

# Man-to-Man Defense in 4 weeks



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# **INTRODUCTION:**

Hey there,

Welcome to the 'Man-to-Man Defense in 4 Weeks' guide.

Within the next 136 pages, I'm going to teach you how you can implement a fundamentally sound man-to-man defense on your basketball team.

This can be used for teams of any age. From youth teams, to high school teams, to college teams, all the way up to professional teams. The drills within this guide work at any level.

## **Here's a brief overview of how your team will progressively learn the man-to-man defense:**

During the first couple of practices, the focus will be on teaching your players how to play on-ball defense correctly and stay in front of their opponent.

This will be a large focus throughout all practices which is why we utilize many one-on-one drills.

Players will also practice closing out on their opponent. With their weight back to absorb the drive and a high hand to discourage their opponent from shooting.

Your practices will then progress to players learning the correct way to deny the basketball being passed to their opponent when they're one-pass away from the basketball (one of the core man-to-man defense rules).

This will first be learned using a series of 2-on-2 drills but will continue to be a large focus for the rest of the program.

We'll then progress from focusing on denying the basketball (one-pass away) to being in correct help defense position (two-passes away) and being able to help and rotate.

Being in correct help position and rotating defensively will be a large focus of all 6 shell drill progressions, but I will share some 3-on-3 drills that will help your players with this, too.

Finally, your team will focus on how to defend the post and how to defend on-ball screens.

You and your team will learn the different options you have to customise the defense to take advantage of the players on your team.

While there is a lot of overlap, this describes the general direction of how your team will learn the man-to-man defense in four weeks.

Here are a few more important points before continuing:

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## **Defending the Post:**

We recommend 1/2 fronting the ball from the low side when the basketball is below the free-throw line and 3/4 fronting from the high side when the basketball is above the free-throw line.

Here are the reasons why:

### **1/2 fronting the ball from the low side when the basketball is below the free-throw line:**

We half front from the low side because the man-to-man defense forces the dribblers on the perimeter towards the baseline.

Being on the low side puts your players in position to help without having to evade the offensive post player.

### **3/4 front from the high side when the basketball is above the free-throw line:**

The reason we do this is because you should never want the basketball entered into the post from above the free-throw line.

It gives the offense too many options and we want to keep the basketball out of the middle.

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## **Defending the Ball-Screen:**

How you defend an on-ball screen is up to the coach's personal preference.

Here are the options coaches have to defend the screen:

**Switch the Screen** - Switching is the most effective way to guard an on-ball screen in youth basketball. This is because the offense usually isn't experienced or skilled enough to take advantage of the switch.

**Hedging the Screen** - 'Hedging' simply means the screener's defender steps out to cut off the path of the dribbler and force them to take an extra dribbler or two to get around the screen. This gives the dribbler's defender extra time to establish position in front.

**Under the Screen** - Using this technique involves the dribbler's defender going under the screen. This will leave the dribbler open behind the three-point line temporarily, but many youth basketball coaches are okay with doing that.

**Trap the Ball-Handler** - As the opposition goes to set an on-ball screen, both defenders jump the ball-handler and attempt to force a turnover.

The choice is yours!

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## How to Use This Book:

Following this introduction, you'll see 12 complete one-hour practice plans broken up into 4 weeks (3 per week).

After the practice plans, you will find a full breakdown of every drill that's used in the practice plans.

Finally, the eBook finishes with a complete guide to the Man-to-Man defense.

***This 21-page guide includes the strengths, weaknesses, rules (very important), setup, progressions, variations, etc.***

I recommend you spend some time going through this section thoroughly before using the plans and drills to teach your team the defense.

When you first introduce your team to the man-to-man defense, print off this section of the eBook for each player to allow them to review it in their own time.

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If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas don't hesitate to send me an email at [coachmac@basketballforcoaches.com](mailto:coachmac@basketballforcoaches.com) and I'll do the best I possibly can to help you out :)

- Coach Mac



# Week 1 - Practice Plan #1

Time	Drill	Coaching Points
8-Minutes	<b>Defensive Mirrors</b> - Two players line up on parallel lines and one player attempts to mimic the other's defensive slides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players must be in a low defensive stance throughout the drill.</li> <li>• Encourage the lead players to use fakes to get their opponent off-balance.</li> <li>• Make sure to rotate through the pairs quickly. Players must be ready to step in.</li> </ul>
10-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 Continuous</b> - A continuous game of 1-on-1. Two players will compete against each other and then the offensive player will become the defensive player and closeout on the opposite wing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When players close out, they should have a hand up and their weight back.</li> <li>• Inform your players they shouldn't allow middle penetration. They will learn more about this during shell drill.</li> </ul>
12-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 Full Court</b> - Players get into pairs and compete against each other full-court. At the end, the offense attempts to score against the defender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The on-ball defenders should attempt to stay one arm's length away.</li> <li>• Tell the defender to watch the chest or stomach of the offensive player so that they don't get faked out.</li> <li>• Defense starts with the feet. Beat the offensive player to the spot and force them to turn.</li> </ul>
5-Minutes	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
15-Minutes	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 1</b> - Players start to learn the basics of a good man-to-man defense by learning the correct positions they should be in depending on where the basketball is on the court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A player must always be either on the ball, in denial position, or in help position.</li> <li>• Talk to your players about not allowing middle penetration. Adjust the feet.</li> <li>• Go through this progression slowly at first until all players understand where they need to be.</li> </ul>







# Week 1 - Practice Plan #2

Time	Drill	Coaching Points
8-Minutes	<b>4-Point Closeouts</b> - Placing 4 cones around the arc, players all start under the rim and practice using correct close-out technique on each cone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players should have a hand up and their weight back when closing out.</li> <li>• Encourage players to shout 'ball, ball, ball' on each closeout.</li> <li>• Hold the closeout for 2-3 seconds.</li> </ul>
12-Minutes	<b>Simple Closeouts</b> - A defender starts with the ball on the low block. They pass out to an offensive player and close out with good technique before playing 1-on-1 to a score or stop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing focus on close-outs, we now add a live offensive player.</li> <li>• Have the offensive player hold for 2-3 seconds to allow the defender to practice closing out before competing.</li> <li>• Choppy steps and weight back to absorb the drive.</li> </ul>
10-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 V-Cut</b> - Two players will start matched up on the perimeter. The offensive player must v-cut and pop out to receive the basketball. The two then play 1-on-1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More on-ball defense for the players to practice containing their player.</li> <li>• Eyes focused on the opponent's chest or stomach area to prevent fakes.</li> <li>• Give the offense a maximum of 3 dribbles before they must shoot.</li> </ul>
5-Minutes	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
15-Minutes	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 1</b> - Players start to learn the basics of a good man-to-man defense by learning the correct positions they should be in depending on where the basketball is on the court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A player must always be either on the ball, in denial position, or in help position.</li> <li>• Talk to your players about not allowing middle penetration. Adjust the feet.</li> <li>• Again put emphasis on correct feet positioning that influences the offense to the sideline/baseline and away from the middle of the court.</li> </ul>



Time	Drill	Coaching Points
10-Minutes	<b>No Middle Game</b> - Two teams compete in the half-court with the goal not to allow the opposition to penetrate the middle of the court. This is one of the staple rules of a good man-to-man defense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="954 281 1401 380">• Not allowing middle starts with the feet. Don't allow any lane towards the middle.</li> <li data-bbox="954 394 1401 493">• Don't worry if players do get beaten baseline for a score. We'll introduce them to help defense soon.</li> <li data-bbox="954 508 1401 640">• Make sure you openly praise players who are doing a great job not allowing middle penetration. Show that it's important!</li> </ul>

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# Week 1 - Practice Plan #3

Time	Drill	Coaching Points
10-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 Continuous</b> - A continuous game of 1-on-1. Two players will compete against each other and then the offensive player will become the defensive player and closeout on the opposite wing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to emphasise the rule of not allowing middle. Players should be closing out on the high foot to force baseline.</li> <li>• Ensure players are quickly transitioning from offense to defense. There shouldn't be any stop between them.</li> <li>• One arm's length away from the opponent.</li> </ul>
8-Minutes	<b>Basket Cut Defense Basics</b> - This drill allows the coach to show the players the basics of defending the common basket cut.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back to the ball, hand in passing lane, vision over lead shoulder.</li> <li>• Players must be jumping towards the ball on the flight of the pass.</li> <li>• Use both sides of the court.</li> </ul>
12-Minutes	<b>3-on-3 Jump</b> - 3 offensive players will pass around the perimeter while 3 defenders practice jumping to the ball, defending basket cuts, and being in the correct position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continues practice on jumping to the ball and defending cuts with an offense.</li> <li>• Remind players how they should be defending when in denial position.</li> <li>• Defenders aren't attempting to steal the basketball during this drill.</li> </ul>
5-Minutes	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
15-Minutes	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 2</b> - Players will now add basket cuts to the shell drill. This means the defense must be on their toes and constantly adjusting their defensive position on the court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players are now to incorporate the basket cut defense and jump to the ball they learned during this practice.</li> <li>• Ensure all off-ball defenders are in the right position and are constantly adjusting where they are.</li> <li>• All players should be able to see the basketball and their player at all times.</li> </ul>



Time	Drill	Coaching Points
10-Minutes	<b>10 Passes</b> - Regular 5-on-5 with the rule that the offensive team must make 10 consecutive passes before attempting to attack the rim and score.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players must be communicating with each other and ready to help at all times.</li> <li>• Moving into a live game, expect players to 'forget' they must force away from the middle. Remind them!</li> <li>• Feel free to increase the passing number from 10 to a higher number.</li> </ul>

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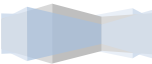
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## Week 2 - Practice Plan #1

Time	Drill	Coaching Points
10-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 Recovery</b> - A fun 1-on-1 drill that will have defenders working on recovering from behind to challenge a layup without fouling. Also great for working on layups!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not fouling the opponent is the most important part of this drill.</li> <li>• Ensure players are using correct closeout technique on the ball.</li> <li>• The offense must catch and attack immediately.</li> </ul>
8-Minutes	<b>Denial Defense Basics</b> - Offensive and defensive player on the wing. The coach runs through the correct position to be in when playing denial defense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to 'basket cut defense basics', but run back over the correct way to deny the basketball. Repetition is good!</li> <li>• Back to the basketball, hand in the passing lane, vision over lead shoulder.</li> <li>• Feet and chest should be pointed towards the opposition player, not the sideline.</li> </ul>
12-Minutes	<b>Triple Catches</b> - Two players compete 1-on-1 on the wing. The defense practices denying the pass for three catches before competing one-on-one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defense must keep a hand in the passing lane and attempt to get a deflection or steal.</li> <li>• Keep chest towards the opponent to prevent them from quickly going backdoor.</li> <li>• Low stance for the entire drill.</li> </ul>
5-Minutes	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
15-Minutes	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 2</b> - Players will now add basket cuts to the shell drill. This means the defense must be on their toes and constantly adjusting their defensive position on the court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players are now to incorporate the basket cut defense and jump to the ball they learned during this practice.</li> <li>• Ensure all off-ball defenders are in the right position and are constantly adjusting where they are.</li> <li>• All players should be able to see the basketball and their player at all times.</li> </ul>



Time	Drill	Coaching Points
10-Minutes	<b>3-on-3 Outlet</b> - A full-court 3-on-3 game. A player will outlet to a receiver and fill their spot while the rest of the players transition down the court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasise the importance of transition defense to being a great team.</li> <li>• The defenders should turn and sprint to get back before picking up their opponents.</li> <li>• Encourage communication since match-ups can change on every possession.</li> </ul>

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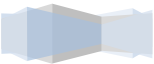
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## Week 2 - Practice Plan #2

Time	Drill	Coaching Points
8-Minutes	<b>Split Help</b> - This drill will allow the coach to teach players how to step across from help and challenge a shot without fouling the offensive player.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach players how to 'wall up'. Jump up in the air vertically and keep hands pointed in the air. Forcing the offense to miss is just as good as blocking a shot!</li> <li>• Run the drill on both the right and left hand side of the floor.</li> <li>• The offense shouldn't be barreling into the defender. No injuries.</li> </ul>
10-Minutes	<b>Deny and Help</b> - Four offensive players around the three-point line. Two defenders rotate between being in help position and denying the basketball.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's crucial for players to move quickly between the two positions.</li> <li>• Emphasise the importance of loud communication. Defenders should always be saying deny or help.</li> <li>• Give the offense 5 seconds to score once the basketball goes live.</li> </ul>
12-Minutes	<b>Stunt and Recover</b> - 3 pairs of players around the arc. The defenders practice 'stunting' towards the basketball and recovering to their player on the pass.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another rule of the man-to-man defense is not helping one-pass away. This drill teaches players to stunt without giving full help.</li> <li>• When stunting towards the ball, players must keep their body facing their own opponent. Take a quick step backwards into the lane.</li> <li>• Remind players they're only giving up the middle to teach this defensive concept.</li> </ul>
5-Minutes	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
15-Minutes	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 3</b> - In progression 3, players learn how to defend the pin-down screen on the weak side of the floor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender guarding the screener must open up to allow the wing defender to fight through.</li> <li>• Players must not become so focused on the screen that they forget to establish help position.</li> </ul>



Time	Drill	Coaching Points
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Players must communicate with each other throughout the drill.</li></ul>
<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>West Virginia Transition</b> - Teams transition from 5-on-4 to 5-on-5 by placing one of the defenders at full-court. This forces the offensive team to sprint back quickly in transition or else they'll give up a layup.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Another important drill emphasizing the importance of transition offense</li><li>• The offensive team must know which players to send to rebound and which players will transition back.</li><li>• As they're outnumbered, the defense must scramble and communicate to contest the shot.</li></ul>

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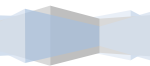
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## Week 2 - Practice Plan #3

<b>8-Minutes</b>	<b>Spitfire</b> - A fun warm-up drill played in groups of 5 or 7. Players set up in a square or triangle and play keepings off from two or three defenders. The offense has one extra player.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defense must stay in a low athletic stance so they're able to react quickly.</li> <li>• Encourage the defense to read their opponent's eyes to see where they'll pass the basketball.</li> <li>• One defender must always be on the ball.</li> </ul>
<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>Triple Catches</b> - Two players compete 1-on-1 on the wing. The defense practices denying the pass for three catches before competing one-on-one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defense must keep a hand in the passing lane and attempt to get a deflection or steal.</li> <li>• Keep chest towards the opponent to prevent them from quickly going backdoor.</li> <li>• Low stance for the entire drill.</li> </ul>
<b>12-Minutes</b>	<b>2-on-2 Help Rotation</b> - This drill will teach players how to rotate correctly from help to trap the offensive player dribbling baseline. The defender will then have to sprint to closeout on their player as the drill repeats this baseline drive and trap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When players are closing out, they must close out on the high side to force a baseline drive.</li> <li>• Trap with high hands to force a lob pass or get a deflection.</li> <li>• Choose whether you want the drill to lead to 2-on-2 or simply focus on the defensive movements.</li> </ul>
<b>5-Minutes</b>	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 3</b> - In progression 3, players learn how to defend the pin-down screen on the weak side of the floor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender guarding the screener must open up to allow the wing defender to fight through.</li> <li>• Players must not become so focused on the screen that they forget to establish help position.</li> <li>• Players must communicate with each other throughout the drill.</li> </ul>



<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>2-on-2 Frenzy</b> - A two-on-two full-court drill. The defense outlets to two new players as the offensive team transitions back on defense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Another high-intensity drill emphasising the importance of getting back in transition quickly.</li> <li>The defenders must do their best to get in front as establish position.</li> <li>If the defense is training, they must challenge the layup without fouling.</li> </ul>

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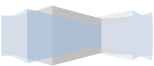
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# Week 3 - Practice Plan #1

<b>8-Minutes</b>	<b>Star Closeouts</b> - A fun warm-up drill that practices closing out correctly and allows players to compete.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand in the air and weight back on the closeout.</li> <li>• Wing players must be closing out with their feet pointed towards the sideline to force the dribbler towards the baseline.</li> <li>• Give the offense 10 - 12 seconds to score.</li> </ul>
<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>1-on-1 Full Court</b> - Players get into pairs and compete against each other full-court. At the end, the offense attempts to score against the defender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The on-ball defenders should attempt to stay one arm's length away.</li> <li>• Tell the defender to watch the chest or stomach of the offensive player so that they don't get faked out.</li> <li>• Defense starts with the feet. Beat the offensive player to the spot and force them to turn.</li> </ul>
<b>12-Minutes</b>	<b>2-on-2 Spread</b> - Two pairs of players attempt to get open on opposite halves of the court and then the drill transitions into a game of two-on-two.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender whose partner doesn't catch the basketball must quickly move into help position.</li> <li>• Always force towards the baseline.</li> <li>• If the defense traps and forces the skip pass to an open shooter they've done well. When there are more defenders someone would have rotated across.</li> </ul>
<b>5-Minutes</b>	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 4</b> - In progression 4 of the shell drill, the team practices defending the baseline drive by the opposition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're now going to practice defending the baseline drive with 4 defenders which means players will be learning rotations.</li> <li>• Focus a lot of attention on players getting to 'high help' and 'low help' whenever the defense traps.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slowly walk through the rotations at the start and make sure all players practice all positions.</li> </ul>
<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>Transition Advantage</b> - A competitive full-court drill that puts the defense at a disadvantage while a player is recovering into the play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress the importance of communication. Defenders must talk to match up.</li> <li>• Always have a defender channel the basketball to a side. Someone must rotate over.</li> <li>• The recovering defender must sprint to get back into the play.</li> </ul>

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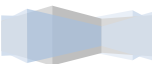
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## Week 3 - Practice Plan #2

Time	Drill	Coaching Points:
8-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 Recovery</b> - A fun 1-on-1 drill that will have defenders working on recovering from behind to challenge a layup without fouling. Also great for working on layups!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not fouling the opponent is the most important part of this drill.</li> <li>• Ensure players are using correct closeout technique on the ball.</li> <li>• The offense must catch and attack immediately.</li> </ul>
10-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 Plug</b> - This 2-on-2 drill teaches players how to 'plug' and recover to their player. This leads to a game of 1-on-1 from the wing after the closeout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to 'stunting' that players learned but from a help position instead of a denial position.</li> <li>• The player must 'plug' with their backside and keep their chest to their opponent so they don't have to turn to closeout.</li> <li>• On the closeout, the defender must have their weight back and a hand up.</li> </ul>
12-Minutes	<b>3-on-3 Help Rotation</b> - The helper will trap the baseline drive as the off-ball defender drops to help position. This defender then must close out to either offensive player on the skip pass.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players have learned how to help, and now we're focusing on rotating to cover the helper.</li> <li>• It's imperative that the off-ball defender drops to a help position where they can see the other two offensive players.</li> <li>• The defender who traps must immediately recover to the spare offensive player after the skip pass.</li> </ul>
5-Minutes	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
15-Minutes	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 4</b> - In progression 4 of the shell drill, the team practices defending the baseline drive by the opposition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're now going to practice defending the baseline drive with 4 defenders which means players will be learning rotations.</li> <li>• Focus a lot of attention on players getting to 'high help' and 'low help' whenever the defense traps.</li> <li>• Slowly walk through the rotations at the start and make sure all players practice all positions.</li> </ul>



Time	Drill	Coaching Points:
10-Minutes	<b>Hide and Seek</b> - A fun full-court drill that will force the defense to work on communication and working together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The offensive team has 5 seconds to set up on the baseline however they want.</li><li>• The defenders should be sprinting back to at least the three-point line immediately before recovering to their opponents. Cover the basket first.</li><li>• Remind players that they don't necessarily have to pick up a specific player. Talk to each other and work it out!</li></ul>

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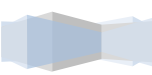
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## Week 3 - Practice Plan #3

<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>Star Closeouts</b> - A fun warm-up drill that practices closing out correctly and allows players to compete.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand in the air and weight back on the closeout.</li> <li>• Wing players must be closing out with their feet pointed towards the sideline to force the dribbler towards the baseline.</li> <li>• Give the offense 10 - 12 seconds to score.</li> </ul>
<b>8-Minutes</b>	<b>1-on-1 Elbow</b> - One player starts on each elbow. The coach calls out the name of one player and they pop out to the wing to catch and attack as the other players closes out as the defender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender should be cutting straight across to force the offensive player baseline.</li> <li>• Encourage the defender to close down the space and play tough defense.</li> <li>• Only allow the offense a maximum of 3 - 4 dribbles.</li> </ul>
<b>12-Minutes</b>	<b>3-on-3 Help Rotation</b> - The helper will trap the baseline drive as the off-ball defender drops to help position. This defender then must close out to either offensive player on the skip pass.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players have learned how to help, and now we're focusing on rotating to cover the helper.</li> <li>• It's imperative that the off-ball defender drops to a help position where they can see the other two offensive players.</li> <li>• The defender who traps must immediately recover to the spare offensive player after the skip pass.</li> </ul>
<b>5-Minutes</b>	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 5</b> - In progression 5, the defender in the slot allows the offensive player to drive past them on the sideline side. The defense practices helping from the middle of the floor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defense must not help from 1-pass away on the ball-side wing or corner. Help must come from the middle.</li> <li>• The off-ball defender must immediately drop into the gap in help so they can closeout on the skip pass.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender who traps must close out on the other defender.</li> </ul>
<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>Defensive Boost</b> - Four defensive players compete against three offensive players trapping at every possible opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fun drill that improves defensive communication.</li> <li>• The defense must use angles well in order to trap the basketball with their teammates.</li> <li>• The same defender doesn't need to trap every time. Switch it up when appropriate but make sure to communicate.</li> </ul>

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## Week 4 - Practice Plan #1

