deemed necessary.

Points of Emphasis

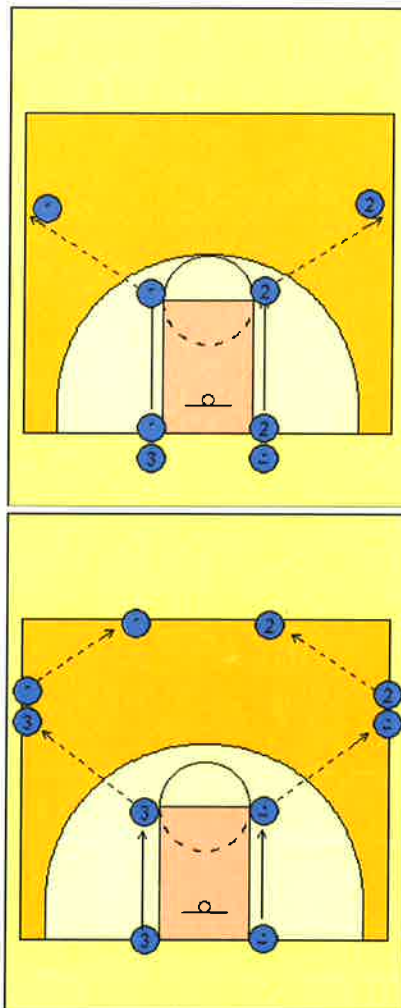
Continually tell your players to...

- Keep their head up when sliding.
- Keep their arms out when sliding.
- Avoid clicking their feet together when sliding.
- Work on defensive form first, and once technique is correct, then worry about speed.

Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – This is not a competition, so let your kids know that form is much more important than speed initially.

Tip #2 – Let your players know that defense is just as important as scoring baskets, and a good defender is just as valuable to the team as a good scorer.



One on One

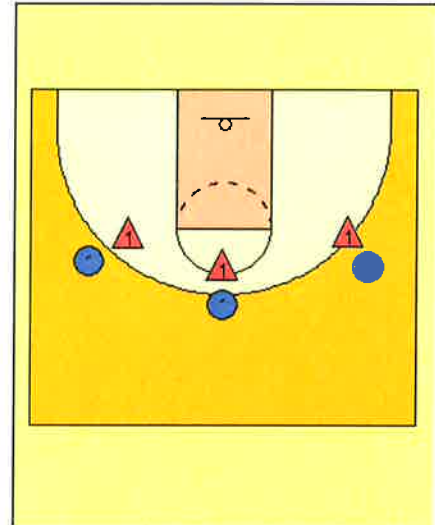
(Age Level - Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This drill is beneficial for both the offensive & defensive players. It is designed to teach offensive players how to elude defenders with the dribble, while teaching defenders how to guard good ball handlers. Both of these are vital to a team's success.

Instructions

1. Match up an offensive and defensive player at the top of the key or the wing. It is safe to have up to three groups of two on one half of the court, as is shown in the diagram.
2. Each offensive player will be holding a ball, and on the whistle will try to shake off the defender with one or more dribble moves. The defender will try to maintain good defensive position and prevent the offensive player from getting by.
3. Rotate positions every few repetitions.



Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- Keep their dribble low & protect the ball so the defender can't get a hand in and knock the ball away.
- Watch the offensive player's midsection while on defense – watching the ball will only get the defensive player in trouble.
- Keep their hands out while on defense. This makes the defender appear to be much wider than (s)he really is.

Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – You can give your offensive players the option to go for a lay up if the player eludes the defensive player. If you choose to do this, you may not want to have three groups doing the drill on one half of the court.

Tip #2 – You can turn this drill into a competition, with points being rewarded for a basket and for defensive stops.

