

Basketball Practice Game Concepts and Drills

You should be cycling through these various game concepts and drills at every practice. Through repetition and consistency, the kids will learn how to play the game of basketball, properly shoot the ball, shoot a lay-up, pass, and dribble.

At this age, they don't need much variety. Keep things simple and repetitive, so they can build good habits. Refer to the Basketball Skills Progression Document to see the correct form on dribbling, passing, shooting, lay-ups, footwork, and game concepts.

Pick one drill from each of the following categories for each practice:

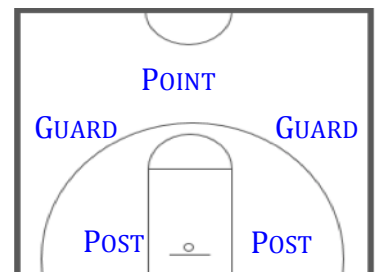
- **Game Concepts/Scrimmaging**
- **Shooting**
- **Dribbling**
- **Passing**
- **Lay-ups**

If there's time, there are other drills that you can do, listed at the bottom. Dribbling, lay-ups, passing, and some kind of scrimmage or game play should be all done at every practice.

Game Concepts

Yes, this seems very basic, but we are laying the groundwork for these kids becoming good basketball players. There is no sense in teaching them about any fundamentals if they don't understand how the game works at a basic level. You may need to take a few minutes at each practice to remind the kids about basketball game concepts.

- **OFFENSIVE CONCEPTS**
 - What does offense mean?
 - The team that has the ball.
 - What is the offense trying to do with the ball?
 - Put it in the basket.
 - Can you run/walk with the ball?
 - Discuss pivoting vs. traveling
 - Can you dribble the ball with 2 hands?
 - Can you kick the ball?
 - Can you dribble the ball again after you have picked it up from dribbling?
 - Triple Threat Position – Face the Hoop
 - You can pass, dribble, and shoot from this position.
 - What is faster: Passing or Dribbling?
 - Demonstrate that you can get the ball to the basket faster by passing vs. dribbling.
 - Should you shoot the ball with someone in your face?
 - Pivot and pass to an open player.
 - Introduce the different positions and where they typically start off on offense.
 - Point guard – Starts the offense
 - Wing guards – On the wings
 - Posts – On the blocks, next to the basket.
 - Important to keep spacing on the court.

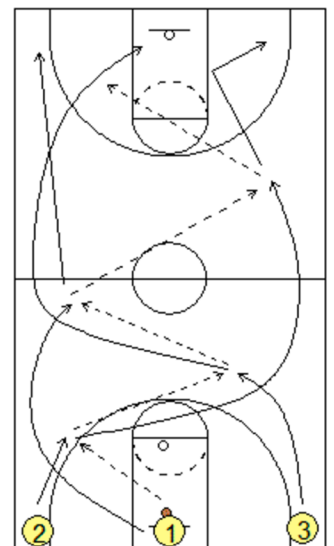


- Show them the different spots to cut and move and to stay spread out.
 - Wing, elbow, baseline, block, top of the key, etc.
 - If someone is already there, cut somewhere else.
 - Stay spread out, cut to an open spot.
- Introduce 1 out-of-bounds play.
 - Keep it very simple and easy to remember.
- What should you do when a shot goes up?
 - Crash the boards: Go for the rebound. Follow your shot.
- What should you do as soon as the defense gets the ball, either from a steal or off a rebound?
 - Immediately run back to protect the basket. No pressing.
- **DEFENSIVE CONCEPTS**
 - What does defense mean?
 - The team without the ball.
 - What is your job on defense?
 - Stop the other team from putting the ball in the basket.
 - When your team is on defense, you are all “goalies” protecting the basket (the goal) together from the ball.
 - Everyone has a player to guard, but the ball is the #1 priority on defense.
 - If a player doesn’t have the ball, can they score?
 - No. Always know where the ball is.
 - What is a foul?
 - Can you push the other player?
 - Can you hit the other player?
 - Can you grab the other player?
 - Good defensive position
 - Feet shoulder-length apart, knees bent slightly, and arms out
 - Watch belly button of offensive player. Only body part that can’t fake you out!
 - What should you be watching on defense?
 - #1 – the ball
 - #2 – your player you are guarding
 - Back to the basket. Does the basket move? Only the ball and player move.
 - Player should ALWAYS be in a position on defense where they can see both the ball and player at the same time. If they can’t see both, it isn’t good defense.
 - *GAME TIP:* Remind your players on defense, “Where’s the ball? Where’s your player? Point to them both.”
 - **REBOUNDING:** When a shot goes up, you should find your player and box them out.
 - Players tend to turn and look at the basket and run to it vs. first finding a player to box them out. Introduce this concept now, so it can be reinforced later.
- **SCRIMMAGING**
 - Off Ball Screens
 - Please see the progression chart for instructions on how to teach setting a screen and using a screen. Make sure the defense knows how to defend against a screen.
 - 1-on-1 half-court
 - You only have 4 dribbles to use on offense.