<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>2-on-2 Ball Screen</b> - Players compete two-on-two and practice the team's on-ball defense rules in one half of the court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start by walking your team through how you want to defend the on-ball screen. Whether that's to hedge, switch, go under, etc.</li> <li>• Understand that since there's no help defense, the offense should score the majority of the time.</li> <li>• Make sure all your players are practicing both positions.</li> </ul>
<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>3-on-3 Ball Screen</b> - Three pairs of players practice defending the ball-screen while there's a defender in help position to make the drill more realistic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender on the weak-side must immediately fall back to help position.</li> <li>• Compete until a score or the defense has the basketball. Pursue the rebounds.</li> <li>• If the skip pass is made, the help defender must close out while forcing the offensive player baseline.</li> </ul>
<b>5-Minutes</b>	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 5</b> - In progression 5, the defender in the slot allows the offensive player to drive past them on the sideline side. The defense practices helping from the middle of the floor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defense must not help from 1-pass away on the ball-side wing or corner. Help must come from the middle.</li> <li>• The off-ball defender must immediately drop into the gap in help so they can closeout on the skip pass.</li> <li>• The defender who traps must close out on the other defender.</li> </ul>
<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>On-Ball Bonus</b> - Two teams play a live game of 5-on-5 but will receive bonus points if a score comes from an on-ball screen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This drill allows players to compete in a live 5-on-5 game while still emphasizing the importance of on-ball defense.</li> <li>• There should always be a player calling out split-line defensive help.</li> <li>• Make sure your players are all on the same page with your on-ball defense rules.</li> </ul>

## Week 4 - Practice Plan #2

Time	Drill	Coaching Points
8-Minutes	<b>Spitfire</b> - A fun warm-up drill played in groups of 5 or 7. Players set up in a square or triangle and play keepings off from two or three defenders. The offense has one extra player.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defense must stay in a low athletic stance so they're able to react quickly.</li> <li>• Encourage the defense to read their opponent's eyes to see where they'll pass the basketball.</li> <li>• One defender must always be on the ball.</li> </ul>
10-Minutes	<b>1-on-1 Post Feed</b> - Two passers attempt to feed the basketball into a post player being guarded 1-on-1. When the pass is made, the two players in the post compete to a stop or score.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both players should be using their lower body to attempt to establish position.</li> <li>• The defender should be attempting to 3/4 front on the high side.</li> <li>• If the pass is made over top, the defender should have time to swing around and establish defensive position.</li> </ul>
12-Minutes	<b>6-on-2 Post Defense</b> - Four offensive players pass the basketball around the perimeter as two post defenders practice their post defense positioning against two offensive players in the post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3/4 front when the basketball is above the free-throw line. 1/2 front when the basketball is below the free-throw line.</li> <li>• Both offense and defense should be physical with each other to establish post position.</li> <li>• Once the basketball has been passed to the post, the two players compete one-on-one.</li> </ul>
5-Minutes	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
15-Minutes	<b>5-on-5 Shell Drill - Progression 6</b> - In the final progression of the shell drill, players practice their post defense positioning and also learn how to trap the offensive player in the post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3/4 front when the basketball is above the free-throw line. 1/2 front when the basketball is below the free-throw line.</li> <li>• Always trap with the player in help from the high side.</li> <li>• Players trapping the basketball must have high hands to force a lob pass or get a deflection</li> </ul>

Time	Drill	Coaching Points
10-Minutes	<b>Ball Drop</b> - Two teams play a regular game of 5-on-5. When the coach calls out or blows their whistle, the offensive team must drop the ball and sprint back in defensive transition while the other team recovers and attacks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fun drill for emphasizing the importance of transition defense.</li> <li>• Do your best to make both teams drop the ball the same amount of times.</li> <li>• The offense loses two points if they intentionally roll the ball away from the defense.</li> </ul>

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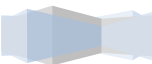
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## Week 4 - Practice Plan #3

<b>8-Minutes</b>	<b>1-on-1 Elbow</b> - One player starts on each elbow. The coach calls out the name of one player and they pop out to the wing to catch and attack as the other players closes out as the defender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender should be cutting straight across to force the offensive player baseline.</li> <li>• Encourage the defender to close down the space and play tough defense.</li> <li>• Only allow the offense a maximum of 3 - 4 dribbles.</li> </ul>
<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>3-on-3 Ball Screen</b> - Three pairs of players practice defending the ball-screen while there's a defender in help position to make the drill more realistic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The defender on the weak-side must immediately fall back to help position.</li> <li>• Compete until a score or the defense has the basketball. Pursue the rebounds.</li> <li>• If the skip pass is made, the help defender must close out while forcing the offensive player baseline.</li> </ul>
<b>12-Minutes</b>	<b>6-on-2 Post Defense</b> - Four offensive players pass the basketball around the perimeter as two post defenders practice their post defense positioning against two offensive players in the post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3/4 front when the basketball is above the free-throw line. 1/2 front when the basketball is below the free-throw line.</li> <li>• Both offense and defense should be physical with each other to establish post position.</li> <li>• Once the basketball has been passed to the post, the two players compete one-on-one.</li> </ul>
<b>5-Minutes</b>	<b>Drink Break</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players must make 2 free-throws.</li> </ul>
<b>15-Minutes</b>	<b>5-on-5 Shell Drill - Progression 6</b> - In the final progression of the shell drill, players practice their post defense positioning and also learn how to trap the offensive player in the post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3/4 front when the basketball is above the free-throw line. 1/2 front when the basketball is below the free-throw line.</li> <li>• Always trap with the player in help from the high side.</li> <li>• Players trapping the basketball must have high hands to force a lob pass or get a deflection</li> </ul>



<b>10-Minutes</b>	<b>5-on-5 Scrimmage</b> - Split your team into two groups of players and play a live game of 5-on-5 using all of the defensive rules they've learned in the past 4 weeks!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Players must be communicating with each other at a high level.</li><li>• Keep stressing the importance of being in the correct position and being willing to rotate to help a teammate.</li><li>• Always force sideline and baseline!</li></ul>

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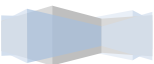
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# 1-on-1 Continuous

## How the Drill Works:

Players form a line at the top of the key and fill the wing spots. An offensive and defensive player start by playing 1-on-1 from the wing. After the score or defense takes possession, the offensive player immediately closes out on the opposite wing and they play 1-on-1.

## Purpose:

A fast-paced and competitive drill with focus on attacking the defender off a close out and being able to guard the opposition in isolation. 1-on-1 play is fantastic for development.

## Setup:

- One offensive player on each wing.
- One defender guarding one of the wing player.
- The rest of the players form a line at the top of the key each with a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. On the coach's call, the offensive player being defended starts the drill by v-cutting to get open for the pass from the top and then competing 1-on-1 until a score or change of possession.
2. As soon as they finish, the top line passes to the opposite wing and then fills the free wing.
3. The offensive player from the previous 1-on-1 immediately closes out and they play compete until a score or change of possession.
4. This process of the offensive player immediately transitioning to defending the opposite wing continues for the amount of time given to the drill.



## Variations:



**Wing Starts With Basketball** - Instead of receiving the pass from the top and being able to attack the defense as they're closing out, both wing players start the drill with a basketball as well. This means the offense must wait while the defender closes out until the defender touches their hip before they can attack the rim.

**V-Cuts to Start** - In this variation the top doesn't pass immediately to the wing. The offensive player on the wing must wait for the new defender to sprint to them and then the one-on-one starts with the offensive player getting open using a v-cut on the wing.

**Loser to Defense** - The player that loses the one-on-one battle closes out on the next defender. This means that if the offense scores, the defender will stay on defense. If the defense gets a stop, then the offensive player will transition to defense like usual.

**Limited Dribbling** – Limit the dribbles the offensive player on the wing is allowed to use before taking their shot. Usually it's best to allow 3 dribbles for youth players and 2 dribbles for advanced players.

## Coaching Points:

- Each game of 1-on-1 can't cross over to the opposite side of the court. This will prevent players from dribbling all over the court and ensures they're attacking in limited space.
- Pay attention to the footwork of both players. Specifically the closeout for the defender and the footwork off the catch for the offensive player since many will rush and travel.
- The offensive player should be looking to attack immediately on the catch. This requires them to read the defender before they've received the basketball.
- For the drill to work effectively, the pass from the top to wing must be made at the right time. Too early and it gives the offense too much time. Too late and the offensive player won't be able to attack on the catch.



# 1-on-1 Elbow

## How the Drill Works:

One player starts on each high post. The passer at the top of the key calls out the name of one of these two players and they quickly pop out behind the three-point line to receive a pass. The other player closes out as the offensive player immediately attacks 1-on-1.

## Purpose:

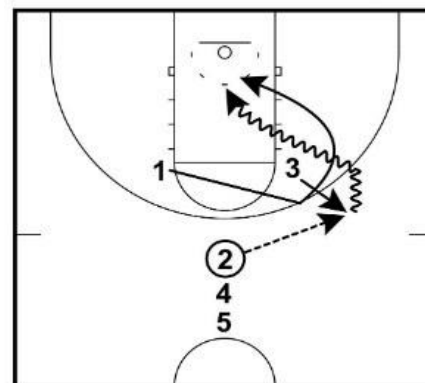
This is a great one-on-one drill for developing both offensive and defensive skills. This variation has the benefit of putting the defender in a position to close-out without allowing middle penetration.

## Setup:

- One player starts on each high post.
- The other players form a line at the top of the key.
- The first player in line has a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The passer starts the drill by calling out the name of one of the players on the high post.
2. The player called out sprints out to the wing as offense in order to receive a pass while the other player becomes the defender.
3. The offensive player receives the pass and attempts to attack the basket immediately and score one-on-one against the defender who must close out and attempt to get a stop.
4. After either a score or a defensive stop, the players rotate to the end of the line, and the next two players in line take their positions on the high posts to start their round.
5. The drill continues in this manner for a set period of time (7-10 minutes, for example, depending on the size of the group).





## Variations:

**Limit Offensive Dribbles** – Allow the offensive player only 2-3 dribbles to get a quality shot attempt.

**Start from the Low Block** - Instead of starting from the high posts, have the two players start from the low blocks.

**Coach as Passer** - Instead of the players calling out their teammates and passing the basketball, assign a coach or parent to be the passer instead.

## Coaching Points:

- No middle. The defender must closeout at the same height as the offensive player so that they force them towards the sideline and baseline.
- Encourage the defenders to get up close and play tough, aggressive defense. Praise players for working hard on defense and pushing themselves.
- Pay attention to players closing out if the offense doesn't immediately attack the baseline. The defender's weight must be back and have a hard up to defend the shot.
- Teach your players to watch the chest or torso of their opponent. It's very hard for an offensive player to fake with that part of their body.



# 1-on-1 Full Court

## How the Drill Works:

Two players compete 1-on-1 full-court using only one third side of the court. When the two players reach the opposite three-point line, the offensive player attacks and attempts to score at the basket.

## Purpose:

This high-intensity drill is a great for working on containing an opposition 1-on-1. The defense will practice reading their opponent and keeping position in front while the offensive player will practice their dribbling moves and beating their opponent down the court.

## Setup:

- All players find a partner.
- Each pair has one basketball.
- Line up cones along 1/3 of the court or simply explain this to the players and allow them to image that there's a line they can't cross.
- Half of the pairs start on one baseline and the other half start on the opposite baseline. These two groups should be in opposite corners.

## Instructions:

1. The first pair of each line sets up with the offensive player a step in from the baseline and the defender one arm's length in front of them.
2. These two pairs start playing one-on-one in the full-court using their respective sides. The ball-handler attempts to beat the defender while the defender does their best to stay in front.
3. If the offensive player does get by the defender, they retreat and allow the defense to establish position back in front.
4. If the defender steals the basketball or it's tipped away, they allow the offense to recover the ball and set back up.
5. When the first pair cross half-court, the next pair in line sets up and starts.



6. Once they get to the opposite 3-point line, the offensive player attacks the basket and attempts to score.
7. After a score or a stop, the pair will swap roles and then join the end of the line on the same end of the floor.
8. The drill continues like this for a set period of time.

## Variations:

**Limit Offensive Dribbles** – Allow the offensive player 2-3 dribbles only to get a quality shot attempt after reaching the 3-point line.

**No Shooting** - Instead of attacking the rim after reaching the three-point line, the pair simply continue the dribbling and defending until they reach the baseline.

**Competitive** – To add competition, give the defender one point for every steal or stop. And give one point to the offensive player each time they succeed in beating their defender or score a basket. The players keep the score and the player with the most points in the end wins the game.

## Coaching Points:

- The drill must be run at full speed by both the offensive and defensive players.
- Encourage the defender to get up close and play hard defense. It doesn't matter if they get beat a couple of times while they're working on their full-court defense.
- Remind players that containing their player starts with their feet. Get in front and establish good positioning instead of reaching in and committing silly fouls.
- Defenders should be roughly one arm's length away from the offensive player at all times.
- Encourage the offensive players to attack the rim instead of settling for three-point shots or long-range two-pointers. There's no help defense!



# 1-on-1 Plug

## How the Drill Works:

The drill starts two-on-two with a defender and an offensive player on each wing. One of the offensive players with a basketball drives towards the middle where a help defender must 'plug' the drive. The dribbler will kick the basketball out to the wing and the help defender must closeout and then get a stop against their opponent who can drive or shoot.

## Purpose:

This drill works on the game-like scenario of the help defender needing to plug the lane to help a teammate and then recover to their player on the kick out. The drill ends with 1-on-1 which is always terrific for development.

## Setup:

- Two offensive players on each wing.
- The offensive player of one pair has a basketball.
- The defender who will be closing out and playing defense starts in help position.

## Instructions:

1. The player with the basketball starts the drill by driving to the middle past the 'dummy' defender who is guarding them. The dummy defender calls out 'Middle! Middle!'
2. The help defender must step across and cut off the dribbler's driving lane and force them to pass out to the offensive player on the wing.
3. When this pass happens, the help defender must immediately close out on the basketball and then attempt to get a defensive stop.
4. The offensive player on the wing must attack on the catch and can either shoot the basketball or drive into the lane for the score.
5. After each turn, everyone rotates one position.



## Variations:

**Limit Offensive Dribbles** - After the pass out the wing, only allow the offensive player 2 - 3 dribbles to get a quality shot attempt. Any more than that are wasted dribbles.

**Competitive** - To add competition to the drill, give the defender one point for every defensive stop. When using this rule, players are rewarded with a defensive stop by getting to stay on defense for another possession.

## Coaching Points:

- When plugging the driving lane, the help defender must not turn their body to face the dribbler as then it will be too slow to turn and recover. Instead, they should retreat backwards into the driving lane so that when the kick out pass is made they can close out in a straight line.
- Ensure correct closeout technique. Players should have a hand up, be in a low stance, and have their weight back to absorb the drive.
- The offensive player should be deciding whether they'll drive or shoot on the catch of the basketball so that they can make a quick decision and keep the advantage over the defender.
- Use both ends of the courts if possible to maximise the amount of reps!



# 1-on-1 Post Feed

## How the Drill Works:

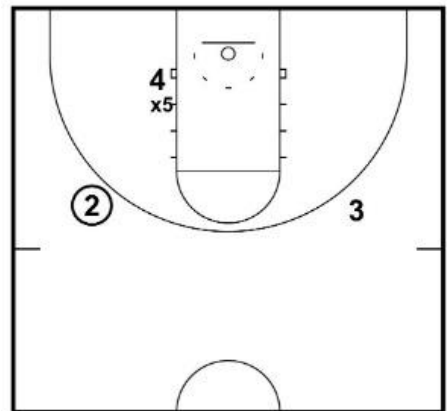
Two passers on the wings attempt to make a pass to an offensive player in the low post with a defender guarding them. The offensive player can move from post to post and the passers can skip pass to each other. Once the basketball is passed inside, the two players play one-on-one.

## Purpose:

This is a great drill for working on multiple areas. The defender will practice denying the entry pass into the post and then play defense, and the offensive player must work hard to open up passing angles and then score.

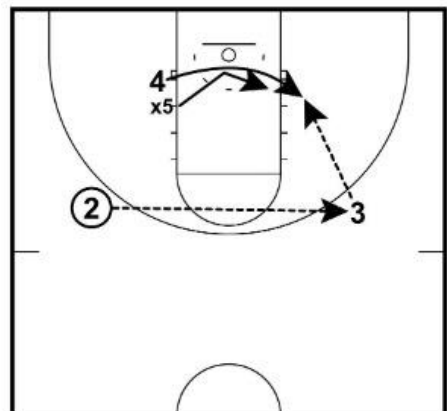
## Setup:

- One passer on each wing.
- One of the passers has a basketball.
- One offensive player in the low post.
- One defensive player in the low post.



## Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the defender in denial position. When the wing player slaps the basketball, the drill begins.
2. Now the offensive player in the post must work hard to get open while moving between both low blocks.
3. The defensive player continues to deny the pass whenever possible but never full-fronts as they will lead to an easy lob pass over the top.
4. The two wing players can pass the basketball to each other to help the offensive player but cannot move.
5. When the basketball is eventually passed inside, the two play one-on-one until a score.



## Variations:

**2-on-2** – Start another pair on the opposite low block and then compete two-on-two. The offensive players can use cross screens and can slide up to the elbow too. Must stay in the paint area.

## Coaching Points:

- The defensive player must make sure to not over-deny. They must be able to slide back behind the offensive player if a pass is made inside.
- The defensive player must deny from the high side. Not the baseline.
- When the pass is skipped, the defender should quickly slide to the middle and then see both their player and the basketball. When the offensive player slides across, make contact and then establish position.



# 1-on-1 Recovery

## How the Drill Works:

A line of players on each wing and the coach starts at the top of the key with a basketball. A defender sprints out from the baseline and closes out on the coach who will then pass to a player either wing. On the pass, the defender must turn and sprint challenge the shot of the offensive player. The shooter then becomes the next defender.

## Purpose:

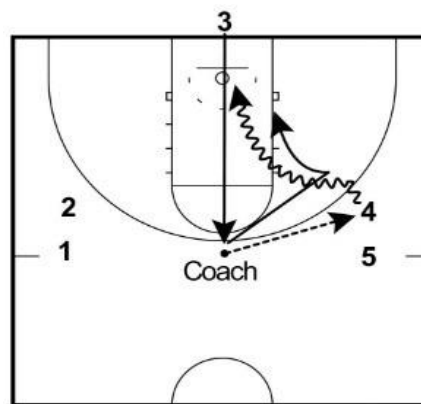
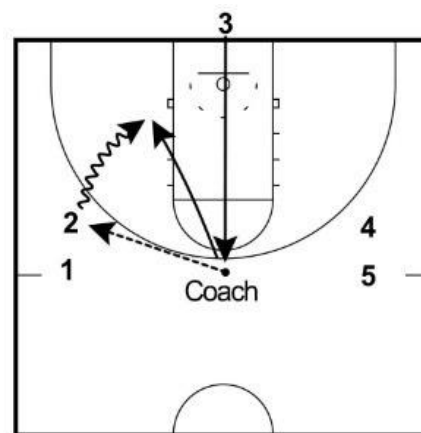
This drill forces the defense to react quickly and use smart angles to contain the offensive player and challenge their shot. It's also a great drill for the offense to learn how to read the defender and finish at the rim.

## Setup:

- One player starts on the baseline (defender).
- A line of players on each wing.
- A coach at the top of the key with a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The first defender starts the drill by sprinting out and closing out on the coach. The player must be close enough to touch the ball and down in defensive stance.
2. The coach will then make a pass to either wing. The player on the wing must catch the basketball with two feet behind the three-point line.
3. As soon as this pass is made the defender can turn and sprint to close out or cut off the dribbling path of the offensive player.
4. On the catch, the offensive player has a maximum of three dribbles and five seconds to get off a clean shot.
5. After the score or stop, the defensive player passes the basketball to the coach and joins the end of one of the lines.





6. The player who was on offense must immediately touch the baseline and then sprint to close out on the coach who has the basketball.
7. This process then repeats for the desired amount of time.

## Variations:

**2-on-1** - Instead of one-on-one using only one offensive wing player, both players on the wing are involved in every possession. This will make it much harder for the defense as they must look to prevent an open layup.

**Defense Stays** - If the defender doesn't get a stop against the offensive player, they must stay on defense for as many possessions as it takes to get one.

**Competition** - Each defensive stop equals one point and defenders are rewarded with a stop by staying on defense for another possession. The player with the most points at the end of the drill is the winner.

**Free-Throw Line Closeout** - To make the drill easier for the defense, put the coach on the free-throw line instead of the three-point line. This makes the distance to recover and get in front of the offensive player shorter.

## Coaching Points:

- Since the defense will often be recovering to challenge the shot, it's important that the defense doesn't foul during this drill.
- Tell the defense that they don't have time to sprint directly at the basketball to close out. They must pick a spot in front of the offensive player and cut them off.
- We don't want the offense holding up the basketball in this drill. They must be looking to catch and attack the rim immediately.
- Encourage your players to have their weight back and hands up on the close out.



# V-Cut to 1-on-1

## How the Drill Works:

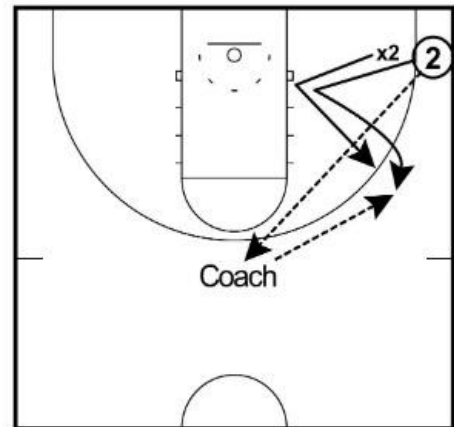
Two players start the drill two spots away from the coach. One player on offense and one player on defense. The offensive player makes a skip pass to the coach and then must v-cut to the spot between them and the coach to receive the pass before attacking the rim 1-on-1.

## Purpose:

This drill simulates rotating around the perimeter when running the 5-out motion before catching and attacking the rim. Great drill for introducing the importance of the v-cut to get open and also for working on one-on-one skills.

## Setup:

- One offensive and one defensive player start at one of the five spots around the perimeter - always two spots away from the coach. For example, the coach starts the drill at the top of the key and the players start in the corner.
- The offensive player starts the drill with a basketball.
- The other players are waiting their turn outside the court.



## Instructions:

1. The offensive player starts the drill by making a skip pass to the coach.
2. After passing, the offensive player makes a v-cut to the next spot to get open against the defender and receives a pass from the coach.
3. The defender attempts to deny or deflect this pass if possible. They're competing.
4. After receiving the pass, the offensive player attacks the basket and attempts to score 1-on-1 against the defender using no more than 3 dribbles to finish.



5. After the shot, both players pursue the rebound. If the offensive players grabs it, they're allowed to attempt another shot inside. If the defender grabs the rebound, the drill is finished.
6. The players then rotate positions. A new offensive players comes in, the previous offensive player rotates to defense, and the previous defensive player joins the end of the line.