Offensive Footwork Drills

Jump Stop Drill

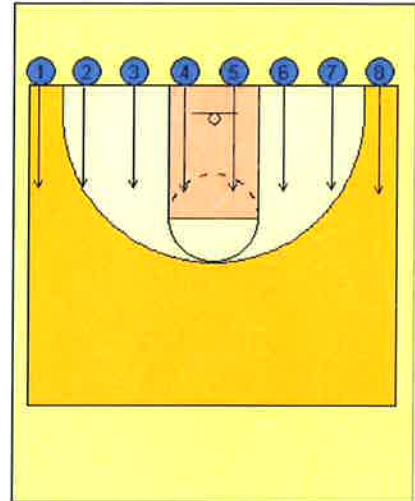
(Age Level – Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This is a very important drill that all coaches should use. It will improve your players balance, reduce travels, improve pivoting skills to create space, and improve confidence.

Instructions

1. Line your players up on the baseline. If you have more than 10 players or a small court, you'll need to divide them into two groups because they won't have enough space.
2. Have each player spread out with about 5 feet between them, so they have enough room for pivoting.
3. When you blow the whistle, all players should start running at 3/4 speed.
4. At various intervals, blow the whistle and yell out their pivot instructions. Your choices are: front pivot left foot, front pivot right foot, back pivot left foot, back pivot right foot. When the whistle blows, the sequence for the player consists of: jump stop (both feet should hit the floor at the same time), pause for a second, do a full 180 degree pivot, pause for a second, do a full pivot back to starting position, and stay in triple threat position until whistle blows again.
5. Watch every player to make sure they did the jump stop and pivot properly. If anyone traveled or if they're goofing off, make them start over again, back at the baseline.
6. If everyone did it correctly, blow the whistle again. All players should start running.
7. At various intervals, blow the whistle and yell out their pivot instructions. Your choices are: front pivot left foot, front pivot right foot, back pivot left foot, back pivot right foot.
8. When all players reach the end of the court, start over again. You can blow the whistle anywhere between 1 and 5 times during their trip down the court.
9. You should run this drill so players run down the court at least 5 times.



Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- Don't travel!
- Stay low when pivoting. Keep your knees bent and butt down, in a good triple threat stance.
- Don't get out of your triple threat stance until you hear the whistle. You always want to stay low, so you can take off quicker.

Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – The motivation aspect of this drill is simple. If they do it wrong, they all have to go back to baseline and start over again.

Tip #2 – It's important to always mix things up and keep your players guessing. You should mix up the number of times and locations that you blow the whistle. You might want to let them run all the way down without blowing the whistle once. And next time blow the whistle 5 times.

Tip #3 – Vary the speed that your players run. Start out with half speed, then progress all the way to full speed. Again, mix things up.

Tip #4 – Add a ball. Generally, you should use a ball for this drill and have them dribble while they are running. However, you might want to start without a ball, especially when first teaching younger players how to run this drill. Or if you don't happen to have enough basketball balls, they will still get benefit without it.

Tip #5 – Make sure ALL players pivot properly. Their butt should be down, knees bent, with feet shoulder width or wider. The pivot should be a full 180 degree turn, and then back again. Some players will have trouble with this at first or just do partial pivots. But keep on them to do it right. It's an important skill to master!

Tip #6 – You might want to use this as a combo warm up drill every day. For me, it worked great as the warm up at the beginning of every practice. This saved time because they worked on important skills and warmed up at the same time.

Tip #7 – You really should run this almost everyday, especially if you have players at the high school level or younger. At the minimum, run the drill every other day.

Partner Dribble, Pass, Pivot, Pass Drill

(Age Level – Elementary 1 +)

Drill Purpose

This is one of the best youth basketball fundamental drills around. It's great, because the player can get many repetitions in a short amount of time and they work on many of the most important basketball fundamentals at once: dribbling, passing, pivoting, ball swings, jump-stops, and the triple threat. If done correctly, it can also improve their explosiveness tremendously.