- Use them to go quickly and directly to the basket.
 - Defense needs to move feet to keep the ball from going to the basket.
- 2-on-2 or 3-on-3 half-court
 - No dribbling, just passing.
 - Focus on pivoting and quick passes.
 - Defense can steal the ball.
 - Try to keep the ball moving towards the basket.
- 5-on-5 full court
 - Simulate how a game will be with the same game rules.
 - Make sure to stop and correct the kids. It seems tedious, but by the end of the season, they will catch on to the concepts.
 - You will see the results of stopping and correcting them in the games.

Passing

- **CHEST PASS**
 - Kids pair up with only 1 ball for the pair.
 - Start close and gradually move farther apart as they progress. Make sure they are keeping proper form as they move apart.
 - They should hit the target directly in the chest.
 - See how long they can go without someone dropping the ball.
- **CHEST PASS SHUFFLE**
 - Same drill, except kids are shuffling down the court passing the ball back and forth to each other.
- **BOUNCE PASS**
 - How to do a Bounce Pass should only be introduced after the kids have mastered a chest pass properly with the correct form.
 - Mastered means that they consistently do all of the steps in the Basketball Progression Chart document for that particular skill.
 - Kids pair up with only 1 ball for the pair.
 - Start close and gradually move farther apart as they progress. Make sure they are keeping proper form as they move apart.
- **3-PERSON WEAVE**
 - This may be a bit advanced for this age, but it is worth a shot to try it out at once of your practices if you have the time.
 - This teaches the kids to pass and move. And, it is a great conditioning exercise, and a great way to start practice.
 - There are 3 lines on the baseline. The players in the middle line all have a ball.
 - The ball gets passed player 2, and player 1 immediately follows their pass and runs behind player 2.
 - Player 2 immediately passes to player 3, and follows their pass, running behind player 3.
 - Player 3 then passes it to player 1, and follows their pass again. This continues the whole way down the court.
 - If you walk through this drill at first, it will be easier to grasp.



- There is no dribbling, traveling, and bounce passes. Everyone is moving together at the same time down the court.
- Focus on passing the ball ahead of the player or rather, where they will be. Meet the player with the pass.
- Have the player receiving the pass call out the name of the passer as a way to encourage communication.
- *PROGRESSION DRILL*
 - Have the last person receiving the ball at the end of the court shoot a lay-up.

Dribbling

Discuss with the players about how to use their dribbles in a game. In the game, they have a 5-second rule while dribbling, before it is a turnover. These are the dribbling concepts that should be taught to the players throughout the season, at practices and in games:

1. Don't dribble as soon as you get the ball.
2. Use your dribble to go directly to the basket, not the corners of the court.
3. Use your dribbles wisely and efficiently.

• BASIC DRIBBLING REVIEW

- Every player has a ball. If there are not enough balls, have them pair off and take turns.
- Have them spread out in a line, with enough space to dribble.
- Start with the right hand and demonstrate the correct form.
 - Knees bent.
 - Pushing the ball with fingers, not slapping the ball with palm.
 - Ball kept low to the ground, bouncing up to about knee level.
 - Eyes up!
 - Opposite hand protecting.
 - Player should have their body and arm in front, protecting the ball.
- Blow the whistle to have them do a Crossover to the other hand.
- *PROGRESSION DRILL*
 - Introduce Between the Legs and Behind the Back once the Crossover Dribble is mastered. Refer to the Basketball Progression Document for instructions on how to teach those skills.