## Variations:

**Partner Competition** - Instead of switching partners each time, have all players find one partner of similar size and ability to compete against each time they run the drill. Keep score and player first player to 5 scores.

**Player Passing** - If possible, I recommend using a player in the coach's position. This allows a player to practice making on-time and on-target passes to the wing.

**Three Receive** - Have the offensive player make three successful v-cuts and catches before facing up to the rim and attacking. Only use this variation if you don't have any other players waiting for their turn.

## Coaching Points:

- Use a change of speed when v-cutting. Walk the defender to the paint before exploding out to the perimeter to receive the ball.
- Read the defense early and attack on the catch.
- The offensive player should attempt to get their foot higher than the defenders. This will seal off the defender and make it difficult for them to deny the ball.
- If the defender overplays and lunges for a deflection, the offensive player should back-cut to the rim and receive the pass for a layup.
- Run the drill on both sides of the court if possible to increase the amount of reps and playing time for the players.



## 2 on 2 Ball-Screen

### How the Drill Works:

The drill starts with 2 players on offense and 2 on defense. The offensive team will attempt to score out of the pick and roll while the defense will attempt to get a stop without switching on defense.

### Purpose:

This drill works the basics of both pick and roll offense and pick and roll defense.

### Setup:

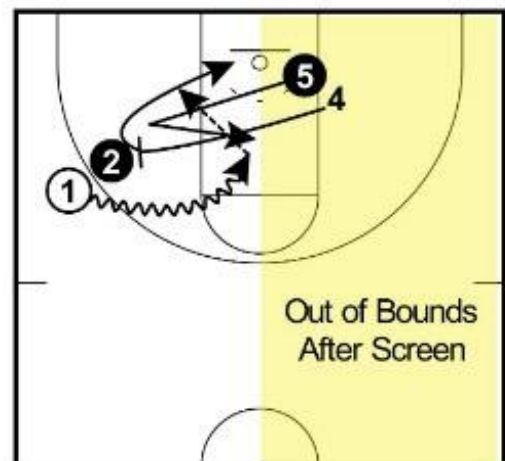
- An offensive and defensive player on the wing.
- An offensive and defensive player on the low block.
- The rest of the players wait on the baseline.
- The offensive player on the wing starts with the basketball.

### Rules:

1. The offensive team must stay within the quarter of the court. Crossing the split line is out of bounds.
2. The offensive team must start each possession with a pick and roll.
3. The defensive team is not allowed to switch.

### Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the offensive player on the low post sprinting out to set a screen.
2. The offensive player with the basketball must use the screen and attempt to create a scoring opportunity.
3. The defense can defend the pick and roll any way they want, but they must not switch.



4. If the offensive team scores, they stay in and the defenders rotate. If the defensive team gets a stop, they become offense and new defenders must come in.
5. Continue this drill for a set amount of time.

## Variations:

**Change the Screen Location** - You can also have the players set the screen at the top of the key or on the opposite wing.

## Coaching Points:

- You must talk with your players before starting about how to set a screen. Make contact, correct angle, etc.
- Make sure all your players practice being both the ball-handler and screener. We need to create positionless players!
- Coach your players on making the right read off the pick and roll. Eg. If the defender goes under, shoot. If they go over, attack.



# 2-on-2 Frenzy

## How the Drill Works:

The drill begins by playing 2 on 2. On either a score or a stop, the offensive team must transition quickly to defense while the defense outlet passes to two new offensive players on the closest free-throw line extended. They then attack two on two and this routine repeats.

## Purpose:

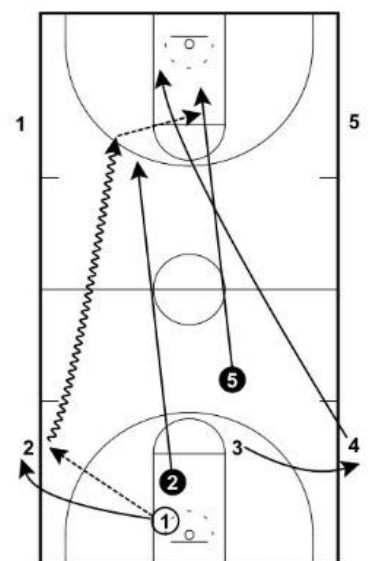
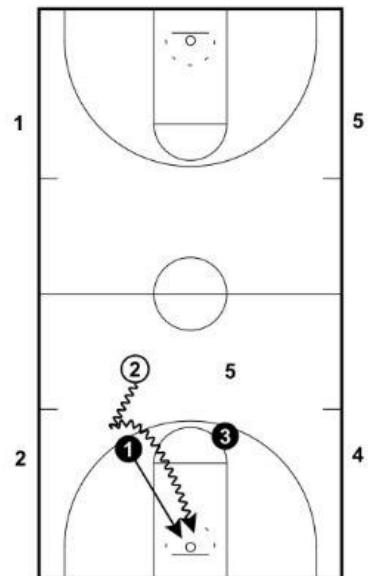
A great transition drill to work on player conditioning as well as offensive and defensive transition. The offense and defense will be faced with a new situation each time.

## Setup:

- This drill is performed best with 8 or more players, but you must have at least 6.
- 2 players begin on defense, 2 players begin on offense, and then you must have at least 1 player on each free-throw line extended.

## Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the 2 offensive players attempting to score against the two defenders in the half court.
2. On either a stop or a score, the defenders outlet the basketball to one of the two players on the closest free-throw line extended while the two offensive players quickly transition to defense.
3. On the catch, the two new offensive players sprint down the court and attempt to score quickly in transition.
4. They then become the new defenders as the sequence continues.
5. There is no scoring system and the stops when the coach decides.



## Variations:

**Fewer Players** - If you only have 6 or 7 players (less and the drill won't work), instead of 4 groups starting on each extended free throw line, have 2 groups start at the mid-court line.

## Coaching Points:

- Remind your players that it's a transition drill, we don't want players slowing the basketball down too much.
- Depending on the number of players you have, this drill is great for conditioning. Use it for short spurts during training.



# 2-on-2 Help Rotation

## How the Drill Works:

Two defenders will start on the low block with two offensive players on the wing. A pass is made to the wing and the ball-side defender must closeout while the other defender moves to split-line defense. The player with the basketball will drive baseline, the defender will help, and a skip pass will be made to the opposite wing and the defender must close out. This continues until 2-on-2.

## Purpose:

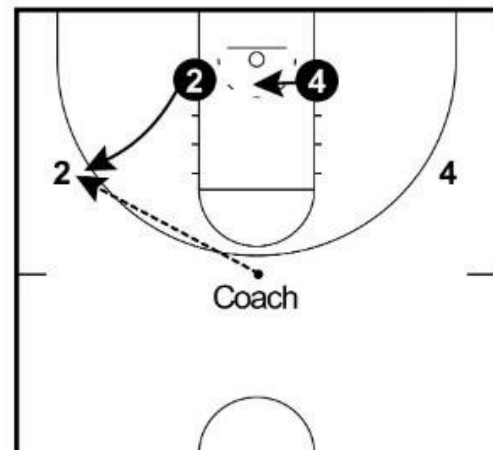
This drill allows defenders to practice rotating to help and then sprinting to close out on their opponent. It will also work on closing out on the correct angle to force a baseline drive.

## Setup:

- An offensive player on each wing.
- A defender on each low block.
- The coach at the top of the key with a basketball.

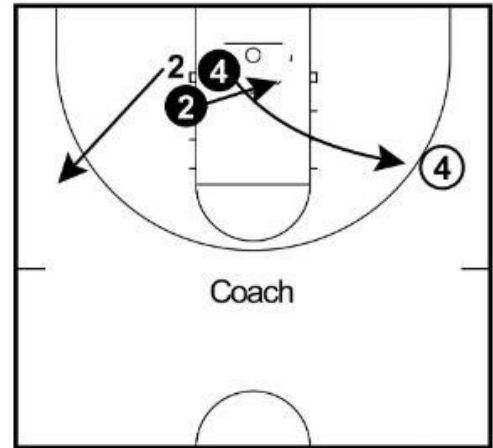
## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the coach making a pass to either wing.
2. The defender on ball side will sprint out to their opponent and closeout making sure to get a foot above their opponent's which ensures that the offensive player is being forced baseline.
3. The weak-side defender moves to play split-line defense.
4. The offensive player will drive baseline which forces the help defender to rotate. The help defender should step across to stop the drive just before the dribbler gets to the key.





5. As the trap is set, the dribbler throws a skip pass across court to the other offensive player.
6. The help defender will then turn and sprint towards their opponent and close out on the basketball at the correct angle to force a baseline drive.
7. The passer retreats to the three-point line to set back up as the previous on-ball defender becomes the new help defender.
8. The offensive player who now has possession is again forced to drive the baseline as the drill repeats itself on the opposite side of the court.



9. This process repeats until the coach calls out 'next'. This means that on the next skip pass, the basketball is live and the offensive player can shoot or drive as the drill becomes 2-on-2.
10. After a score or a stop, offense switches to defense, two new offensive players come in, and the defenders join the end of the line.

## Variations:

**No 2-on-2** - You can run this drill without 2-on-2 or live play at the end of the drill to just focus on correct defensive rotations and closing out correctly.

**Offense Can Attack Middle** - To ensure the defense is pressuring the basketball baseline, inform the team that the offense can attack the middle of the court after a closeout if the defense is not in correct position. If this happens, the defensive team must do 10 push-ups, an up-and-back, or any other small consequence.

## Coaching Points:

- It's incredibly important that players are closing out to the high foot of the offensive player so that they're forcing the baseline drive and now allowing middle penetration.
- When closing out, defenders must do so with a high hand to prevent a shot and their weight back ready to absorb the drive.
- Don't allow the help defender to go too early. They should be waiting on split until the last second and then quickly jumping across to trap the basketball.
- Defenders must trap with high hands to force a lob pass across court. This will give the defense more time to close out and will likely force a deflection or steal during a real game.



# 2-on-2 Spread

## How the Drill Works:

A coach or player starts with the basketball at the top of the key. Two offensive players starting on the wings must get open for the pass and then attempt to score in a 2-on-2 situation. The focus of the drill is on the defenders denying the pass to these two players and then getting a defensive stop when the basketball is live.

## Purpose:

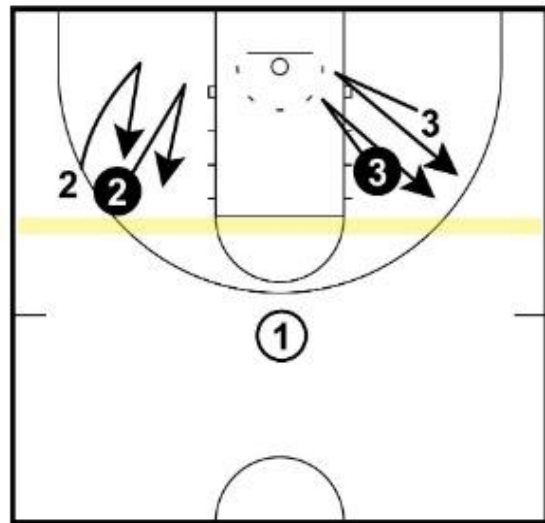
Great drill for working on the fundamentals of denying the basketball especially their positioning and the communication with another defender.

## Setup:

- A coach or player starts at the top of the key with a basketball.
- One offensive player starts on each wing.
- One defender starts guarding the offensive players on each wing.

## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the coach slapping the basketball to signal the players are allowed to start moving (the coach isn't allowed to move from the top of the key).
2. The offensive players can move anywhere they want on the court below the free-throw line but aren't allowed to set screens for each other.
3. The defenders must do their best to constantly deny the pass from the coach to the player they're defending by keeping a hand in the passing lane.
4. When the offensive team is able to receive a pass, they immediately pass the basketball back to the coach and keep on moving for the first two catches.



5. On the third catch, the basketball is live and the two defenders must attempt to get a defensive stop.
6. After that, the offense and defense switch positions or a new team joins in if you have extra players waiting on the baseline.

## Variations:

**3 Pairs of Players** - The maximum I recommend running this drill with is 6 players on the court at one time. After that, since they have to stay below the free-throw line it will be too crowded.

**Set Screens** - The offensive team are allowed to set screens for each other. For this variations, the defense must communicate and are allowed to switch if necessary.

**Transition** - If you're running this drill with a large group of players, have the offense attack after one catch. On the score or defensive stop, the teams quickly transitions down the court 2-on-2 with the defense becoming the new offensive team.

## Coaching Points:

- The defenders should keep their chests facing the offensive player, have one hand in the passing lane at all times, and see the passer over their lead shoulder.
- Emphasize to the offensive team that it's important to utilize quick changes of speed and direction if they want to get open.
- Refrain from throwing lob passes to the offensive players. The drill is focused on denying the basketball so the lob pass will often be open. There will be a defender to pick this off during most games.



# 3-on-3 Help Rotation

## How the Drill Works:

Three offensive and defensive players around the arc. From the wing, the defense forces a baseline drive. The help defender steps across to trap while the off-ball defender falls back to help position. When the dribbler makes a skip pass to either one of their teammates, the defense practices making the correct rotations and closeouts.

## Purpose:

This drill will allow players to learn and practice making the correct rotations out of a baseline drive trap. It's very important that all players know how to fall back and then rotate.

## Setup:

- Three offensive players around the three-point line.
- Three defenders guarding the offensive players.
- The player at the top of the key has a basketball.



## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the player at the top of the key making a pass to the wing. The defense doesn't attempt to steal this pass but must be in the correct positions.
2. The on-ball wing defender will then force a baseline drive which the defender in help will step across to stop and trap.
3. When this happens, the off-ball defender must fall back into help position so that they can see both of the other offensive players and the basketball.
4. On a skip pass to either offensive player, the off-ball defender in help will always be the one who closes out on the basketball.
5. The player who helped across on the trap will then close out on the other offensive player while the previous on-ball defender establishes help position their man retreats back outside the three-point line.



6. The basketball is then passed back to the top of the key (if it's not there already), and the drill is ran on the other side of the court.
7. After several repetitions, the coach will call out 'next' and that means on the next skip pass the basketball is live 3-on-3.
8. After a score or stop, offense rotates to defense, three new offensive players join the drill, and the defenders join the back of the line to wait for their next turn.



## Variations:

**No Live 3-on-3** - If you just want to practice correct positioning and rotations, simply end the drill after a specific amount of repetitions and swap the players over.

**Offense Can Attack Middle** - To ensure the defense is pressuring the basketball baseline, inform the team that the offense can attack the middle of the court after a closeout if the defense is not in correct position. If this happens, the defensive team must do 10 push-ups, an up-and-back, or any other small consequence.

## Coaching Points:

- The closeouts must be made on the right angle. If the closeout is done too low, it will allow the offensive team to attack the middle of the key.
- Make sure the defenders are loud with their communication. Let each other know what position of the floor they're on and who's closing out and helping.
- The off-ball defender must drop immediately to help position as the wing player starts to drive the basketball. Don't be late on this rotation.
- On the skip pass, make sure the previous on-ball defender immediately gets to split-line help position and doesn't follow their opponent out to the three-point line as they retreat.



# 3-on-3 Jump

## How the Drill Works:

The drill starts 3-on-3. Two player on each wing and two at the top of the key. The three offensive players will pass the basketball around, cutting each time they make a pass from the top of the key and then the wing player filling the empty spot. During this, the defenders practice jumping to the ball and being in the correct position until the coach calls out to start 3-on-3.

## Purpose:

This is a great drill to practice the basics of jumping to the basketball and defending a basket cut which are incredibly important for man-to-man defense. The players will enjoy the competitiveness of 3-on-3 that the drill transitions to.

## Setup:

- Three offensive players around the perimeter. 2 on the wings and 1 at the top of the key.
- Three defenders matching up on the three offensive players.
- An offensive player starts with the basketball.

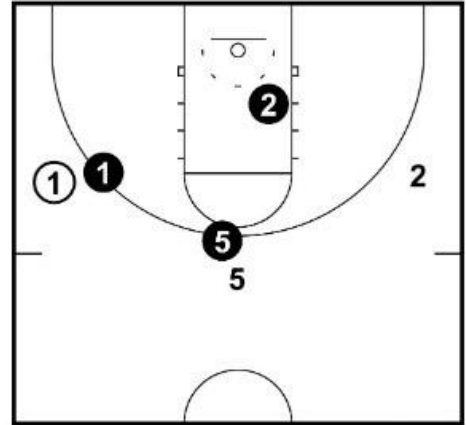


## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the offensive players passing the basketball around.
2. On any pass from the top to the wing, the offensive player must cut through to the middle of the key and then fill the wing spot on the weak side of the court.
3. On this cut, the player on the weak side wing fills the empty spot closest to the basketball at the top of the key.



4. The defender's role is to always be in correct defensive position and work on jumping to the basketball each time a pass is made.
5. After 12 - 15 passes or 3 or 4 repetitions, the coach calls out 'go' and the two teams will compete 3-on-3 until a score or a stop.
6. Then the offense swaps to defense, a new set of offensive players comes in, and the defenders wait at the top of the key for their turn.



### Variations:

**No Cut** - If you only want the team to practice jumping to the basketball and being in correct defensive position, remove the cut to the basket on the top-to-wing pass.

**Skip Passes** - Once your players are comfortable with the drill, allow the offensive players to throw wing-to-wing skip passes which will allow the defense to practice closing out.

### Coaching Points:

- When players jump to the basketball, they should have their chest facing their opponent, arm in the lane, and have vision of their shoulder to see both the ball and their player.
- Communication is very important. Players should always be calling out 'ball', 'deny', and 'help'.
- Defenders aren't trying to steal the basketball while it's being passed around until the coach calls out to compete. Play dummy defense.
- Offensive players should v-cut around the perimeter.
- Defenders should be moving on the flight of the basketball. Don't wait until the pass has been completed before moving to the next defensive position.



## 3-on-3 Ball Screen

### How the Drill Works:

The drill will start with an on-ball screen on the wing as the basketball becomes live. The defenders must use the team's rules to defend the screen. There's a help defender who starts the drill in the middle of the key and must read the play to determine whether to help or hedge towards their defender. The drill ends after a stop or score.

### Purpose:

This drill allows team to practice defending the on-ball screen while there's a help defender. Without the help defender (as there would be in the game), it's very easy for the offense to lob the ball over the defense each possession.

### Setup:

- An offensive and defensive player on each wing.
- An offensive and defensive player at the top of the key.
- The offensive player at the top of the key starts with a basketball.

### Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the player at the top of the key passing to one of the offensive players on the wing.
2. The weak-side defender will immediately drop into split-line help position.
3. The passer will then follow their pass and set an on-ball screen on the wing.
4. The defenders must use the team's rules to defend the screen. They may choose to hedge, switch, ice the screen, etc.
5. The offense will do their best to read the defense and then attack while the defense will do their best to prevent the offense from scoring or getting an open shot.





6. The defender on split-line makes the pick-and-roll more game-like since the offense can't simply lob the ball over without it getting picked off.
7. After 2 - 3 possessions, offense becomes defense, three new offensive players come into the drill, and the defense rotates out.



## Variations:

**Winners Stay on Offense** - Instead of rotating the offense and defense through after each possession, the offensive team gets to stay on offense if they score the basketball.

## Coaching Points:

- Don't stop on the shot. Both offense and defense must attack the rebound. If the offensive team gets it, they can go back up with another shot. If the defense rebounds, the drill is over.
- All of your players must be practicing all positions. That means your tallest players should be practicing being the dribbler and your shortest players should be practicing being the screener.
- The screening angle is super important. Set the screen on the back hip of the on-ball defender.
- The offensive player must not dribble too early before the screen is set. That will lead to an offensive foul on the screener during games.
- The screener must hold their screen until the defense has got around it. Don't leave too early.



# 3-on-3 Outlet

## How the Drill Works:

This drill involves two teams playing continuous 3-on-3 full-court with at least two additional players for each team on the sideline as outlet players. Each time there's a score or a defensive stop, the basketball is passed to the outlet player and the passer fills their spot. The receiver then quickly transitions down the court with the other two players on their team while the three players previously on offense must quickly transition back on defense.

## Purpose:

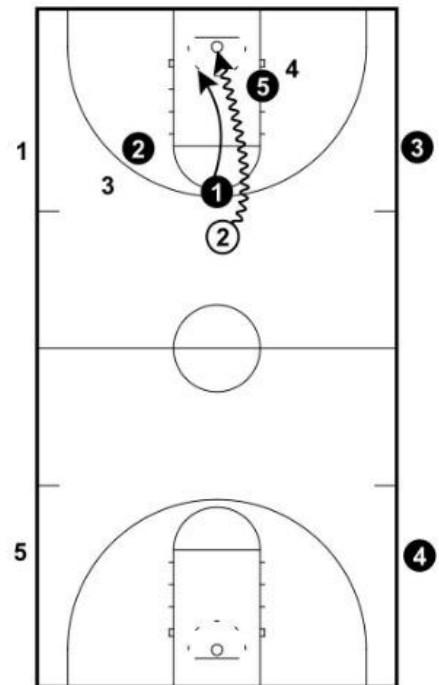
This is a high-intensity small-sided game which emphasizes the importance of both offensive and defensive transition. The offense must take advantage of the outlet player and the head-start in transition while the defense works on quickly transitioning back and preventing any easy scores.

## Setup:

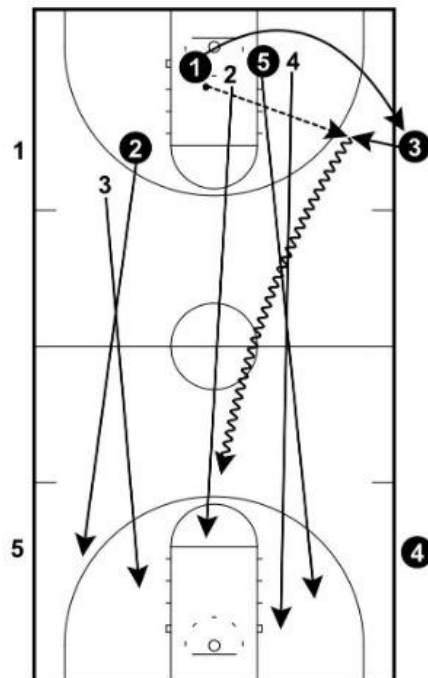
- The drill requires at least 10 players. 5 on each team.
- Each team outlets to one side of the court. There should be at least 1 player at free-throw line extended on both ends of the court.
- 3 players from each team start on the court.
- Coach starts with a basketball.
- Additional players can line up behind the outlet player on their team.

## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with a jump ball in the middle of the court.
2. One team will take possession and transition into their front court and attempt to score the basketball.



3. On either a score or defensive stop, the defender who comes up with the basketball quickly passes to the outlet player and then fills their position.
4. The outlet player will receive the pass and then quickly transition down the court looking to create a quick scoring opportunity with the other 2 players on their team.
5. The other team must immediately transition back on defense to prevent the other team from scoring.
6. This rotation and transition happens on any score or defensive stop.
7. The game concludes after a certain amount of time or when a certain amount of points have been reached from one of the teams.



### Scoring System:

- The game is played to 11 points and counted by 1's (all shots inside the perimeter) and 2's (all shots outside the perimeter).
- On all shooting fouls, the shooter will receive one free-throw. If made it's worth 1 point.

### Variations:

**Number of Players** - This drill can also be run 4-on-4 or 5-on-5 if you have a larger group of players. Though I believe 3-on-3 is most beneficial for the players.

**No Teams** - You can run this drill continuously and without teams by only having one side of the court to outlet the basketball to. Both teams outlet to the same lines so that all players will filter through and play with each other.

### Coaching Points:

- The player in the outlet position is not allowed to move off their spot until a score has been made or their team has secured the basketball. Don't allow them to leak down the court or it will be impossible for the defense to catch them.
- Outlet passes should be made as quickly as possible.
- Make sure to constantly emphasize the importance of transitioning quickly between offense and defense for both teams.



- On defensive transition, players must first sprint back before picking up a player from the opposition. Remind the players they defend as a team and may not always pick up the same player as they scramble to prevent a score.
- After a shot is attempted, players should either be crashing the boards or transitioning back on defense. Don't get stuck in 'No Man's Land' by standing and watching.



# 4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 1

## How the Drill Works:

The players start the drill with four offensive and defensive players around the perimeter. The offensive team passes the basketball around while the defense constantly adjusts their positioning between on-ball, deny, and help.

## Purpose:

This drill aims to establish a base understand on fundamental man-to-man defense. We do this by teaching players where they should be on the court in relation to how many passes away from the basketball they are.

## Setup:

- Two teams of four players.
- An offensive team with a player on each slot and each wing.
- A team of defenders matching up on the offensive players.
- Any offensive player can start with the basketball.



## Correct Positioning:

### Ball on the Wing:

- One on-ball defender.
- The player one-pass away is in deny.
- The player two-passes away is in help on the free-throw line.
- The player three-passes away is in help on split line.



### **Ball in the Slot:**

- One on-ball defender.
- The two players one-pass away are in deny.
- The player two-passes away is in help on the weak-side low block.

### **Instructions:**

1. The offensive team starts the drill by passing the basketball around the perimeter.
2. As the offense passes the basketball around, the defenders adjust their positions accordingly without attempting to intercept the passes.
3. On the coach's call (after approximately 12 - 15 passes), the two teams will compete 4-on-4 until a score or a stop.
4. After three possessions, the two teams swap roles and the drill continues.

### **Coaching Points:**

- The focus of the shell drill progressions is being in the right place at the right time. Take time to explain where each player should be depending on where the basketball is on the floor.
- All players must be down in stance the entire time throughout the drill.
- Players must use one hand to point at the ball and one hand to point at the player they're guarding. Then use their peripheral vision to see ball and man at the same time.
- Move positions on the 'flight' of the basketball. If players wait until the next offensive player catches the basketball, their rotation will be too late.
- Stress the importance of communication. At all times player should be calling out either: 'ball', 'deny', or 'help'.



# 4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 2

## How the Drill Works:

In this progression of the 4-out shell drill, when the pass is made from the slot to the wing, the passer cuts through the key to the weak-side wing while the other offensive players rotate around to fill the empty spots. The defense must react and adjust their positions properly.

## Purpose:

This progression allows the defense to practice reacting and rotating to the common basket cut action. This involves all of the defenders adjusting their positions.

## Setup:

- Two teams of four players.
- An offensive team with a player on each slot and each wing.
- A team of defenders matching up on the offensive players.
- Any offensive player can start with the basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The offensive team starts the drill by passing the basketball around the perimeter.
2. As the offense passes the basketball around, the defenders adjust their positions without attempting to intercept the passes.



3. When the basketball is passed from one of the top slots to a player on the wing, the passer makes a cut to the basket through the key and then fills the empty spot on the weak-side.
4. When this happens, the player defending the passer must jump to the ball to stop the offense from cutting in front and then deny the ball throughout the cut. As the offensive player pops out to full the weak-side wing, the cutting defender must remember their role is to fill help position.
5. As this happens, the other two offensive players rotate and replace to fill the empty spots closer to the basketball.



6. The defenders of these players must make constant adjustments as their opponent moves around the perimeter to ensure they're always in the correct position.
7. The basketball is then reversed to the other wing and the same series of rotations happens again on the slot-to-wing pass.
8. Ensure all players have gone through each position multiple times before calling out 'go' and allowing the two teams to compete 4-on-4 until a score or a stop.



## Coaching Points:

- On each pass, players should be 'jumping to the basketball'. This means quickly moving from playing on-ball defense to denying the return pass.
- The cutter's defender should never allow the offensive player to cut ball-side. Jump to the ball and then keep a hand in the passing lane while the offense cuts through.
- Encourage the offense to look for the basket cut and pass to them for the layup if it's open. We have to hold the defense accountable for denying this action. The offense can make this pass at any time throughout the drill.
- The cutter's defender must remember to stay in help position in the paint if the basketball hasn't been quickly reversed. Don't follow your player out when you're on weak-side.





# 4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 3

## How the Drill Works:

In this progression, every time a slot-to-slot pass is made, the passer will set an away screen (pin down) for their teammate on the weak-side of the floor. The defense practices defending this pin down screen by switching or fighting through the screen.

## Purpose:

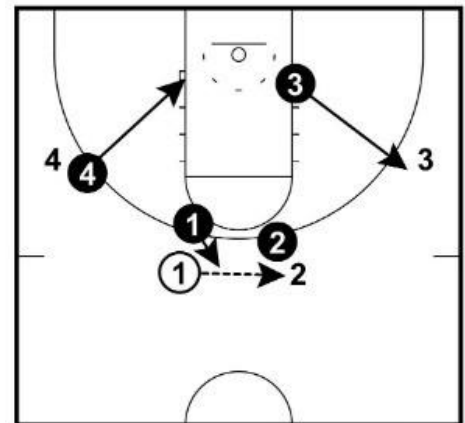
For the defense to practice communicating and getting through off-ball screens. This is an important screen to practice defending against since it happens regularly during games.

## Setup:

- Two teams of four players.
- An offensive team with a player on each slot and wing.
- A team of defenders matching up on the offensive players.
- Any offensive player can start with the basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The offensive player who starts with the basketball makes a slot-to-slot pass.
2. The defensive player who was guarding the passer jumps to the basketball on the flight of the pass as the three other defenders quickly adjust to the correct positions.



3. The passer then sets a pin-down screen for their teammate on the weak-side of the floor. The screener steps out to the wing as the player who was on the wing cuts to the slot position.
4. When this screen occurs, the defenders must communicate that there is a screen coming and then fight through it. The best way to do this is for the screener's defender to open up and allow the defender getting screened to go through before matching up again.
5. The player who received the screen cuts to the slot and then the offense can either make a slot-to-slot pass or pass to the wing and make a basket cut (progression 2).
6. These actions and rotations continue for a certain period of time before the coach calls out 'go' and the two teams compete to a score or a stop.



## Coaching Points:

- Make sure players are still focusing on the man-to-man skills they learned from the previous progressions.
- I recommend to open up and allow the player being screened to go under because then it forces the offense to catch on the perimeter. If the player being screened attempts to go over the screen, it's an easy curl cut and layup for the wing player.
- Once your players understand how to fight through, you can experiment with switching on the screen if that's something you do during games.
- Players must keep up a high level of communication and keep their hands active throughout the entire drill.



# 4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 4

## How the Drill Works:

In this progression, the player who catches the basketball on the wing is encouraged to drive along the baseline. The help defender in the middle is required to step across to help while the two off-ball defenders must relocate to be able to closeout after a pass out is made.

## Purpose:

When playing man-to-man defense, the basketball is always to be forced towards the baseline. This progression allows the defenders to practice the help and rotations that must be made after a baseline drive.

## Setup:

- Two teams of four players.
- An offensive team with a player on each slot and each wing.
- A team of defenders matching up on the offensive players.
- Any offensive player can start with the basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The offensive team starts the drill by passing the basketball around the perimeter.
2. When the basketball is in possession of a player on the wing, they have the option to drive the basketball towards the baseline.
3. When this happens, the player in split-line help must step across and trap the basketball just before the offensive player enters the key.



4. This triggers the other two defenders to adjust their positions to 'high' and 'low'. The player two-passes away becomes low help and the player one-pass away becomes high help.
5. The basketball is then reversed out of the trap to the player in the slot on ball-side as everyone rotates back to their original player.
6. To advance this drill, the offensive player being trapped can make a skip pass to either player on the weak-side...
7. If the basketball is skipped to the weak-side wing, the player in 'low help' must close out on the basketball to defend the potential shot. Then 'high help' will close out to the next rotation.
8. If the basketball is skipped to the weak-side slot, the player in 'high help' will closeout to the basketball and 'low help' will need to rotate out to the weak-side wing.



## Coaching Points:

- Since this is the first time players will be making player-to-player rotations, start off at 50% when you're teaching players the different rotations they need to make.
- The players should maintain their low defensive stance throughout the drill, seeing both the basketball and the opponent.
- Keep stressing the importance of communicating loud on defense. You should be hearing 'ball', 'deny', 'help', and 'trap'.
- Even if players get mixed up with rotations, it's important that they're able to quickly work it out and get a defender on each offensive player.
- The help defender in the middle must rotate over before the dribbler gets inside the key. The perfect trap location is a step outside the paint below the low block.



# 4-on-4 Shell Drill - Progression 5

## How the Drill Works:

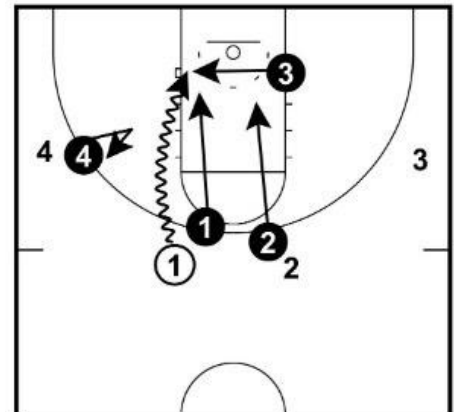
The on-ball defender in the slot allows the offense to drive down the sideline and the help defender must rotate and help on the drive. This triggers the lone weak-side defender to drop into help and then closeout on any skip passes to the opposite side of the court.

## Purpose:

The main purpose of this progression is to teach players that help must always come from the weak-side of the floor. Too often players will attempt to help from one-pass away leading to an open three-point shot for the opposition.

## Setup:

- Two teams of four players.
- An offensive team with a player on each slot and each wing.
- A team of defenders matching up on the offensive players.
- Any offensive player can start with the basketball.



## Instructions:

1. The offensive players start by passing the basketball around the perimeter. Always using basket cuts (progression 2) and pin-downs (progression 3).
2. When the basketball is in the slot position, the defender will allow the offense to drive towards the basket on the sideline side.
3. The defender on the ball-side wing can stunt towards the dribbler to get them to pick up the ball or pass, but they cannot fully help and allow the pass out to their player.
4. Instead, help comes from the weak-side to trap on the low block.



5. When this happens, the single defender left on the weak-side must drop down into help so that they can see both offensive players on the weak side of the court.
6. If the pass is made to the weak-side wing, the player in help closes out and the player who helped out on the trap must rotate to the ball-side slot.
7. If the pass is made to the weak-side slot, the player in help closes out and the player who helped returns to their matchup on the wing.
8. Once this skip pass has been made, the dribbler pops out to the wing as the ball-side wing rotates to the slot.
9. This continues until the coach says 'go' and the two teams compete 4-on-4 until a score or a stop.



## Coaching Points:

- Run through the rotations slowly to start with so that all players understand how they're going to rotate depending on which skip pass is made.
- Make sure all players are practicing all positions. This needs to happen with all progressions.
- The defense should never allow the opposition to pass the basketball to the ball-side out of the trap. The ball-side wing defender needs to hard deny and force the skip pass which can be intercepted or deflected during games.
- Continue to stress the importance of good communication by all defenders.
- The initial help defender must step across before the dribbler gets below the low block.
- On the drive, help should NEVER come from the ball-side. This will lead to easy three-point opportunities for your opponents if your team can't follow this rule.



# 4-Point Closeouts

## How the Drill Works:

Defensive players start under the basket and must sprint out and close out on each of the four offensive players spread around the three-point arc. They then retreat to the basket and move on to the next player.

## Purpose:

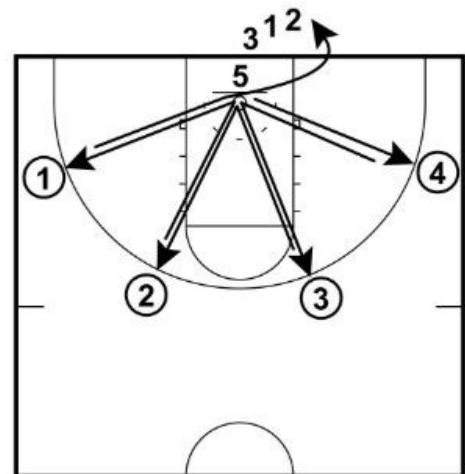
The primary purpose of this drill is to work on closeout technique. Specifically, footwork and staying on balance.

## Setup:

- 4 offensive players or coaches spread around the 3-point arc.
- The rest of the players underneath the basket.
- The 4 offensive players all have a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The first player in line sprints out to the first offensive player in a clockwise direction and closes out on the ball.
2. They then put pressure on the offensive player for 2 - 3 seconds before back-peddalling until they're within the charge circle and then sprint out to the next player.
3. The next player in line begins once the first player has closed out, retreated to the charge circle, and starts sprinting to the next player.
4. After closing out to each of the 4 offensive players, the player joins the end of the line and starts again when it's their turn.
5. After a certain amount of time, swap the offensive players with the defensive players and continue the drill.



## Variations:

**Offense Takes 1-2 Dribbles** - After closing out and pressuring the basketball, the offensive player takes one to two dribbles either left or right and the defender must slide with them to stay in front. After two slides, they back-pedal to the rim.

**Cones Instead of Players** - If all you're doing is closing out and retreating, consider using cones to close out to instead of players.

**Opposite Direction** - While the drill states to perform it clockwise, throughout the drill you should change the direction people are rotating at some stage.

## Coaching Points:

- Offense must be in the triple threat stance and protecting the basketball from the defender.
- On the closeout, the defender should use short, choppy steps, get one hand up to contest the shot, and ensure balance to absorb the drive.
- When pressuring the basketball, the defender should trace the basketball with one hand and keep the other hand low to poke away a dribble.
- This is meant to be a conditioning drill too. Players should be sprinting and back-peddaling hard on every closeout. Make sure it's game pace!





## 5-on-5 Shell Drill - Progression 6

### How the Drill Works:

In the final shell drill progression, players learn how to defend the low post and also how to trap the low post. The post defender practices 1/2 fronting on the low side when the basketball is below the free-throw line, and 3/4 fronting when the basketball is above the free-throw line.

### Purpose:

Learning how to correctly defend the post is crucial for all player in man-to-man defense. Practicing the correct post positioning depending on where the basketball is located on the floor.

### Setup:

- Four offensive players around the perimeter. One in each slot and one on each wing.
- One offensive player in the low post.
- Five defenders matched up on all offensive players.
- One of the offensive players has a basketball.



### Instructions:

1. Progression 6 starts with the four offensive players behind the three-point arc passing the basketball around the perimeter while making the cuts learned in previous progressions.
2. As this happens, the defense constantly adjusts their positioning to ensure they're always in the correct spot on defense.
3. The focus for progression 6 is on low post defense. The low post defender must 3/4 front when he basketball is on ball-side above the free-throw line, and 1/2 front from the low side when the basketball is below the free-throw line.



4. When the basketball is on the post-side wing, the wing player has the opportunity to pass the basketball into the low post. When this happens the post defender establishes position between the low post player and the basket on the flight of the ball.
5. The passer will then cut through below the low post and out to the weak-side wing while the three other offensive players rotate around to fill the gaps.
6. From this position, the post player can choose to attack on the post up or pass the basketball back outside and set the drill again.
7. At any time throughout the drill the coach can call out 'go' and it becomes live 5-on-5.



### Trapping the Post:

1. The best way to trap in the low post (if that's what you choose to do) is to rotate the low help defender over to double the basketball from the high side.
2. When this happens, the next player must immediately drop and fill the low help position. This player will be responsible for a skip pass to the wing.
3. The other player on the weak-side will fill 'high help' near the high post. They'll be responsible for any passes made to the slots or top of the key.
4. The defender on the ball-side's only role is to ensure that the post player can't make a simple outlet pass to the wing. They should be face-guarding their opponent.



### Coaching Points:

- The basketball must enter the post at least once on every possession. I prefer to have my players pass into the post three times before looking to score.



- When the wing player passes in the post and cuts through, you must educate your post player to wait until the perimeter player has cut through before putting the ball on the floor or their defender may be able to knock the ball loose.
- When stepping across to trap the post, ensure the trapper does this with high hands to prevent the quick pass over the top.
- Make sure your players are still practicing the cuts and rotations from the previous progressions.
- As always, loud communication is super important to an effective man-to-man defense. If your players aren't doing it in practice, they definitely won't during games.



# 6-on-2 Post Defense

## How the Drill Works:

Four offensive players will pass the basketball around the perimeter as the two post defenders constantly adjust their positioning. When the basketball is passed into the post, the two players compete one-on-one.

## Purpose:

This drill will allow all players to practice being in the correct position while guarding the post depending on where the basketball is located on the court.

## Setup:

- 4 offensive players spread out around the perimeter.
- 2 offensive players in the low post.
- 2 defensive players guarding the low post.

## Instructions:

### Post Defense Rules:

Ball-side above the free-throw line = 3/4 front from the high side.

Ball-side below the free-throw line = 1/2 front from the low side.

Ball is on the weak-side of the court = Split-line help position.

1. The drill starts with the four offensive players passing the basketball around the perimeter.
2. While they do this, the two post defenders are constantly adjusting and battling for good position in the low post.
3. After 8 - 10 passes around the perimeter, one of the offensive wing players passes the basketball in to the post.



4. The two players on the post then compete 1-on-1 until a score or a stop.
5. After 4 possessions (each post player is passed to twice), the players swap roles.

### **Variations:**

**No 1-on-1** - Instead of competing once the basketball is passed into the post, the post player passes back out and the drill continues.

**Wing Defenders** - Add wing defenders to the drill to put pressure on the pass inside.

### **Coaching Points:**

- We never want to allow the basketball to be passed into the post when the basketball is above the free-throw line. That's why we 3/4 front from the high side.
- The reason for 1/2 fronting on the low side is because it allows the defense to get behind the post player on the flight of the pass, and also because in man-to-man defense we force the dribbler baseline and being on the low side allows us to trap.
- The players in the post should both be battling for position. Don't allow the to play half-hearted.
- Once the players understand where they should be, allow the four players around the perimeter to throw skip passes.



# 10 Passes

## How the Drill Works:

A regular 5-on-5 half-court basketball game with the rule that the offensive team must complete 10 consecutive passes before they're allowed to look to score the ball.

## Purpose:

This drill will allow the defense to practice their team defensive rules and rotations. The '10 pass' rule ensures that there will be several ball reversals and the defense will get lots of rotation and adjustment opportunities.

## Setup:

- Two teams of 5 players.
- Start with 5 offensive players spread out around the three-point arc each with a defender guarding them.
- The offensive player at the top of the key starts with a basketball.



## Instructions:

1. In the half-court, the offensive team completes 10 consecutive passes while cutting and moving to get open against the defenders guarding them. The defense is allowed to steal the basketball during this time.
2. Once 10 consecutive passes have been completed, the offense can look to score.
3. The two teams compete until either a score or a stop by the defense. Once this happens, the basketball is returned to the top of the key and the drill starts again.
4. The two teams will swap roles after 3 - 5 possessions.

## Variations:

**Offensive Movement** - The coach can decide what kind of actions they want the offense to run. Whether the offense stays stationary, makes basket cuts, sets pin-down screens, etc, depends on how advanced the offense and defense are.

**Increase Passing Number** - Instead of making 10 consecutive passes, the offensive team has to make 20 consecutive passes. You could even reduce this to a lower number if you choose to.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Keep reminding players that they should always be in either on-ball, deny, or help.
- Players must be communicating with each other throughout the entire possession. Let your teammates know where you are and where the help will come from.
- Always force the basketball towards the sideline. Never allow middle penetration.
- Don't allow players to be slack for the first 10 passes since they know the offense isn't going to attack them. Hold your players to a high standard the entire possession.



# **Ball Drop**

## **How the Drill Works:**

Two teams play a regular game of 5-on-5. Whenever the coach blows their whistle, the team with the basketball must place the basketball on the floor and quickly transition back on defense. The team that was on defense immediately recovers the basketball and transitions to offense looking to score.

## **Purpose:**

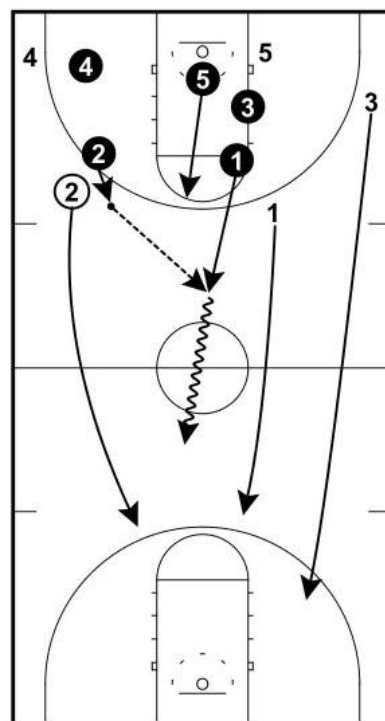
This is a fantastic drill for teaching both teams to transition from offense to defense or from defense to offense as quickly as possible. This is crucial during a game whenever there is a change of possession and often players are too slow when making the change.

