

INDIVIDUAL DRILLS

Basketball Ball-Handling Fundamentals and Drills

Learning to become a good ball-handler, and developing a feel for the ball is vitally important in becoming an excellent all-around player.

Hold The Ball Correctly

The most difficult skills, including shooting, passing, catching, dribbling, and rebounding, involve holding the ball. Work on these skills every day. Here is how to practice holding the ball:

- Hold the ball with your fingertips. The palms of your hands should not touch the ball.
- Make sure your fingers are far apart.

Hold the ball as much as possible at home while watching TV or listening to the radio or music. It is said that the great Pete Maravich slept with his basketball and held it during his sleep! While watching TV, you can hold the ball (with both hands) and spin it around in your hands.

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

Finger Grabs:

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

Slaps:

Pound or slap the ball hard from hand to hand.

Tipping:

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

Circles:

Put your feet together and make circles around both legs. Then circle around the back. And then circle around the head. Then combine them and move the ball in circles around your head, then down your body, down around your knees, and then around your ankles ("candy cane"). Then come back up again. Be sure to use your fingertips, not the palms.

Around Each Leg and Figure Eights:

Put one leg forward and move the ball in a circular motion around the leg. Then do the other leg. Finally, spread your legs out wide with the ball in front of you. Move the ball around through your legs in a figure-of-eight motion. Keep your eyes forward and don't let the ball hit the floor. After 30 seconds, reverse the direction.

Drops:

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

Toss Up and Catch Behind:

Here's a fun drill the players like. Toss the ball up over your head. Reverse pivot and catch the ball behind your back.

Crab Walk:

Walk, bent over up the floor and put the ball between the legs, back and forth as you go. The ball is brought over the front of the thigh, then through the legs and then behind the opposite thigh and around and over the thigh

One-Ball Rapid Fire Passing Drill

Have your players line up facing a solid wall, about two feet from the wall (or a toss-back rebounding device). Each player begins rapid fire passing against the wall, moving back about two feet with each pass until 10 feet away (5th pass). Then he/she starts moving closer to wall by two feet with each pass, until 10 passes are completed. Repeat this 10-pass cycle until each player has made a total 20 passes.

Pointers:

Make sure good passing technique is used, and passers step-into the pass.

Basketball Dribbling

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

You may dribble:

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

How to Dribble

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

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

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

"Speed Dribble" (in the open court)

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

Crossover Dribble

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

In and Out Dribble

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

Hesitation Dribble ("Rocker Move")

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

Behind the Back Dribble, Through the Legs Dribble

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

To do the behind the back dribble, dribble the ball once behind you and pick up the dribble with the opposite hand. For example, you are dribbling with the right hand. Get your body ahead of the ball on your right side, then crossover bounce it once behind you over to the left hand.

The between the legs move is similar, except with one bounce through the legs to the other hand.

Spin Move

The spin move is an excellent move to get around a defender in the open court. But be careful of a defender stealing the ball from behind, on your "blind side" as you make the spin. When making the spin, reverse pivot (spin) on your front foot, and pull the ball hard and quickly around your body. Don't let your hand get under the ball (a "carrying" violation). Then continue the dribble with the opposite hand.

Back-up Dribble and Crossover

The back-up dribble is useful in retreating from a defender or a trap. Dribble backwards and then do a quick crossover dribble (or a through the legs dribble or around the back dribble) to get free.

Have your players practice each of these dribbles at each practice for 5-10 minutes. Have them line-up along the sideline, and dribble from sideline to sideline right-handed, and then back left-handed. Do each of the moves down and back twice before moving onto the next move.

Up and Downs

Start by dribbling the ball in front of you so that the ball reaches your waist high. Gradually, bounce the ball harder and harder until you are dribbling the ball as high as you can without jumping. Then gradually dribble the ball lower and lower until you are on one knee, finishing as close to the floor as possible. Pound the ball quickly to keep it going. Then do it with the other hand.

Kills

Dribble the ball waist high, then suddenly "kill" it by dribbling it as low as you can, hold this for a few seconds, then bring it back up to waist high. Do this several times with each hand.

Circle Dribbles

This drill is similar to "Circles" except now the ball is dribbled. Dribble around your left leg then your right. Next, using both hands, dribble around both legs which should be together. Next, kneel down on one knee and dribble around your body and under your leg. After that, switch knees and continue. Then, while on your knees, dribble around your body, using both hands.