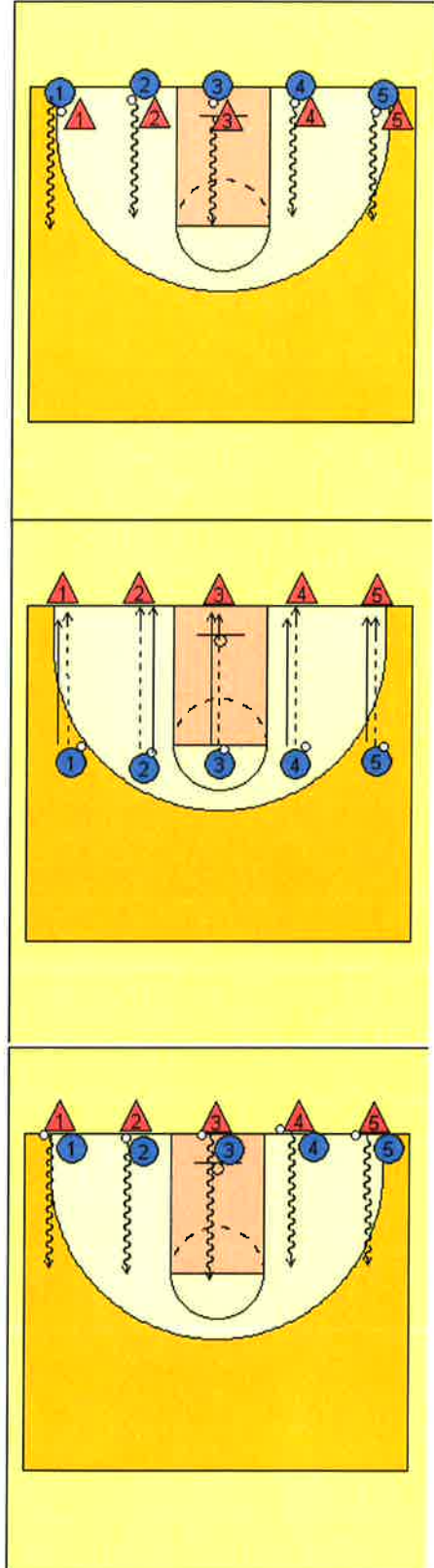
Instructions

1. Player starts out with ball on baseline with partner facing him in a good defensive stance.
2. Player takes two to three explosive dribbles with either hand.
3. Player comes to a Jump-stop. (Over exaggerate Jump-stop)
4. Pivots 180 degrees. As he pivots, he should swing the ball into a triple threat position while leading with his elbow (this is referred to as a ball swing). This will keep the defensive players from smothering the offensive player.
5. Next, he should throw a crisp pass to his partner.
6. Next, the player should sprint and follow his pass and get in a good defensive stance as if he were guarding his partner.
7. Next player repeats the process.

Points of Emphasis

Continually tell your players to...

- The players first step should be long and explosive past the defender. (Focus on long, explosive strides for every step)
- If he's dribbling with his right-hand, his first stride should be with his left foot. (Left hand - right foot)
- Player should explode by defender shoulder-to-shoulder. This makes it much more difficult for the defender to recover on defense.
- Make sure player takes two to three hard dribbles fast and under control.
- The jump stop should be exaggerated.
- Make sure keeps good balance while performing this drill and pivots into a good triple-threat position before passing.
- Most importantly, everything should be quick and crisp. The player should appear as if he is on the attack at all times.



Motivation / Teaching Tips

Tip #1 – If the player loses balance, travels, or loses the ball - make them start over.

Tip #2 – Have them do 5 repetitions with each hand.

Tip #3 – Instead of trying to have them perform all the pivots during this drill. You dedicate one practice to front pivots and another day to reverse pivots. If you have enough time, you could perform both front and reverse pivots.

Tip #4 – If they travel or lose their balance, make sure they start over and do it until they complete the drill correctly.

Tip #5 – It's best to perform this drill with a partner and have them spread across the baseline with their partner. This enables them to do many repetitions rather than waiting 30 seconds in between repetitions if you were only going to have two lines.