## **Setup:**

- Divide the group up into two teams of 5 players.
- The two teams play a regular game of basketball.
- Coach has a whistle.

## **Instructions:**

1. The game starts off regularly with the two teams playing a regular game of 5-on-5.
2. The coach will then blow their whistle at different times throughout the game (I suggest approximately every 3 possessions) and the offense must immediately place the basketball on the floor and sprint back on defense.
3. One of the defenders immediately picks up the basketball and transitions down the court on offense looking to get a quick score.
4. The game continues like this for a set amount of time.





## Scoring System:

- Play first team to score 11 points.
- Shots inside the three-point line are worth 2 points and shots outside the three-point line are worth 3 points.

## Variations:

**Transition to Advantage** - In this variation, the player who has the basketball when the whistle is blown places the basketball on the ground but does not transition back on defense. Instead, they stay down the offensive end of the court while the others transition back 5 on 4. These are great learning opportunities for both the offense and defense and then requires the opposition to quickly transition back on defense to prevent the fast break score from the player who didn't play defense.

**Small-Sided Game** - Instead of playing 5-on-5, this drill can also be ran effectively playing 3-on-3 or 4-on-4.

## Coaching Points:

- Encourage the team who transitions back on defense to first focus on sprinting back to the paint before picking up an opposition player.
- It's important that the coach does their best to be fair with how often they blow the whistle on each team. I often blow the whistle a little more on the winning team to keep the game fair, but don't go over the top with this.
- Watch that the offensive player with the basketball isn't throwing or rolling the basketball away on the whistle. They must place the basketball directly on the ground where they are.
- Don't blow the whistle when the player with the basketball is running at full speed.



# **Basket Cut Defense Basics**

## **How the Drill Works:**

All players find a partner and line up at the top of the key. They will then take it in turns to pass to the wing and basket cut while the defender learns correct positioning and the rules behind defending a cut to the basket from the perimeter.

## **Purpose:**

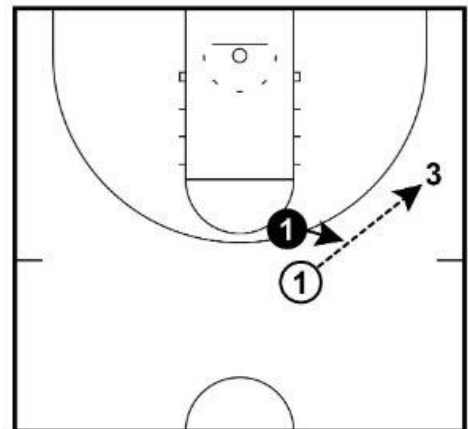
The basket cut is a common action in any basketball offense. Each player learning how to correctly defend the basket cut is crucial if you want your team to have a strong man-to-man defense.

## **Setup:**

- All players find a partner and line up at the top of the key.
- This drill can be run on both sides of the court.
- The offensive player of the first pair starts with a basketball.
- A coach or player on the wing to pass to.

## **Instructions:**

1. The offensive player with the basketball passes to the player on the wing.
2. On the flight of the pass, the defender jumps to the basketball and gets a hand in the passing lane to prevent a return pass.
3. The defender's chest should be facing their opponent, their hand should be in the passing lane, and they should be seeing both the ball and their man by looking over their lead shoulder and using their peripheral vision.



4. The offensive player will then cut to the basket looking for the pass while the defender attempts to deny them the basketball.
5. If the pass is open, the wing player can make the pass leading to a layup.
6. If the defender denies the pass, they both continue through to the baseline and then go back to the top to join the end of the line.

## Variations:

**Passing Position** - The pass being made doesn't have to be a top-to-wing pass. Your team can practice denying the basket cut after a wing-to-top pass, wing-to-corner pass, etc.

## Coaching Points:

- The reason the defender points their chest at the offensive player is so that if they quickly back-cut, the defender won't have to turn a full 180 degrees to deny the cut. They can simply flick their head around and raise their other arm and still be in good position to deny and slide to the rim.
- Make sure players are jumping to the basketball as soon as the pass has been made.
- If the offensive player can cut in front of the defender (closer to the ball), they can. But the defense shouldn't be allowing this to happen.
- If you're using a player on the wing, make sure to rotate them often so everyone has a chance to pass and everyone gets in many defensive repetitions.



# Defensive Boost

## How the Drill Works:

In the half court, 4 defensive players compete against 3 offensive players. The defense must look to trap at every opportunity while the three offensive players attempt to score.

## Purpose:

The drill emphasises the importance of defensive communication and being able to work together to trap the basketball effectively and force a turnover. This is also a great drill for offensive development as they will be pushed out of their comfort zone.

## Setup:

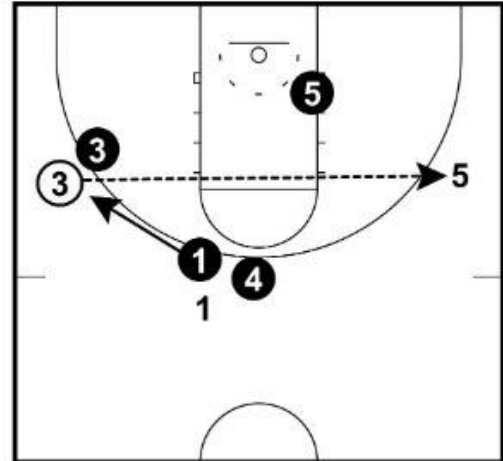
- Three offensive players spread out around the perimeter.
- Three defenders match up against the three offensive players.
- One extra defender starts the drill in the middle of the key.
- The offensive player at the top of the key starts with a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. On the coach's call, the 3-on-4 game is live.
2. The single defender must immediately sprint up to trap the basketball as the offensive players look to avoid the trap with smart passing.
3. The offensive players are free to move around the half-court in order to get open and put themselves in a better position to attack the rim or shoot.



4. The defense must always be attempting to trap the basketball with two players. This doesn't mean the same player must sprint to each matchup as different defenders can rotate.
5. After a score or stop, the players return to their starting positions and run the drill for 3 - 4 more possessions before switching roles.

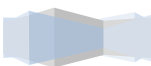


### Variations:

**5-on-4** - This drill can also be run 4-on-5 instead of 3-on-4.

### Coaching Points:

- Don't allow the extra defender to hang back in the key. The defense should always be attempting to trap the basketball and force a turnover.
- Stress the importance of communication. Don't simply send the same defender to trap the basketball every time, communicate and send the closest player or the player with the best angle to sprint to the next position.
- Run this drill at both ends of the court if you have the court space available. This will allow more players to spend more time competing.
- Defenders must not foul on the trap. The goal of the trap is to force the offensive player to make a poor pass or to get a deflection. Don't allow players to fall into the bad habit of reaching in and bailing out the offense.



# Defensive Mirrors

## How the Drill Works:

Two players line up on two parallel lines and then the defensive player must mimic their offensive partner's movements by sliding up and down the line. The offensive players attempts to evade the defender.

## Purpose:

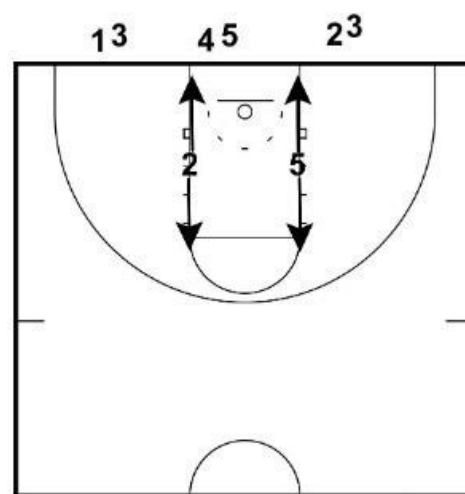
A drill that works on reaction times, will teach your team that they are quicker in a low defensive stance, and will help them with their defensive footwork.

## Setup:

- Everyone starts by finding a partner and standing in pairs behind the baseline.
- If you have another coach, it's best to use both ends of the court.
- For this example, we'll use the parallel lines of the key, but if you have two other parallel lines on your home court, you can use them too.
- Coach should have something to keep time during the drill.

## Instructions:

1. The first pair comes out and sets themselves up directly opposite each other on the two parallel lines of the key.
2. The coach then assigns one of them the offensive player and the drill begins immediately.
3. The goal of the defensive player is to stay directly in line with the offensive player. The offensive player must work hard to try and separate themselves from being in line with the defender by sliding up and down the line of the key.
4. After 15 seconds, the coach calls out 'switch' and the two players swap roles.
5. After 30 seconds they step behind the baseline and two new players come in.



## Variations:

**Duration** - Instead of 15 seconds each, you can make your players slide for more or less time.

## Coaching Points:

- Players must stay in a low defensive stance with their hands out wide the entire time of the drill.
- Encourage the offensive player to use head fakes and quick changes of pace to throw the defender off.
- Make sure you cover what good defensive stance is before running this drill.



# Denial Defense Basics

## How the Drill Works:

An offensive and defensive player start on the wing with a passer at the top of the key. The coach will show the players how to play correct denial defense and then the player will practice denying the pass to the wing and then switch on the catch.

## Purpose:

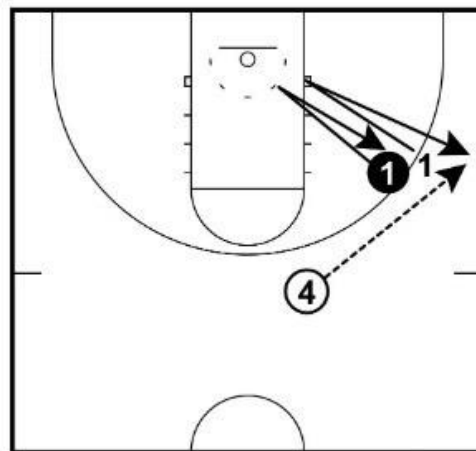
This drill allows the coach to show players the correct way to play denial defense. There are a lot of things that players naturally do incorrectly unless taught.

## Setup:

- A passer at the top of the key with a basketball.
- An offensive and defensive player on the wing.
- The rest of the players lining up behind the two players on the wing.

## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the coach showing the players the correct way to play denial defense.
2. Our denial rules are: (1) The denial defender's ball-side back hip should be pointing towards the basketball with their chest facing their opponent. (2) A hand in the passing lane. (3) Vision over the leading shoulder to see both the basketball and their opponent.
3. The players will then set up in this position and practice denying their opponent from receiving the pass on the wing.
4. Have the offense start by going at 50% pace for the defenders to learn correct technique before increasing the speed to 100%.
5. On the wing catch, the players rotate. Offense to defense, defense out, a new offensive player joins the drill.
6. This continues for a set period of time.





## Variations:

**1-on-1** - The two players compete 1-on-1 after the wing catch catch. This is called 'V-Cuts 1-on-1'.

## Coaching Points:

- Run the drill on both sides of the floor to allow your players to get in more repetitions instead of standing around waiting for their turn.
- The reason a denial defender should point their back towards the ball is so that if their opponent attempts a back-door cut, all the defender needs to do is turn their head and raise their other arm and they're in good position to slide and deny the pass inside. If they had their back to the basket they would need to do a full 180 degree turn before they could deny the pass.
- If you're using a player as the passer at the top of the key, switch them often.
- Ensure the defender is in a low athletic stance the entire time while denying the ball.



# Deny and Help

## How the Drill Works:

With two passers at the slot positions, two offensive players make v-cuts on the wings while the two defenders guarding them must either be in denial or help position depending on where the basketball is on the floor. Once a pass is made to an offensive player and the drill transitions to 2-on-2 until a score or stop.

## Purpose:

The main focus of this drill is on defensive positioning and footwork. Players must be quick to react the movement of the basketball and constantly adjust their where they are. The drill ends competitive by incorporating 2-on-2 into the drill.

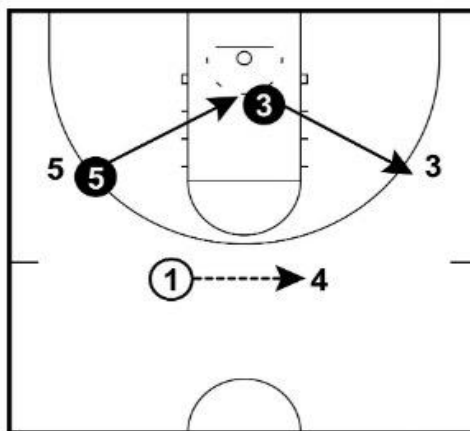
## Setup:

- One player or coach in each slot position at the top of the key.
- One of the players in the slot should have a basketball.
- Two players start on each wing. One on offense and one on defense.



## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the defenders in correct position depending on which side of the court the basketball starts on.
2. When the player in the slot slaps the basketball, the drill begins.
3. The defenders must deny the basketball being passed to their opponent if they're on ball-side and must be in help position when they're weak-side.
4. Once a pass is successfully made to one of the offensive players, the drill immediately becomes live 2-on-2 until a score or a stop.
5. The defenders stay on defense until they get three total stops before switching out or onto offense depending on how many players there are.



## Variations:

**No Live Game** - If you want to put 100% of time and focus onto teaching correct positioning and technique, run the drill without playing 2-on-2 until your players are competent with helping and denying.

**Three Stops In-a-Row** — The defense must record three consecutive defensive stops before they can swap from defense to offense.

## Coaching Points:

- Defenders must be in a low defense stance throughout the drill. It's critical that you emphasize the importance of players staying low so that they can react quicker on a pass.
- When denying the basketball, the defenders should have their chest facing the offensive player and their arm out seeing the player with the basketball over their shoulder. This allows players to quickly turn if there's a back-door cut.
- Make sure that when the basketball goes live, players are sticking to the defensive principles being taught. A lot of times players will perfect a drill and then completely go away from it when live basketball starts.



# Hide and Seek

## How the Drill Works:

This full-court drill starts with four offensive players lined up along the baseline and four defensive players lined up along the free-throw line facing away from the defense. Since the defenders aren't looking, the offensive players can stand anywhere on the baseline. The coach will then call out 'go' and pass a basketball to an offensive player. The offense attacks quickly down the court while the defenders must communicate and match up with their opponents.

## Purpose:

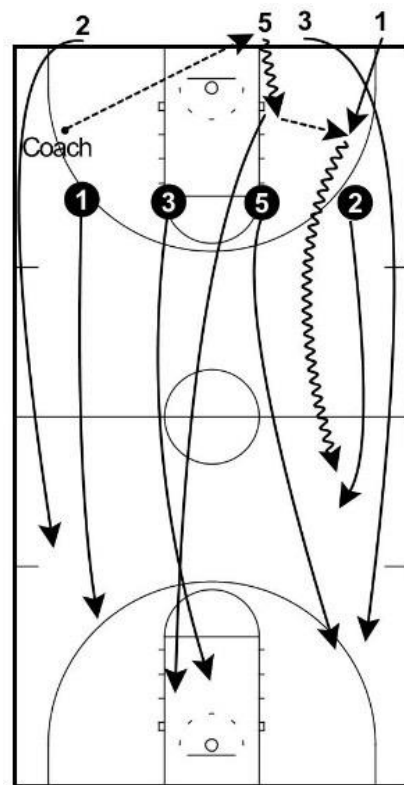
This is a fun transition drill that stresses the importance of getting back on defense quickly and communicating with teammates.

## Setup:

- 4 defenders along the free-throw line extended facing away from the offensive players.
- 4 offensive players on the baseline.
- The coach has a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. Once both the offensive players and defensive players are set up in position, give the offensive players 5 seconds to move along the baseline while the defense has their back turned.
2. After 5 seconds, pass the basketball to one of the players on the baseline and call out 'go!'
3. The offensive team immediately transitions down the floor looking to take early advantage of the defense not being matched up correctly.
4. The defensive team must immediately sprint back and communicate with each other to match up with the offensive team and prevent a quick score.



5. Once there has been either a score or stop, the two teams switch roles and start again transitioning the opposite way down the floor.

## Variations:

**Half-Court Transition** - If you don't want to use the full court, start the defenders along the half-way line and the offensive players 3 - 5 feet in front of them. This will put more pressure on the defenders to recover on time and get a stop.

**3-on-3 or 5-on-5** - This drill can be used playing 3-on-3, 4-on-4, or 5-on-5.

## Coaching Points:

- Advise the defenders that if they can't immediately pick up their player and establish correct positioning in relation to the ball, the best option is to sprint back to the key before finding and picking up their player. Always protect the paint first.
- If possible, one of the defenders should do their best to slow down the player dribbling up the court and influence them towards the sideline.
- Immediate communication amongst the defenders is crucial to successful transition defense.
- Defenders must not have a single focus to pick up the opposition player at their position. They may be required to guard a bigger or smaller opponent to prevent defenders sprinting all over the court looking for their matchup.



# No Middle Game

## How the Drill Works:

Two teams compete in the half-court with one defensive goal – not to allow the offense to drive towards the middle of the floor.

## Purpose:

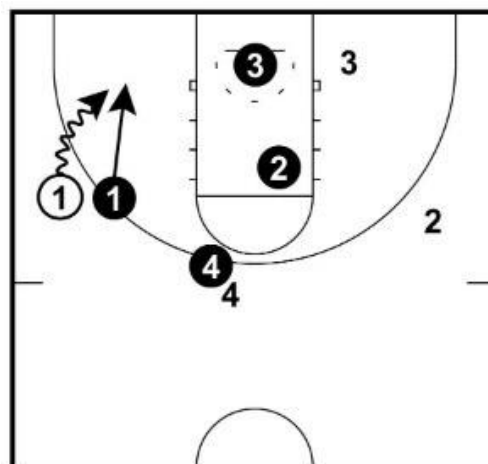
Not allowing the defense to drive towards the middle of the floor is one of the staple rules of man-to-man defense. This drill will allow players to practice all facets of their individual defense including forcing the drive towards the baseline and sideline and closing out correctly.

## Setup:

- This game can be played 4-on-4 or 5-on-5.
- All players set up in the half court with one offensive player in possession of a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The first thing you must do is explain to your players how to force their opponent baseline. The two most important things to address is their positioning when playing on-ball defense and also how they should closeout to the basketball.
2. The basketball starts on the wing and the offensive team must make two ball-reversals before the game begins. As they're doing this, the defense practices adjusting their defensive positioning on the court depending on the location of the basketball.
3. After two ball-reversals, the game is live.
4. The offense has 24-seconds to move the basketball around and get a good shot while the defenders practice forcing them towards the sideline and the baseline (no middle).
5. If the middle is open for the offense to attack, they will receive 1 bonus point every time they're able to attack towards the middle of the court.



6. After 3 - 5 possessions, the two teams swap roles.
7. The winners are the team who has accumulated the most amount of points after a specific number of possessions.

## Variations:

**Catching Outside** – Offense can still move and play freely, but the players can only receive a pass outside the 3-point line.

**Number of Players** - As said at the start of the drill, this game can be played 4-on-4 or 5-on-5.

## Coaching Points:

- Not allowing middle penetration starts with the feet. The feet of the defenders should give a slight opening to the offense towards the sideline while completely blocking off the middle.
- If the offensive player does attack the sideline or baseline, the help defenders must be in the correct positions and ready to rotate.
- Encourage the defenders to have loud communication.
- The defenders must maintain their low defensive stance for the entire time with their hands up.



# No Paint Game

## How the Drill Works:

The offensive team will get one minute to get as many two-foot jump stops in the paint as possible. The defense must attempt to keep them out of the paint without fouling.

## Purpose:

This is a great drill for both offense and defense. The offensive team will learn how to see gaps in the defense early and the defenders will work on staying in front of the offensive player as well as being in the right help position.

## Setup:

- Split your team into two teams of 5.
- One team starts at the top of the key with a basketball.
- The coach must have a timer.

## Instructions:

1. On the coach's call, the offensive team starts moving the basketball around looking for opportunities to drive to the paint.
2. The offensive team will quickly realise that in order to create gaps, they must stay spaced around the three-point line.
3. After a drive, the player must jump stop in the paint. This is worth one point.
4. The player then pivots and passes the basketball back outside the three-point line.
5. This continues for one minute as the offensive team aims to score as many points as possible.





## Scoring Systems:

- Each team will add up the amount of points they get in each game to determine a winner.
- Each two foot jump stop in the paint is worth 1 points.
- Every time the offensive team commits a violation (travelling, turnover, etc) they lose 1 point.

## Variations:

**Catch in the Paint** - In the regular drill, the drive must come from the three-point line to be counted. You can make a variation where offensive players are allowed to cut and catch the basketball inside. This will force the defense to deny hard.

## Coaching Points:

- Make sure the defense is moving their feet and not simply holding the offensive player out. Be observant of fouling.
- Players must stay well-spaced. After a pass the offensive player should never stand still. Cut, screen away, on-ball screen, etc.



# On-Ball Bonus

## How the Drill Works:

Two teams play a live game of 5-on-5 but will receive bonus points for scoring off an on-ball screen. This drill can be ran full-court or half-court.

## Purpose:

This drill puts emphasis on practicing executing the on-ball screen while still allowing players to be creative and score in a variety of ways.

## Setup:

- Two teams of 5 or more players.
- One team starts on offense while the other team matches up on defense.
- The offensive player at the top of the key starts with a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The two teams start playing a live game of 5-on-5 in the half-court or full-court.
2. The offense is allowed to run any action, but they will receive double points if they score while executing an on-ball screen. This doesn't necessarily mean the points have to be scored by the dribbler or screener. If the ball-screen forces another defender to help the dribbler can pass out for the shot and they will be awarded double points.
3. If playing in the half-court, teams will switch roles on any defensive stop but if the offense scores they get to keep it for the next possession.
4. There is no time limit and teams compete to either 11 or 21 points.



## Variations:

**Time Limit** - Instead of playing first to a specific amount of points, play a game for 10 minutes and the team with the most points at the end of the time period is the winner.

**Half-Court or Full-Court** - If possible, I highly recommend running this drill full-court. If you've got a large number of players, sometimes it's better to play two half-court games instead of one full-court game.

**Winners Keep** - The coach can decide whether the team who scores gets to keep the offensive possession or whether the defensive team gets the basketball.

**Scoring** - You can choose to play by 1's and 2's instead of 2's and 3's.

## Coaching Points:

- It's up to the coach whether the play deserves double points or not. Any argument with the coach's decision results in a 2-point penalty. Teach players to focus on what they can control.
- Emphasize the importance communication for both teams.
- Make sure your players know what on-ball screen rules you want to use depending on the age of your players, their skill level, and where the basketball is on the floor.
- Spacing is everything. Ensure when the players are on the perimeter they're close to NBA three-point range for and spread out for correct spacing.