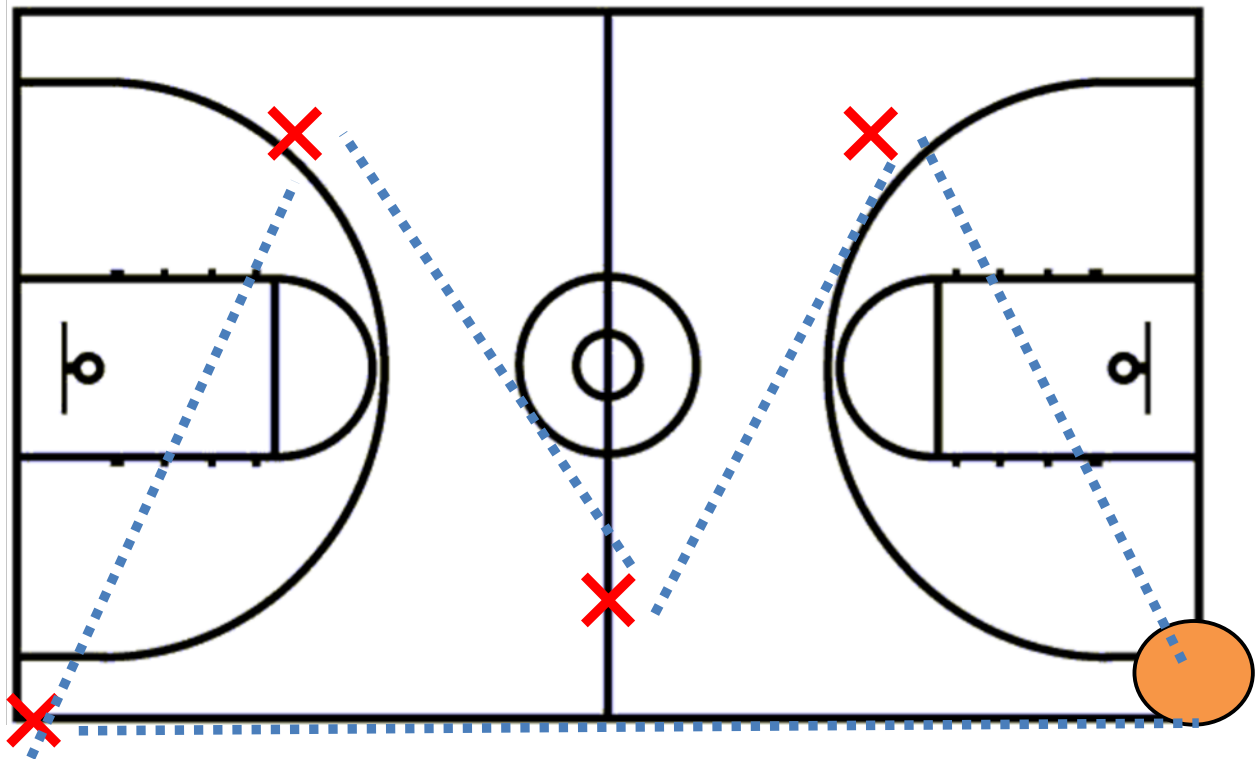
• DRIBBLE, JUMP STOP, PIVOT

- Players line up under the basket along the baseline, each with a basketball.
- When you say "GO", they start to dribble towards the opposite basket with their dominant hand.
 - It is important they maintain good form and not lose control of the basketball. It isn't a race!
- When you say "STOP", they come to a jump stop and pivot on the same foot.
- Say "GO" again to have them start dribbling again.

• DRIBBLE AND CROSSOVER

- Should only be introduced after players have mastered the Basic Dribbling Drill.
- Every player has a ball and starts out in the right-hand corner of the court.
- Place the cones (or have a coach stand there) at the red X's.
- Starting with their right hand, the players will dribble to the red X, and then do a Crossover Dribble, quickly changing direction and changing hands.

- Repeat this Crossover Dribble at each of the X's.
- Once they get to the final X, the player can walk down doing a Crossover Dribble the whole length of the court.
- Allow the players to go as slowly as they need to in order to do this drill correctly.
- *PROGRESSION DRILL*
 - Once your players have mastered this drill and are strong with their lay-ups, on the 3rd X, skip the Crossover Dribble and transition into a right-handed lay-up instead.
 - Make sure the player still gets to the cone in order to get the correct angle to the basket.
 - At the red X, the player should take only 1-2 dribbles max for their lay-up.
 - Integrate the different dribbling techniques for changing direction, such as a Spin Dribble, Between the Legs, and Behind the Back.



Lay-ups

Lay-ups should be a progression drill. If the kids don't understand the footwork, they should not be doing a full lay-up while dribbling.