# Simple Closeouts

## How the Drill Works:

A defender starts with the basketball approximately 3 metres away from their partner. The defender passes out to the offensive player and then closes out. After going over the fundamentals of the closeout, pairs play live after the pass.

## Purpose:

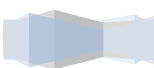
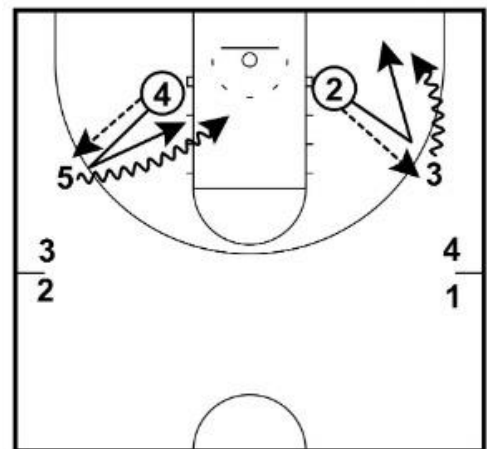
A very simple drill for players still learning the fundamentals of close out technique. It leads into a competitive game of 1-on-1 which is very beneficial for player development.

## Setup:

- Players need to find a partner and get one basketball between the two of them.
- One defensive player on each low block with a basketball.
- Their partner on offense at the three-point line on the wing.

## Instructions:

1. The drill is player using both sides of the court so both players on the low post pass out to their partner and then immediately sprint out to close out on the basketball.
2. If you're practicing fundamentals of the closeout, the defensive player repeats this three times before the next group replaces them.
3. If players understand the fundamentals, have the partners compete live off the closeout.
4. After a score or defensive stop, the next pair rotates in. Players switch roles next time they enter into the drill.



## Variations:

**Defense Stays In** – Instead of having partners, line up a group of players on the wing. Each player must get 3 defensive stops before they're allowed to change to offense as the other players rotate through the offensive position.

**Limit Dribbles** - Limit the offensive player to 2 - 3 dribbles after the catch. This is for more advanced players as it can be difficult against good defense.

## Coaching Points:

- As always, closeout technique is of vital importance. Ensure the player closing out does so with a high hand to prevent the shot, they use choppy steps, and get down in a low stance with their weight back ready to absorb the drive.
- The direction that the defender influences the offensive player on the closeout should line up with your team's defensive philosophy.
- If a shot is taken from the outside, ensure the defender is making contact and then pursuing the basketball. If the offense rebounds the play continues.
- Use both sides of the court and both ends of the court to ensure maximum participation from the players and little standing around.
- Players must stay on their half of the court. This will prevent players from dribbling everywhere and focus on driving in a straight line.



# Spitfire

## How the Drill Works:

Three offensive players set up in a triangle with two defenders in the middle. The offensive players pass the basketball between each other attempting to keep the basketball away from the defenders. When a defender gets a steal or deflection, they swap positions with the offensive player who made the pass.

## Purpose:

This is a fun warm-up drill used to teach defenders how to read the defense and react quickly. It's also great for the offensive players to practice fakes and making smart passes in a small space.

## Setup:

- Three offensive players set up in the corners of a triangle.
- One of the offensive players has a basketball.
- Two defenders start in the triangle. One on the ball and one off the ball.

## Instructions:

1. On the coach's call, the offensive players start passing the basketball to each other. Making sure not to hold the ball for more than three seconds.
2. For this drill to work successfully, one of the defenders must always be pressuring the basketball.
3. The off-ball defender will attempt to read the offensive players and intercept or deflect one of their passes while the on-ball defender will attempt to steal or deflect a pass from the offensive player in possession.



4. When a deflection or steal does occur, the defender swaps with the passer.
5. The drill continues like this for a set amount of time.

### **Variations:**

**Square** - Instead of having three offensive players in a triangle, start with four offensive players in the shape of a square. This means you must add an extra off-ball defender to the drill.

**Size of the Shape** - To increase or decrease the difficulty of the drill, increase or decrease the size of the shape the offensive players are set up in.

**No Switch** - Instead of switching positions after a steal or deflection, the defenders stick with their role for a specific amount of time before switching with two of the offensive players.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Encourage the offensive players to make pass fakes. This must include faking with the eyes and body to really sell the pass fake.
- The offensive players must stay stationary throughout the drill.
- Ensure there's always an defender playing on-ball defense. If you allow the defense to step off, there will be no one to pass to and the drill will be ineffective.
- Defenders must keep their hands high and active throughout the drill.
- Communication is important for both teams. Defenders must let each other know where they are and who's going to close out on the ball.



# Split Help

## How the Drill Works:

An offensive player starts on the wing and drives to the basket. A defender on in on split line must step across and play help defense on the offensive player by contesting the shot or taking a charge.

## Purpose:

This drill will teach player how to help from the weak side of the court and allow them to experience what they should do on defense from this position. Great for teaching charge positioning and 'walling up'.

## Setup:

- Split the group up into two lines. One line on the wing and one on weak side short corner.
- The players on the wing start with a basketball.
- One of the defenders starts on split line.

## Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the first offensive player in line driving to the basket.
2. At the correct time, the defender on split line steps across and can either position themselves to take a charge or contest the shot avoiding fouling.
3. After the shot, the players switch line and the next pair sets up to start.



## Variations:

**2-on-1** - If using this variation, start the defenders behind the baseline and replace them with one offensive player at the short corner position. The offensive player drives hard and the defender must do their best to prevent the open layup or deflect the pass made to the short corner.

**Both Ends of the Court** - Since this drill involves lines of players, I recommend running it on both ends of the court if you have another coach or parent to help you.





## Coaching Points:

- The offensive player must attack the rim. The drill is pointless if the offensive player pulls up for a midrange shot.
- The defenders must do their best not to foul the offensive player. Teach them how to 'wall up' on the layup to avoid fouling while still forcing a missed shot.
- Make sure players are stepping across from help at the right time. We don't want players stepping across too early or too late.



# Star Closeouts

## How the Drill Works:

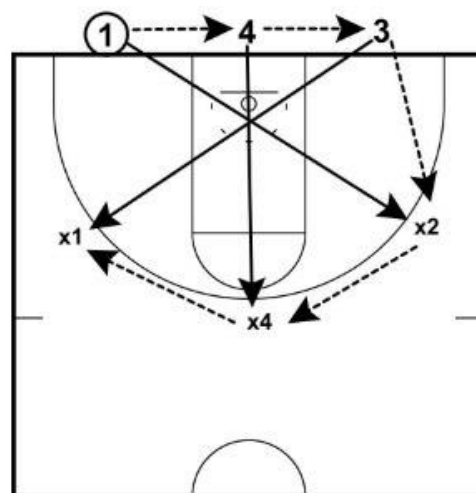
The drill starts with 3 defensive players spread out on the baseline and 3 offensive players around the three-point line. The basketball is rotated around the 6 players as the defenders close out diagonally. When the basketball arrives at the final offensive player, the teams play 3 on 3 until a stop or a score.

## Purpose:

This is a great drill to combine working on closeouts with a competitive small-sided game.

## Setup:

- 3 defenders evenly spaced out along the baseline.
- 3 offensive players spaced out around the three-point line.
- The rest of the players behind the defenders on the baseline.
- A basketball starts on either one of the side defenders.



## Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the basketball being rotated around the 6 players. These passes must be quick and accurate.
2. After the first pass, the defender will close out to the offensive player on the opposite wing.
3. After the second pass, the middle defender will close out to the offensive player at the top of the key.
4. After the third pass, the defender will close out to the offensive player on the opposite wing.
5. Competitive 3 on 3 begins on this final closeout. Players will play until the offense gets a score or the defense gets the stop.



## Scoring System:

**Teams** - A scoring option you have is to create teams of 3 and have them keep their own score using 2's and 3's. Each time the defense gets a stop they become the offensive team.

**Random** - Or the coach can simply rotate the defenders through at random. Each time the defenders get a stop, they become the offensive team.

## Variations:

**4 Players** - This drill can be run with 4 players spread out on the baseline and the three-point line.

## Coaching Points:

- On the closeouts it's important for each player to use choppy steps and to get their weight back to absorb the potential drive.
- Don't allow the defenders to lob their passes to give themselves more time to close out. Sharp passing!



# Stunt and Recover

## How the Drill Works:

An offensive and defensive player sets up on both wings and at the top of the key. The offense passes the basketball around while the defenders constantly move themselves to the correct defensive positioning on the court. The offense attacks the gap between defenders with one dribble which allows the defense to practice stunting at the ball and then recovering.

## Purpose:

This drill allows defenders to work on stunting at the basketball when they're one-pass away without fully committing to the ball. Not helping off a player one-pass away is one of the key rules of a great man-to-man defense.

## Setup:

- Two players (offense and defense) on each wing and at the top of the key.
- The offensive player at the top has a basketball.
- The rest of the players are waiting for their turn behind the baseline or above the three-point line.

## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the offensive players passing the basketball between themselves while the defenders continually adjust their positioning between on-ball, denial, and help.
2. The offensive players are encouraged to take one attack dribble between defenders before kicking the basketball out to a teammate.
3. When this happens, the defender one-pass away must 'stunt and recover'. This involves them taking a quick step towards the dribbler before exploding back out to their opponent and closing out with high hands.
4. The offense will perform this action 3 or 4 times before the coach calls out 'go' and the two teams compete 3-on-3 until a score or a stop.



5. After 3 possessions, defense swaps to offense, a new group of defensive players joins the drill, and the current offensive players join the end of the line.

## Variations:

**4-on-4 or 5-on-5** - Instead of running this drill 3-on-3, the drill can be run 4-on-4 or 5-on-5.

**Baseline Drive** - To advance this drill, the wing player can drive baseline and force the help rotation from the player on split-line. This means the off-ball defender will need to closeout on the skip pass and the trap defenders will need to communicate and rotate to pick up the other two offensive players.

## Coaching Points:

- When stunting at the ball, the help defender should retreat a step into the lane while keeping their chest towards the player they're defending. This allows them to quickly close out if the pass is made.
- Encourage the on-ball defender to get up and play hard defense. Don't allow the defense to drive past, but expect that they'll occasionally get a step when playing close defense.
- Unless they're stunting on a drive, players will either be playing on-ball defense, in denial, or in help defensive position.
- Make sure your players are communicating loudly throughout the drill. Let your teammates know where you are!



# Transition Advantage

## How the Drill Works:

Offensive team lines up along the baseline and the defensive team lines up on the free-throw line extended in front of them. Coach passes the basketball to one of the offensive players and the defender in front of them must touch the baseline before recovering back into the play.

## Purpose:

To put the offensive team in an advantage situation where they must make quick, smart decisions, and keep good spacing to get an easy score. The defense also works on being at a disadvantage.

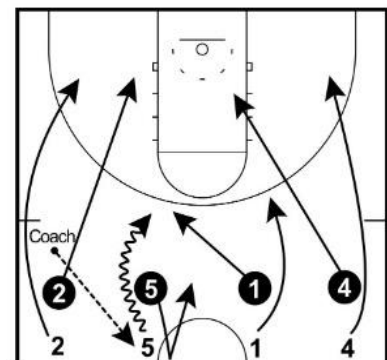
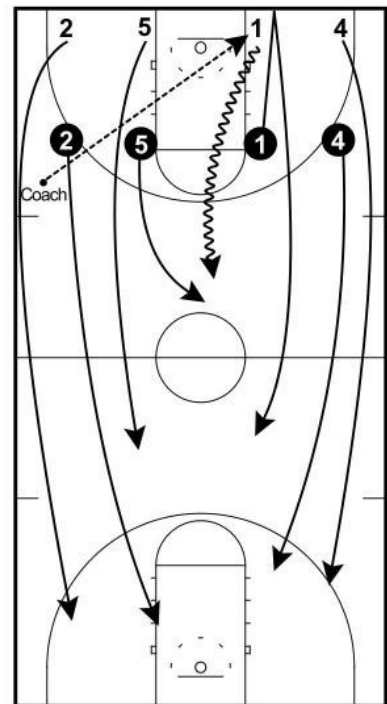
## Setup:

(Example is a 4-on-4 full-court drill).

- Line 4 offensive players an even distance apart along the baseline.
- 4 defensive players line up in front of the offensive players on the free-throw line extended.
- Coach has a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the coach passing the basketball to one of the four offensive players (1).
2. As soon as the pass is made, the defender in front of the offensive players must sprint and touch the baseline before recovering back into the play (x1).
3. The offensive players must advance the basketball up the court immediately to take advantage of the extra player.
4. Play until a score or the defense gets the basketball.



## Variations:

**Number of Players** - You can run this drill 2 v 2, 3 v 3, 4 v 4, or 5 v 5.

**No Dribbling Allowed** - Make it more difficult for the offensive team by not allowing them to dribble the basketball. This is one of my favorite drill variations.

**Half-Court Advantage** - Exactly the same drill but in the half-court instead of full-court. Offense lines up along the half-way line and defense lines up 2m in front of them.

## Coaching Points:

- The recovering defenders must sprint hard to get back into the play.
- Encourage the offensive team to attack quickly so that they take advantage of the extra player.
- If the offensive team keeps good spacing on the transition, they should get an open shot or layup every time down the floor.



# Triple Catches

## How the Drill Works:

The drill starts with two players on the wing (offense and defense) and player at the top of the key with a basketball. The offensive player looks to make three successful catches on the perimeter while the defender attempts to deny and deflect any passes that are made. On the third catch, the two players compete 1-on-1.

## Purpose:

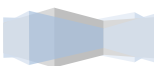
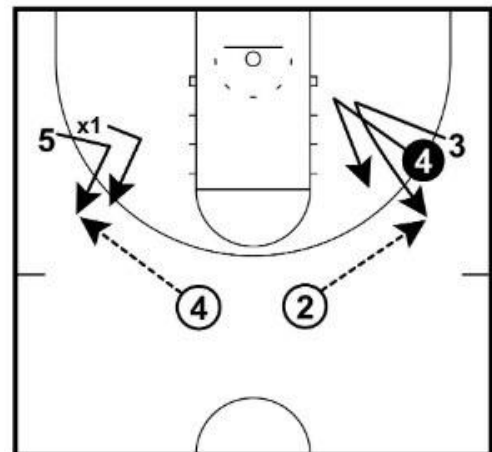
This drill allows the defense to get several consecutive repetitions denying their player the basketball. They will also have the challenge of stopping their opponent scoring in a one-on-one situation.

## Setup:

- An offensive and defensive player on the wing.
- A line of players at the top of the key.
- The first player in line has a basketball.

## Instructions:

1. The drill starts with the offensive player making a v-cut to get open on the wing.
2. The defender does their best to deny this pass as the offensive player cuts out to the perimeter to catch the basketball.
3. If the pass is successful, the offense receives one point and immediately passes the basketball back to the player at the top of the key.
4. If the pass is unsuccessful, the ball is passed back to the player at the top of the key and the offensive player doesn't receive a point.
5. After three successful passes (3 points), the offensive player has three dribbles and five seconds to attack the rim and attempt to score.





6. The offensive player then rotates to defense, the defensive player joins the end of the line, and the passer becomes the new offensive player.

### **Variations:**

**No Triple Catches** - If you want the offense to attack immediately on the first catch, you can do that and the drill will become 'V-Cut 1-on-1's'.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Run this drill on both sides of the floor to increase the number of repetitions and keep all players on your team active.
- The defender in denial defense should have their chest facing their opponent, their arm in the lane, and their back towards the basketball. This allows them to quickly turn and deflect any back-door pass.
- Encourage your players to be physical without committing any hard fouls. It's important to keep a healthy amount of competitiveness in drills.
- If the back-door cut is open, encourage the defense to take it.



# West Virginia Transition

## How the Drills Works:

Teams line up at half court. The coach passes to a player on either team and their direct opponent will sprint forward into the front court instead of playing defense. The two teams will now play 4v5. When the defense gains possession, they look to quickly advance the basketball to the player in the front court for the quick score. The defense must focus on removing this option with quick transition defense.

## Purpose:

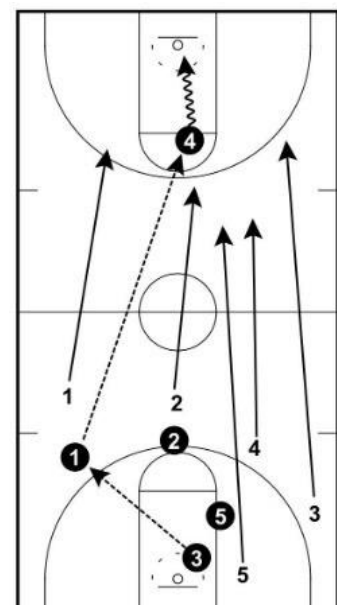
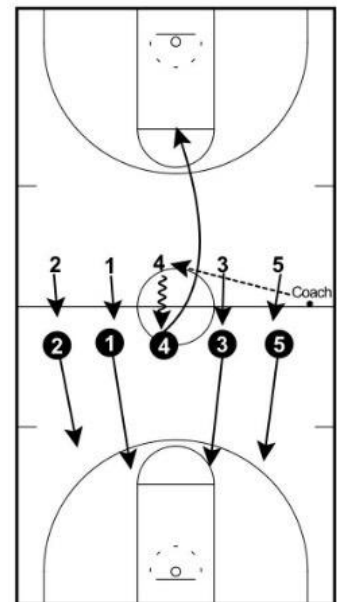
The purpose of the drill is to work on transitioning from offense to defense quickly. There are also added benefits of finding the open player in an advantage situation on offense.

## Setup:

- Split your team up into two teams of either 4 or 5 depending on numbers.
- Coach begins with a basketball.
- Teams line up opposite sides of half-way line.

## Instructions:

1. The drill begins with the coach passing the basketball to one of the players on either team.
2. When this happens, the defender of the player who received the basketball will sprint forward into their half-court.
3. The rest of the team then play 5 vs 4 until a score or a stop.
4. Once the defense gains possession, they immediately look to pass ahead to their loose offensive player while the defense scrambles to get back on defense.
5. If the pass can't be made, the two teams play 5 on 5 until a stop or a score.



6. One the defense gains possession, the basketball is returned to the coach and the two teams set up again.
7. The coach then switches which team he makes the initial pass to.

## Scoring System:

- Game is played to 11 points.
- Scoring is normal (2pts and 3pts) as long as the coach switches starting sides after each possession.
- A 'home run' (a score within the first 7 seconds by advancing the basketball to the front-court player) is worth 5 points.

## Variations:

**Scoring System** - Change the amount of points given for each score depending on the section of the drill.

**Number of Players** - The drill can be played with 4 on 4 or 5 on 5. I don't recommend using 3 on 3 or smaller although it can be done.

## Coaching Points:

- One of the players on the team starting on offense should be retreating and calling out 'safety' when a shot is put up.
- When the defensive team does gain possession, they must immediately be looking to advance the basketball to the loose front-court player.
- Ensure the first offensive team is spaced out to make the most of their extra player. There is no reason for the offensive team to not get an open shot.



# Man-to-Man Defense - Complete Coaching Guide



The traditional man-to-man defense is by far the most common defense in the game of basketball today.

This is especially true as players progress to a higher level of competition. In fact, due to the great outside shooting of professional players, every NBA team almost exclusively plays man-to-man defense.

The man-to-man defense involves all 5 defensive players on the court being allocated one opposition player who they're accountable for defending whenever they're on defense.

Of course, there will be times when players switch opponents or help each other on defense, but for the most part, each player is responsible for one player from the opposition.

Learning to be a great man-to-man defender is perhaps the most important skill for a player to learn during their years of youth basketball.

No matter what defense a player goes on to play at the next level or on another team, the skills they learn playing man-to-man defense will transfer. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for players that solely learn zone defense.

If you're coaching youth basketball, taking the time to teach your team man-to-man defense will go a long way to preparing them for the next level.

## Strengths

- 1. Every player needs to learn man-to-man defensive principles** - It's crucial that all youth players develop good man-to-man habits and understand man-to-man defensive principles.
- 2. Many Variations** - There are many different ways to run your man-to-man defense depending on the team you're playing against and what the strengths and weaknesses of your team are.
- 3. Preparation for future basketball** - The better players get at man-to-man defense during their youth, the more opportunities they'll get as they advance to higher levels of play.

## Weaknesses

- 1. There's a lot to teach** - Players will need to learn more defensive skills than if they were to play Pack Line defense or a zone defense. A lot of situations a player must know how to defend and where to position themselves.
- 2. It will take time for your players to successfully run** - One of the most common reasons for youth coaches running a zone is that they don't have enough time to teach a man-to-man defense. They're right. There's a lot to learn and it will take time. But it's definitely worth it.
- 3. Unable to hide weak players** - In the man-to-man defense, everyone is held accountable for their role defending the basketball and being able to help and rotate when needed.

## Man-to-Man Defense Rules

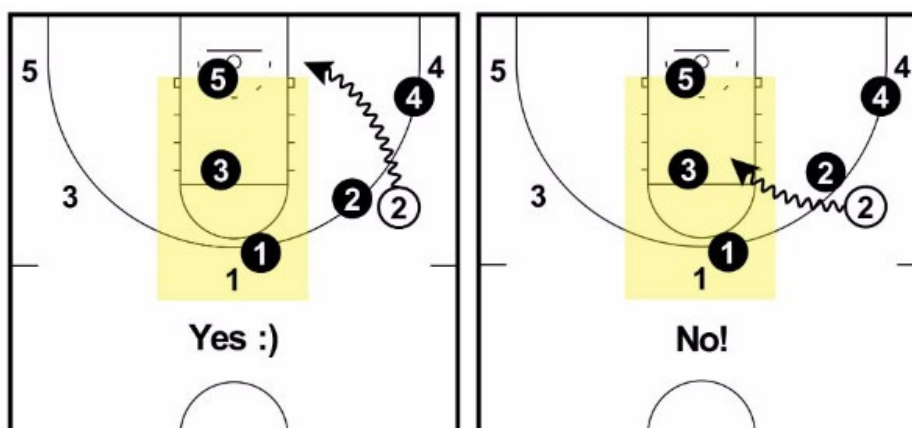
While I've listened to coaches name hundreds of rules associated with the man-to-man defense, there are only 5 key rules that you need to teach to your players.

### 1. No Middle Penetration

If you plan to run the man-to-man defense with your team, the next sentence is the most important thing you need to teach them...

**Not allowing the opponent to into the middle of the lane from the top or the wings is the most important rule of man-to-man defense.**

Instead, defensive players must use their stance and position themselves in such a way that the opposition can only dribble down the sideline and the baseline.



When an opposition player has the basketball at the top of the key, we direct them towards the sideline.

When an opposition player has the basketball on the wing, we direct them towards the baseline.

*"Why the baseline instead of the middle?"*

**The reason we direct opponents towards the sideline and baseline is because it's much easier to defend and rotate on a baseline drive than it is when a player drives into the middle of the lane.**

This is because the help defenders roles and responsibilities are clear in regards to who is meant to help and rotate when the basketball is on the wings or in the corners.

When the basketball is driven into the middle, however, who is meant to help and who is meant to stay on their player becomes difficult to define which often leads to open scoring opportunities for the opposition.

## 2. No Ball-Reversals

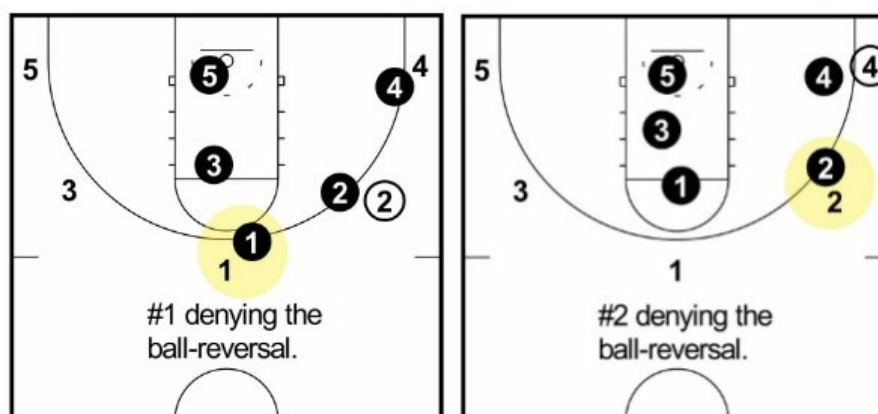
How many times have you heard a coach scream out "Reverse the basketball!" to their players?

A lot, I bet. Perhaps you've even done it yourself.

There's a good reason for it if you have... it works for the offensive team!

The more you can get the defensive team to move and rotate, the more gaps will open up in the defense and the number of open scoring opportunities will rise.

**So when you're playing man-to-man defense, once the basketball has been passed to one side of the floor, we never want to allow it reverse back to the top or the opposite side.**



The players defending the ball-reversal should be in 100% deny the entire time.

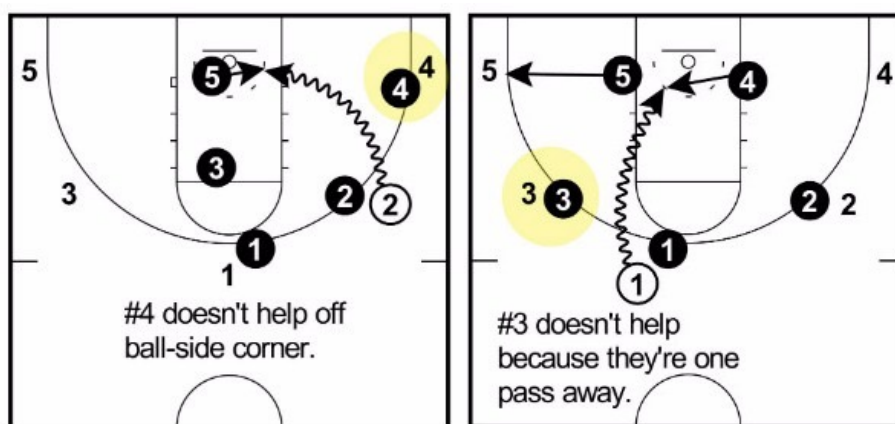
### 3. No Help from Defenders One-Pass Away

This is the biggest difference between the Pack Line defense and the man-to-man defense.

In the Pack Line defense (which I often recommend), the players one-pass away from the basketball are helping in the driving lanes by taking away dribble penetration. This allows the basketball to be passed around the perimeter.

In man-to-man defense, since the players one-pass away from the basketball are denying the pass to their player, this leaves driving lanes open and means the on-ball defender is more accountable for keeping the player with the basketball out of the lane.

**If an opposition player does attempt to drive down the middle, the player one pass away can quickly 'stunt' in their direction to get the offensive player to pick up the dribble, but they can never fully help.**



If they do, it will often lead to an in-rhythm jumper or an offensive drive after a difficult closeout.

### 4. No Face Cuts

A defensive player must never allow their opponent to cut across their face in-between them and the basketball.

The 'no face cuts' rule will most commonly occur when the offense performs a 'pass-and-cut'.

When an offensive player makes a pass to a teammate (they will still happen even if we're denying them), the player defending the passer must immediately 'jump to the basketball' to force their opponent to cut behind them instead of in front.

This rule is also important when playing defense off the ball to stop players from flashing to the ball to receive a pass.



To put it simply, a defender must always stay between their man and the basketball whenever they're playing off-ball defense.

## 5. Move When the Ball Moves

The final rule is to ensure that players are playing correct off-ball defense.

**Whenever the basketball moves, every defensive player on the court should be adjusting their positioning on the court.**

By keeping the importance of this in mind, players will learn that they must stay alert at all times and anticipate passes that they may be able to deflect.

As the great Don Meyer puts it...

*"Positioning, anticipation, and technique create quickness. Therefore, you can always get quicker."*  
- Don Meyer

This is incredibly important because the difference between a steal and an open layup or a missed steal and a break down of the defense can be a fraction of a second.

## Man-to-Man Defense Positioning Basics

There are 3 roles you can be in when you're on the court playing man-to-man defense...

1. On-ball defense
2. Deny defense
3. Help defense

In this section I'm going to talk about each of them in detail and what's required of a player when they're in each role.

Each player understanding all of these roles is crucial to good team defense. Being out of position by even a small amount can be the difference between blocking a shot or giving up an easy layup.

Positioning is everything.



## **On-Ball Defense**

The role of the on-ball defender in a man-to-man defense is to contain the offensive player while influencing them towards the sideline and baseline.

While containment is the ultimate goal regardless of where the ball is on the floor, if the defensive player is going to get beat, we want it to be towards the baseline instead of the middle. This is why the on-ball defender slightly overplays the middle.

It's imperative that all defenders on the court have the ability to contain their man consistently. If not, dribble penetration will break down your defense very quickly.

In fact, I never encourage on-ball defenders to reach in for steals unless the offensive player mishandles the basketball. There's a far higher chance of them getting called for a foul than getting a steal.



Here are the 5 keys to playing great on-ball defense:

### **1. Desire to be a great defender.**

The biggest differentiator between a great defender and an average defender is that a great defender wants to be a great defender.

All coaches must emphasize the importance of learning how to be a great defender and the benefits your players will get from the skill as they progress to a higher level of competition.

A player who desires to be a great defender is willing to stay down in a stance the entire possession, chase their opponent around the court, dive on any loose basketball to gain possession, take a charge if they're in the proper position, etc.

### **2. Stay in a balanced stance.**

An on-ball defender must stay in a balanced stance at all times so that they're ready to react to the offensive player as quickly as possible.

This means they should stay low, keep their chest up, and place an even amount of weight on each leg.

### **3. Slightly overplay the middle to force the offensive player sideline or baseline.**

The player defending on the basketball should have their head in line with the opponent's shoulder on the side you don't want them to drive.

### **4. Keep an arm's length distance at all times.**

The defender should be able to stick out their arm full length in front of them and just be able to touch the player they're defending.

### **5. Keep your eyes on the opponent's chest.**

It's very easy for an offensive player to fake with their head, eyes, or body. The spot on a player that is most difficult to fake with is their chest.

## **One Pass Away - Denial Defense**

As per rule #3, any player one-pass away from the basketball should be in a denial stance to deter any pass to their player.

A denying defender should have one hand and one foot in the passing lane at all times, their chest should be facing their direct opponent, and they should be looking over their lead shoulder to see both the basketball and their man.

This is important to note because I see far too many coaches teaching their players 'ball-you-man' stance when one-pass away.

The reason this is the wrong stance is because if your opponent was to suddenly backdoor cut, the denial defender would need to do a full 180-degree turn to defend it.

However, if your defender backdoor cuts when your chest is towards the player and you have a hand and leg in the passing lane, all it requires is the defender flicking their head around and the sliding in the deny position towards the rim.

The purpose of this is that we want to remove all easy passing options from the player with the basketball. This is why the man-to-man defense is an aggressive defense.

The distance a denial player should be from their man will depend on the distance the offensive player is away from the basketball. A good rule of thumb would be close enough to ensure you can close the distance and pick off the pass if a lob is thrown over the top.

**Once again, the 4 keys to great denial defense are:**

- 1. One hand and foot in the passing lane.**
- 2. Chest towards your direct opponent.**
- 3. Eyes over lead shoulder to see both.**

## Two Passes Away - Help Defense

Any defender two or more passes away from the basketball is playing help defense.

This requires the defender to be in 'ball-you-man' stance.

The 'ball-you-man' stance means that the defender is pointing one hand at their opponent and one hand at the basketball. They must be able to see both with their peripheral vision at all times.

The position of a help defender will vary depending on where the basketball is on the court and where their direct opponent is on the court at that time.

When the basketball is on the weak-side and below the free-throw line, the players two passes away will often be in either 'High-I' or 'Low-I'.

This is an important concept to understand for the article so I'll give you a brief introduction here...

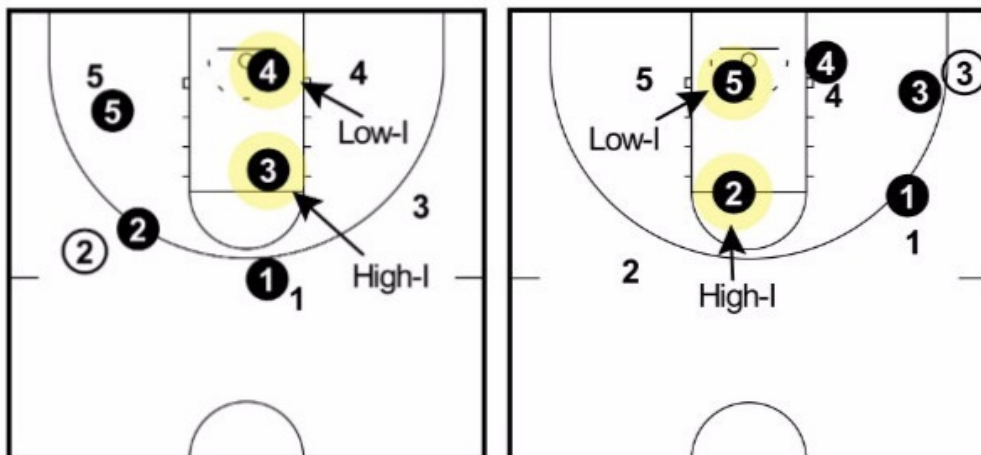
When the basketball is on either of the wings or in one of the corners, there should always be 2 help defenders with at least one foot on the split-line (the line down the middle of the court).

1. A help defender close to the rim in the paint (low-I)

2. A help defender near the free-throw line (high-I).

By establishing these two help defenders, it makes it much easier for the defensive players to know their understand their roles and rotations on drives to the rim by opposition players.

Here are a couple of diagrams to give you an example...



## How to Run the Man-to-Man Defense

Now, let's get into how your team will actually run the man-to-man defense during a game!

First, I'll talk about the positions the players should be in when the basketball is in different areas of the court.

After that, I'll break down what rotations must occur on the floor when there is dribble penetration from the offensive team.

### Basketball Top of the Key

Whenever the basketball is within the lane lines at the top of the key, the team has one goal: **Get it out of there!**

As soon as the basketball is dribbled over the half-court line, the point guard defender (x1) immediately starts forcing the dribbler to the sideline by angling their defensive stance.

At the same time, the wing defenders (x2 and x3) pinch in and **allow the pass to be made to a player on the wing.**

*(Note: When the basketball is at the top of the key is the only time that players one pass away don't deny the pass.)*



As for the help defenders (x4 and x5), both of them have a foot on their respective lane line.

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**The goal when the ball is at the top is to get the basketball committed to one side of the court.**

This can happen either with the point guard dribbling to one side or passing to a player on the wing.

Let me take a minute to explain why we allow the basketball to get from the top to the wing...

When the basketball is at the top of the key, the man-to-man defense is at its most vulnerable.

**The reason for this is because on a drive through the middle of the lane, the defenders can be confused on who should help and who should stay attached to their player.**

**The confusion will often lead to easy layups and open shots.**

This is because ball-side and weak-side has not been established.

However, when the basketball is established on one side of the floor, players on the floor know whether they're in help or deny and what their responsibilities are making help and rotations much quicker and easier.

## **Basketball on the Wing**

**When the basketball gets to the wing, the most important thing is that you don't allow the basketball to be reversed back to the top of the key.**

The player defending one pass away towards the top (x1) must be in complete denial position.

The on-ball defender (x2) should be playing on the high foot of the player with the basketball to take away the middle drive and force them to drive towards the baseline if they choose to dribble.

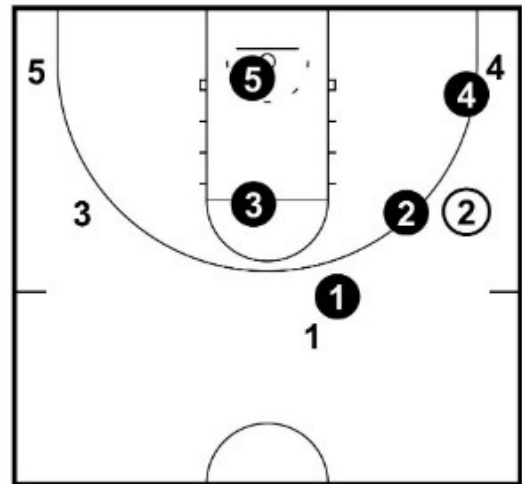
If the offensive player does attempt to dribble middle, the on-ball defender should only slide vertically to force them to the top of the key.

As for the corner defender (x4), they should be in full denial as they're one pass away from the basketball.

*(Side note: Although I don't recommend it for youth teams, there can be a benefit to allowing the pass to the corner to occur since it removes even more offensive options. I'll talk about that more in the 'Advanced' section below.)*

Looking at the help defenders, x3 and x5 should have a foot on the split line as the basketball is at the free throw line extended or lower.

This puts them in the best position to help, but still gives them time to recover and perhaps get a deflection if the players with the basketball decides to throw a skip pass.



## **Basketball in the Corner**

**Once again, when the basketball is passed to the corner, the most important thing is that we don't allow the basketball to be reversed to the wing.**

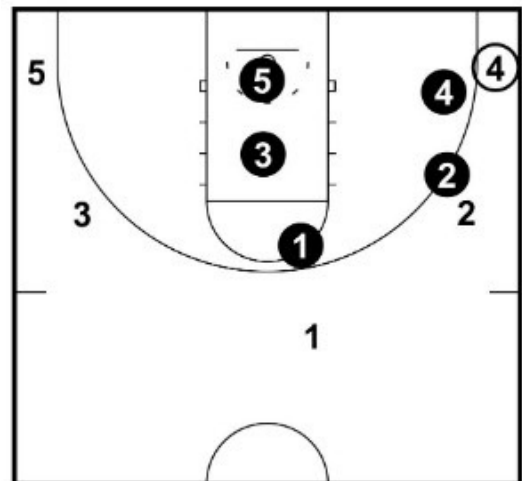
The player one pass away to the wing (x2) must be in complete denial and not allow the pass to be made to the wing.

The on-ball defender (x4) must aim to contain the player in the corner. But by overplaying the high side, if x4 is beaten off the dribble, it must be towards the baseline because there is help waiting.

The player in low-I (x5) is in help position anticipating the drive from the player with the basketball.

The player in high-I (x3) is in help position and is preparing to drop down and rotate if 4 drives the basketball and x5 needs to help.

The final player (x1) is in ball-you-man position and are as low as possible while still being able to intercept a pass to 1.



# Dribble Penetration and Rotations

If your players aren't able to make the correct rotations when an offensive player drives the basketball, you will have a very ineffective man-to-man defense.

Make sure you constantly drill the following rotations each and every practice.

## Top of the Key Drive:

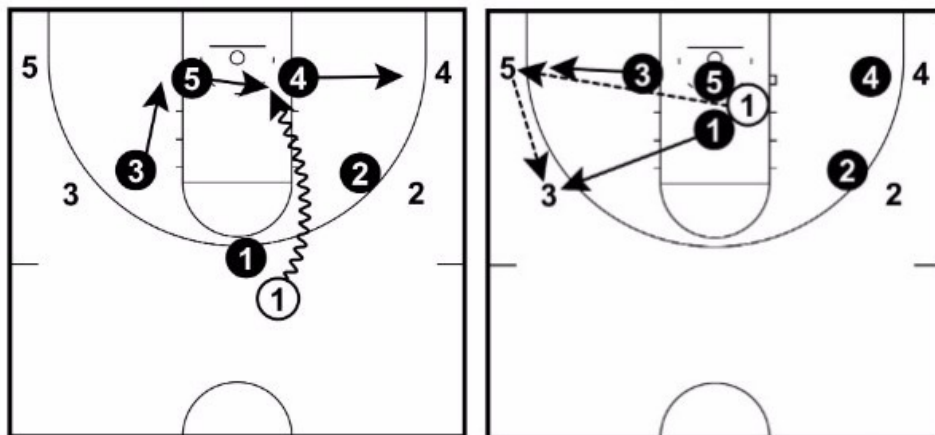
As explained in the previous section, dribble penetration from the top of the key through the foul line is the hardest penetration to defend when playing man-to-man defense.

We never want to let it happen.

This can often occur against a great point guard, if the player defending the dribbler is playing too close to their man, or if we allow ball reversals and rotations and closeouts are poor.

But knowing this will occasionally happen, your players must know how to best defend it.

**Here's how to do it:**



When the defender at the top of the key is beat and the dribbler gets into the lane, whichever defender is the lowest on the weak-side must step across to defend the basketball.

X3 doesn't help on the drive since they're one pass away. They can quickly stunt to try to make the driver hesitate or pick up the basketball, but they must not leave their direct opponent.

Since help always comes from the weak-side, x4 must step out and take away the corner three-point attempt.

The player that must help is x5 since they're the lowest on the weak-side.

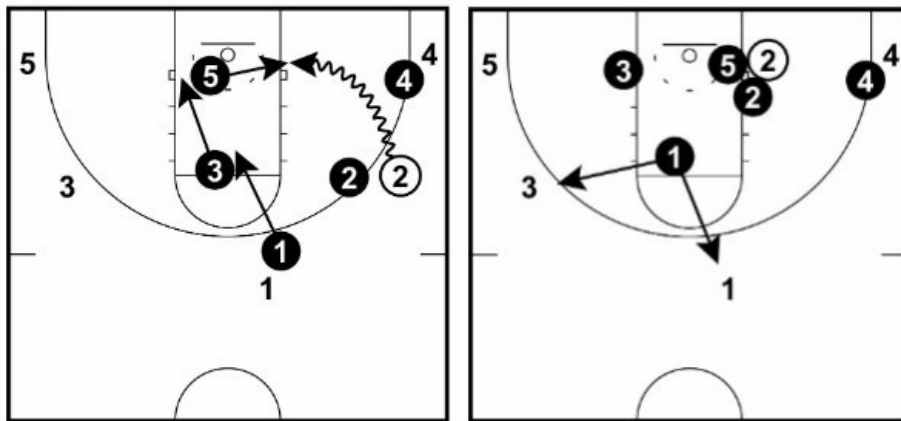
When x5 steps up to help, x1 must immediately rotate down and will now be the player that closes out on the basketball if the pass is made across court to 3 or 5.

## Wing Baseline Drive:

When the basketball is on the wing our ball-side and weak-side are clearly established which is great for the defense.

On the baseline drive from the wing, if there's an offensive and defensive player in the corner (x4), they do not help off a ball-side corner player.

*Remember: Help **always** comes from the weak side.*



The player at the top of the key (x1) is denying the ball reversal.

Then since the basketball is on the free-throw line or lower, we have high-I and low-I established in the key.

Low-I (x5) helps on the drive and meets to trap the dribbler just outside the paint. X5 and x2 trap the offensive player if they pick up the dribble.

High-I (x3) must rotate down and prevent the pass to 5 in the corner.

The final defender (x1) drops down and positions themselves so that they can intercept a lob pass made to either 3 or 1 or defend either of them if the skip pass is made over the top.

## Wing Middle Drive:

The middle drive from the wing is a bit more difficult and not a drive the defense ever wants to give up.

If the on-ball defender is correctly playing on the high side of the player with the basketball, they should be able to take a large slide or two vertically and cut off the drive or draw a charge.

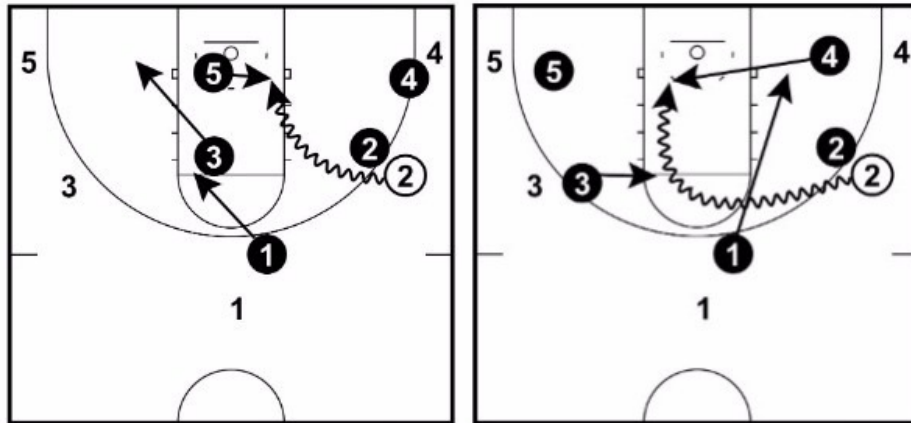
If the on-ball defender has been caught out of position, the next goal is to force the offensive player to dribble to the top of the key.

If the on-ball defender has really been caught out of position and the drive is inevitable, the lowest weak side player must step across and challenge the shot and the correct rotations must take place.