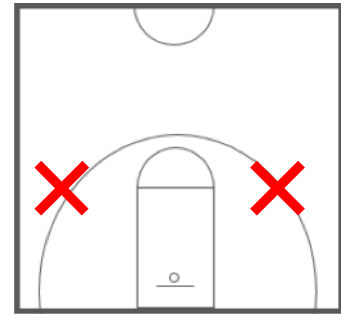
- **LAY-UPS, NO DRIBBLE AND 2 STEPS**
 - Each player has a ball and lines up on the right side. Feel free to split up the kids if you have enough coaches to watch and help the kids.
 - No dribbling! Just footwork and shooting the lay-up.
 - Start with two steps, Right than jumping off the Left.
 - Ball is shot up by the head, not thrown underhanded.
 - Right knee comes up with the ball.
 - Hit the corner of the box on the backboard to bank it in the basket.
- **LAY-UPS, NO DRIBBLE AND 3 STEPS**
 - Each player has a ball and lines up on the right side. Feel free to split up the kids if you have enough coaches to watch and help the kids.
 - Still no dribbling!
 - 3 steps: Left, Right, and jumping off the Left foot.
- **LAY-UPS, 1 DRIBBLE**
 - It is essential to not progress to this part until a player has mastered the footwork.
 - Each player has a ball and lines up on the right side. Feel free to split up the kids if you have enough coaches to watch and help the kids.
 - The player still takes 3 steps, but adds in 1 dribble with the first step.
 - 3 steps: Left (dribble), Right, and jumping off the Left foot.
 - Make sure to explain that this isn't traveling, because their right foot is technically their pivot foot. Eventually, they will do this quicker, but this is how they will learn the right footwork.
- **LAY-UPS ON THE LEFT SIDE OR WEAK SIDE**
 - This is the age where we can start to introduce left-handed (or right-handed, for left-handed players) lay-ups in preparation for try-outs and travel basketball.
 - Go through the same progression as you did for the right side or strong side.
 - The footwork is opposite: right, left, right.
 - Refer to the Basketball Progression Document for more instructions.

Shooting

At this age, you can begin to focus more on the fundamentals of shooting into practice. The kids should go through the drills more efficiently, leaving more time for more work on shooting. Emphasis should be on proper form, not making the basket. Encourage the players to shoot far away from the basket, unless they are able to maintain good shooting form. Refer to the Basketball Skills Progression Document for correct shooting form.

- **SHOOTING THE BALL OFF THE PASS**

- Split the kids into two different groups, lined up on opposite sides of the court.
- One line is the shooting line, and the other is the passing line.
- In the passing line, give the first two players a ball.
- The first person in the shooting line runs towards the passing line, ready to catch the ball.
- As the pass is being caught, the shooter plants the foot closest to the basket as their pivot foot.
- Once the ball is caught, the player should pivot towards the basket and completely square their shoulders and be under control. No fading away from the basket or off-balance shooting. They should catch the ball stable and be squared up towards the basket.
- The shooter gets their own rebound, passes it to the next person in the passing line, and goes to the back of the passing line. The passer goes to the back of the shooting line.



- **SHOOTING THE BALL OFF THE DRIBBLE**

- The players all line up with a ball on either side of the basket, as if they are going to shoot a lay-up.
- Put a cone on the ground where you want the players to jump stop and shoot.
- The players will dribble towards the cone, do a jump stop, and shoot the basketball.
- Pick different spots on the court for different practices.

Additional drills

If there's time, you can do any of these other drills. The focus should be on passing, dribbling, lay-ups, and game concepts.

- **LIGHTING OR KNOCKOUT**
 - This game may take a few times for the kids to get it, but once they do, it is a fun game that teaches them about following their shot, rebounding, and the importance of bank shots.
 - The players to line up in a single line starting on the free throw line, facing the hoop.
 - The first two players in the line each have a ball.
 - The first player shoots from the free throw line. Once the first player shoots, the player behind can shoot from the free throw line to try and make it before the player ahead of them.
 - If the first player does not get the ball in the hoop before the player behind them, the first player is out.
 - You do not need to go back to the line to shoot each time. It is just your first shot.
 - Once the player makes it, they pass it to the next person in line, and go to the back of the line.
 - Last player left wins!
- **MOVE AND GET OPEN**
 - Coach stands at the top of the half-court with the ball.
 - Have the kids partner up with someone they would likely guard in a game.
 - One of the kids on offense and the other on defense.
 - The player on offense needs to move to get open. The player on defense needs to try and stop them from getting the ball.
- **DRIBBLING GAME – KNOCK OUT**
 - This is a great way to teach kids about dribbling, all while learning how to dribble.
 - Every player has a basketball inside a defined area, usually the lines on the floor.
 - If your ball is knocked outside of the area, you are out.
 - You can knock away another player's ball, but make sure you don't lose yours in the process!
 - As the number of kids left in the game go down, shrink the size of the game area.
 - Last one in wins!