X3 can quickly stunt on this drive with their back to the basketball in an attempt to make the offensive pick up the ball as long as they can quickly close out on their player without giving up the shot. They should never fully commit to a trap as it will leave the wing shooter open.

This can be a difficult rotation as if the dribbler crosses over the split line with their dribble, the help defender (ball-side and weak-side) changes.

Take a look at the following diagrams to see the differences and the rotations...

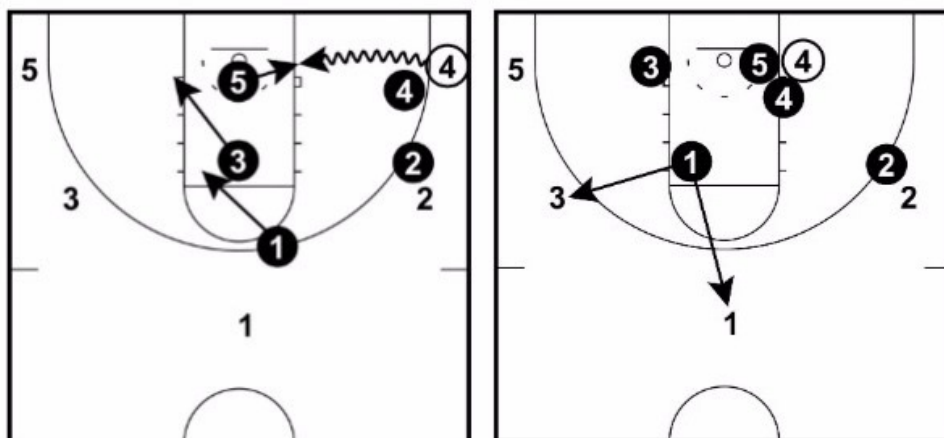


As you can see, allowing the middle drive ends up very problematic and confusing for the defense.

So make sure it never happens!

### **Corner Baseline Drive:**

The rotations on baseline penetration from the corner are very similar to wing penetration



The defender playing on the wing player (x2) makes sure to deny the easy reverse pass back outside.

The player in low-I (x5) is responsible for stepping across to set a trap with x4 if the player with the basketball decides to drive baseline to the basket.

If this occurs, x3 drops down and cuts off the passing lane to the player x5 was defending.

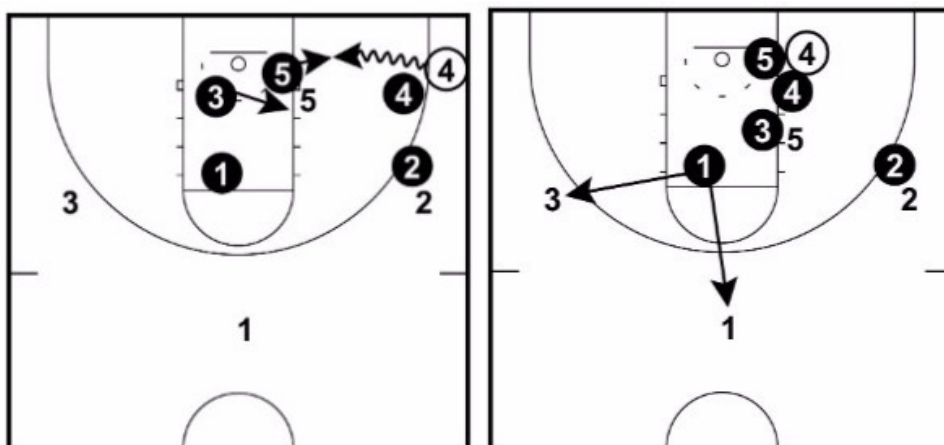


Finally, x1 drops and now has two offensive players they must position themselves in-between. If the interception pass is there, go for it. If not and the skip pass is made, x1 is responsible for closing out on either 1 or 3.

### **Drive with Low Post Defender**

Dribble penetration from the corner or wing, while there's an offensive player in the low post, isn't common but can happen.

Here are the rotations when it does occur:



Since we 1/2 front on the low side when there's a player in the low post, it's easier for the low post defender (x5) to take one step across and trap the dribbler on the baseline with the on-ball defender (x4).

To take away the pocket pass to the low post player, the defender in low-I (x3) must step across and guard the pass to the low post player.

The defender in high-I (x1) must then drop and they're responsible being in position to either intercept a lob pass or closeout on either 1 or 3.

To not give 4 an easy pass out of the trap, x2 must continue complete denial of the outlet pass to 2.

### **Drive with High Post Defender**

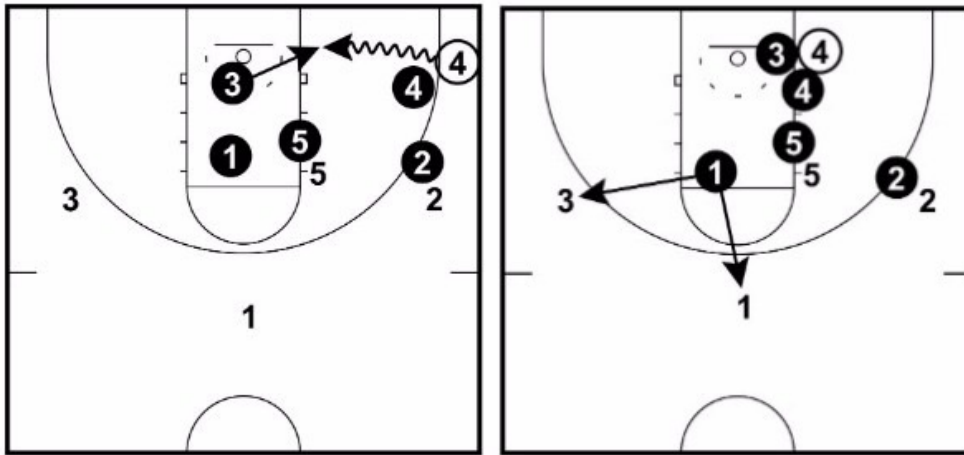
When there are offensive and defensive players in the high post, the defender does not help out on the drive as they're too far away and all it takes is a pocket pass for an open jumper.

Instead, low-I (x3) steps across as traps the dribbler with the on-ball defender (x4) just below the low block.

The defender in the high post (x5), denies the pass to the high post player and doesn't help.

The player denying the retreat pass (x2) continues to deny the pass outside.

This leaves high-I (x1) to drop in and is now responsible for intercepting the pass or closing out on 3 or 1.



### Skip Pass Rotations

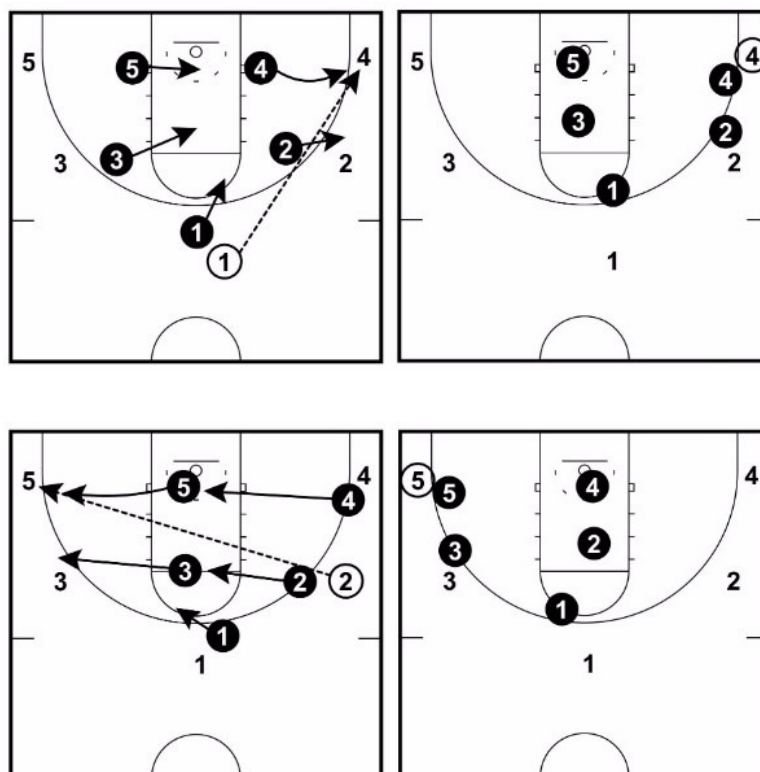
On any skip pass, the most important thing is that the player closing out on the player who receives the basketball closes out in a banana cut so that there's no middle penetration.

Every player on the team must be committed to sprinting to their next position on the flight of the basketball.

Often it's not the closeout player who's too slow, it's the players who were previously on the ball-side not sprinting into help positions quick enough.

Also, depending on what level you're playing, you might want to run the shooter off the three-point line if they're a good shooter.

Here are a few diagrams to show you close out rotations:



## Advanced

### Top to Wing Pass - Should you allow it?

In the guide above, I break down the variation allowing the pass from the top of the key to the wing because I believe it to be the most effective way to play man-to-man defense.

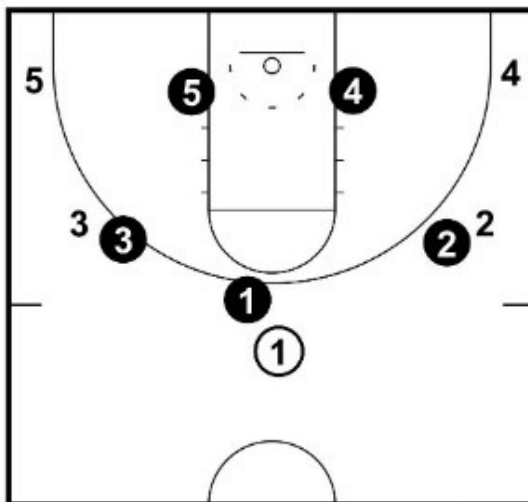
Since the man-to-man defense is most vulnerable from the top, why would we want to keep the ball there by denying the pass to the wing?

But there are other ways to do it...

Is it easier to simply make a denying one pass away a universal rule including from the top?

Here are a few ways why you might consider denying this pass to the wing:

- 1. Players can sometimes get confused when exactly they should allow the pass and when they should deny.*
- 2. It's another rule for players to remember.*
- 3. Sometimes putting more pressure on the point guard is a good thing!*
- 4. Most teams begin their offense with a top to wing pass. By denying it, you will often disrupt the opponents offense.*



Since there is no right or wrong answer to choosing to deny or allow the pass, each coach must decide individually after looking at the pros and cons.

It's up to you!

### Defending the Post

Knowing how your team is going to defend the post is crucial to a great man-to-man defense.

You must have a consistent system that's based on the strengths and weaknesses of the post players on your team.

But before we get into any of that, here's the main rule for defending the post...

#### **Don't let it get there!**

Allowing the basketball to get into the post is bad news for any defense. It will often lead to part of the defense collapsing or a silly foul by a post defender.

Before we discuss the ways to defend the post, here are 3 tips to keeping the basketball out of there in the first place...

## 1. Beat them down the floor

By beating the opposition post player down the floor, it takes away their ability to establish strong early position that can result in a quick pass inside and an easy score.

## 2. Great on-ball defense

Guards pressuring the player with the basketball can go a long way to discouraging the pass inside to the post player. Every on-ball defender should be active with their hands in the passing lane and tracing the ball.

## 3. Push them off the block

If a post player does establish position on the block, a post defender can move them further out by keeping their arm bar locked still while pushing the offensive player out with the strength of their lower body.

## Positioning to Deny the Post Player

There are many different ways to deny the pass into the post, but here are my preferences:

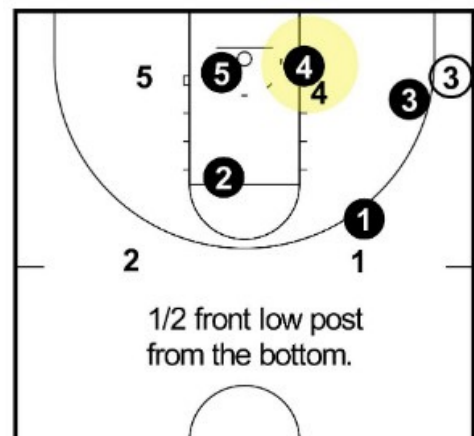
*(I'm not a fan of fronting the low post)*

### 1. Basketball above the free-throw line.

When the basketball is above the free-throw line, the post defender should 3/4 front keeping themselves on the line between the basketball and their opponent.

For the offensive team to make this entry pass, it would have to be very accurate and the post defender will still have time to establish position between them and the basket.

Also, keep in mind that there is a player in low-I who can pick off any passes made over the top.

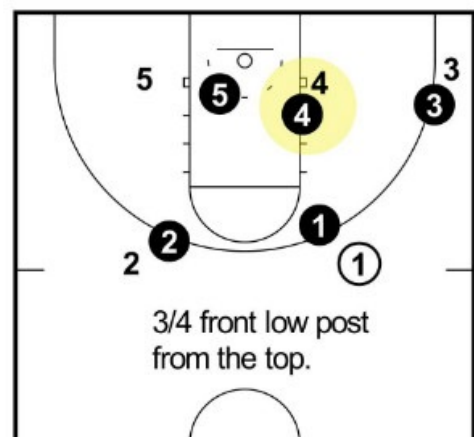


### 2. Basketball below the free-throw line.

When the basketball is below the free-throw line, the post defender should 1/2 front from the baseline side.

By doing so, they're in perfect position to help on any baseline drives.

Also, since the pass is now shorter, only half fronting the offensive player will allow the defender to still be able to establish position behind if they're unable to get a deflection on the pass inside.

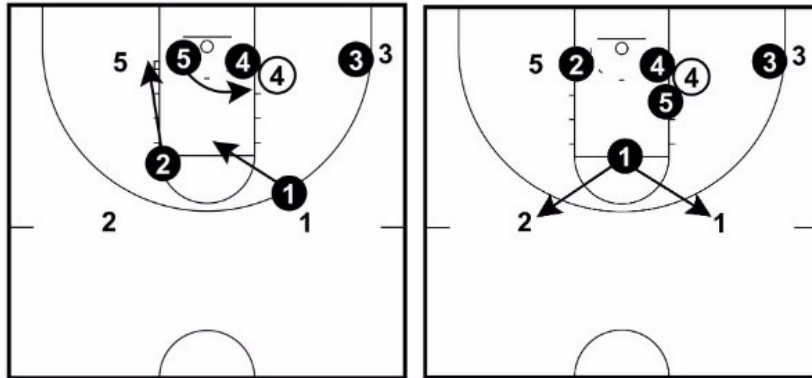


## Trapping a Dominant Low Post Player

There will be times when you come up against such a dominant low post player that you have no choice but to send help and trap them in the post.

When this happens, I recommend sending trapping with the player in the low-I help position.

Here's how it works:



When 4 receives the pass in the post, x4 must immediately establish position behind.

Immediately, x5 will sprint across and set a trap on the high side with x4.

X2 drops to defend 5 and then x1 drops and becomes the interceptor.

Their role is to pick off any passes made to 1 or 2. If none are available for steal or deflection, they're the first to close out to whoever receives the outlet pass.

On the ball-side, x3 never allows the simple pass out and is in complete denial while the basketball is in the post.

## Transition Defense

You can never have a great man-to-man defensive team if you're not a great transition defense team.

Educate your players on the importance of this and then get them to buy-in and commit to transitioning back quickly after each offensive possession.

The secret to being a great transition defense team is that your players must know how many people are going to the offensive boards and how many people are to immediately retreat on any shot attempt.

**The worst possible thing a player can do after an offensive shot is to stand and watch. Neither transitioning back on defense or attacking the offensive glass.**

Most coaches refer to this as being in 'no man's land'. A place a player never wants to be!

Here's what I recommend when running the man-to-man defense:

**Send three players to the offensive glass and send two players back on transition defense immediately after the shot.**

As the two players transition back, the goal is to establish a top defender and a bottom defender.

The bottom defender protects the rim while the goal of the top defender is to slow down the basketball and give the players that were competing for offensive rebounds time to recover on defense.

This is the method I've found the most success with, but it might not necessarily be the best option for your team.



For instance, if you have a very small team that never gets offensive rebounds, you could send all 5 players back immediately after each shot in an effort to never give up any transition baskets. There are numerous NCAA teams that currently do this.

## **Defending BLOB's**

Inbounds plays often provide great scoring opportunities for the offensive team.

They have well-thought-out plays and are in the perfect position to run them.

The main goal when defending a baseline in-bounds plays is to get the opponent to throw the ball to the top and set up their main offense.

If you can do that, you've successfully defended the BLOB.

Defending a baseline in-bounds while playing man-to-man defense can be done in two ways:

### **1. Stick to man-to-man defense**

If you're going to stick to the man-to-man defense on baseline inbounds, there are a few things you must be prepared to do to stop the opponent from getting an easy score.

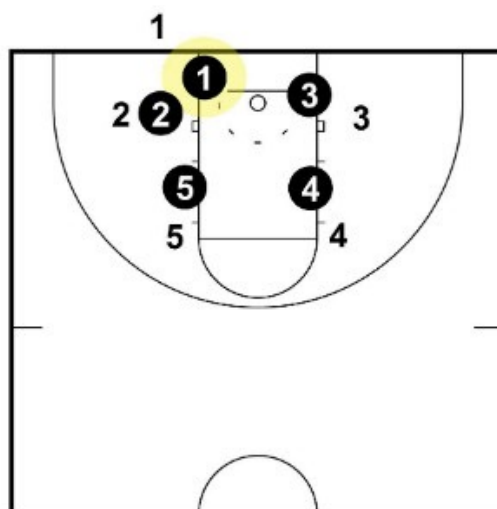
#### **a. Position the in-bounds defender near the rim**

inbounds-defenderThe main goal here is to take away the easy pass and score under the rim and force the opponent to pass out to the wing.

Depending on where the in-bounds pass takes place, the in-bounds passer's defender should position themselves along the lane line connecting to the baseline to take away the under the rim pass.

#### **b. Switch Everything**

Since the up-screens and cross-screens can be difficult to defend on BLOB plays, I often recommend that teams switch everything.



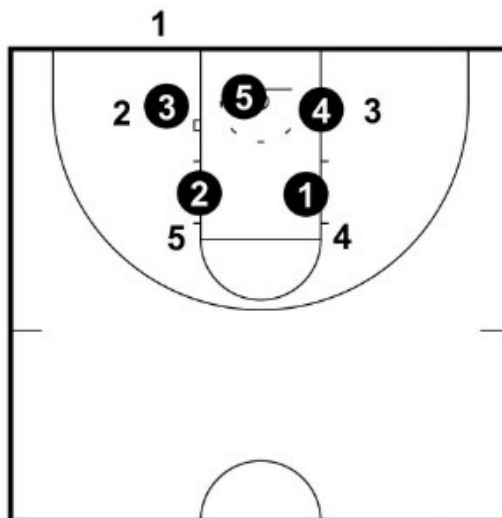
The key is for defenders to stay below the offensive players and keep themselves on the basket side of their opponents.

## 2. Run a 2-3 zone

Depending on the level of basketball you're coaching and the rules of your league, you might consider running a 2-3 zone on inbounds plays.

Once the play has been in-bounded to either the wing or the top, players switch straight back into their man-to-man defense.

The reasons the 2-3 zone works so well on BLOB's is because it floods the key with defenders and doesn't allow the easy baskets under the rim that can often occur when playing man-to-man defense.



## Defending the Pick and Roll

The pick-and-roll is arguably the toughest action in basketball to defend against.

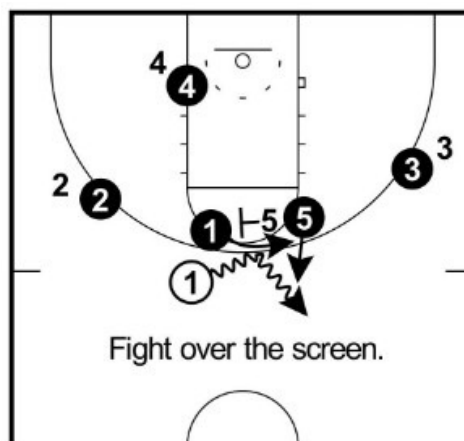
When playing man-to-man defense, there are a few ways you can choose to defend this action...

### 1. Fight Over the Screen

This is my recommended method of defending against the pick-and-roll.

This requires the screener's defender 'hedging' out high and forcing the dribbler to take a few extra vertical steps which allows the on-ball defender to fight over the screen and recover back in front.

This can be difficult for youth players, but hedging and fighting over screens are great habits for players to get into at a young age as it will be a very important skill when they're older.

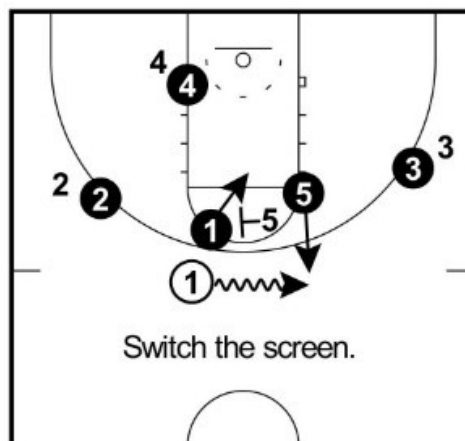


## 2. Switch the Screen

Another option a coach has at their disposal is to switch on any pick-and-roll.

As the name implies, this simply means that the defenders hold their positions and swap the offensive player they're guarding.

This can be problematic if you end up with small player defending a big player or vice versa, but at the youth level players aren't often smart enough to take advantage of it.



## 3. Go Under the Screen

To go under the screen, the screener's defender can take a quick step back to give the on-ball defender room to squeeze past the screen and immediately establish position in front of the dribbler.

While this is probably the easiest way to do it, I do believe players are missing out on the important skill of learning to fight over screens and how to hedge.



## Conclusion

The 5 main man-to-man defense rules:

1. No middle penetration.
2. No ball reversals.
3. No help one pass away.
4. No face cuts.
5. Move when the ball moves.

The man-to-man defense is one of the best defenses you can run with your team no matter what level you're coaching.

With nearly all high-level basketball teams using this defense, the skills that are learned in man-to-man defense are crucial for all players to develop from the earliest age possible.

Sure, it can be difficult to teach. But they payoff for your players will definitely be worth it in the long run.

If you're a coach that puts developing players over winning youth basketball games, then this defense is for you!