Figure Eight

This drill is similar to the ball-handling figure eights drill except now the ball is dribbled through your legs in a figure-of-eight motion. Use both hands and be sure to look up while doing this drill.

Back and Forth Under the Legs

Get crouched over with your right knee and leg forward. V-dribble the ball behind the extended leg. Repeat behind the other leg.

Crossover Dribbles

Dribble with your right hand. Bounce the ball once on the right side, then cross the ball over in front of you by bouncing it to the left. The left hand now bounces it on the left once, and then crossover back to the right, where the right takes over again. Repeat this procedure.

V-Dribble in Front

Start with the right hand and dribble once on the right side. Then dribble the ball in front you, as if you were going to cross over to the left side. Instead of getting it with your left hand, roll your right hand over the top of the ball, and bring it back to the right. Keep dribbling like this: right then cross over V-dribble. Repeat with the left hand.

Side V-Dribble

Now do the v-dribble on the side. Do both left and right hands.

"Tight Chairs" Dribbling Drill

This drill will improve dribbling and dribble moves with many repetitions in a short period of time. Inform players that they can also do this drill at home in their basement or driveway.

Set-up:

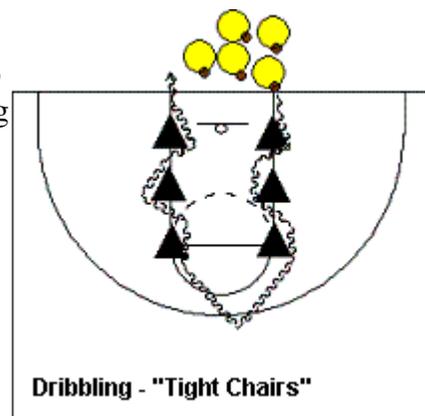
Set up six chairs or cones as indicated in the diagram. Start with the left hand, so face the row of chairs on the right with their seats facing the endline, while the seats of the left row of chairs face the half-court line. This is so the dribbler can hit the seat of the chair with his off hand as he/she makes a dribble move.

The Drill:

Each player has a ball and will dribble between the chairs, making a prescribed dribble-move at each chair. Do the same move at each of the six chairs and will do one or two "laps" through the chairs for each dribble move (depending on how much time you want to spend on the drill). Some of the dribble moves to practice are:

- (1) the crossover dribble
- (2) in-and-out move
- (3) behind the back move
- (4) thru the legs dribble
- (5) spin move

Start with the left hand. After doing all the moves left-handed, turn the chairs around, start from the opposite side and do all the same moves with the right hand.



Basketball Lay-ups

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

Footwork

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

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

Aim

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

The Push Release

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

Underhand Release

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

Simple drill for teaching the footwork

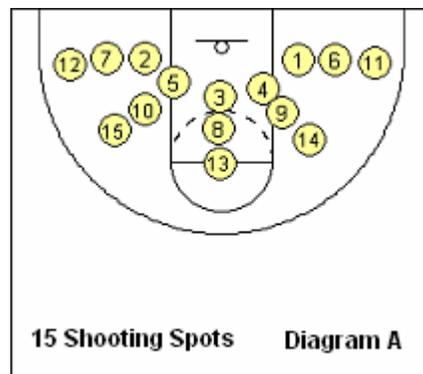
Have the players get into a line near the right side of the basket (to shoot the right-handed lay-up). Each player takes a turn. You can use more than one basket if you have enough assistants to watch each player's technique. This drill works on correct footwork. Have the player (with a ball) face the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

Individual Shooting Work-Out

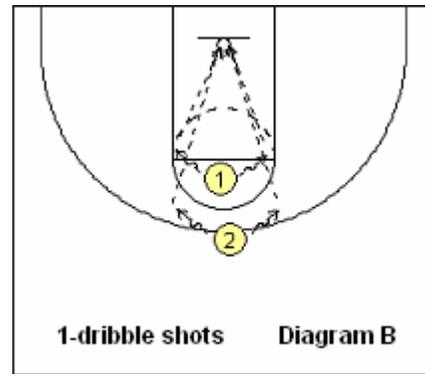
This is an individual shooting work-out that you can do on your own or as a team. Make sure you are using good shooting form, getting your feet set, good balance, no drifting sideways, etc. Shoot game-style jump-shots, not flat-footed shots that you will never actually get in a game.

Spin the ball back to yourself and rebound all shots. With every miss, rebound and keep shooting until you put it in the basket. Try starting with 15 shooting spots.

- Start on either side down low about five feet from the basket, just outside the block (spot #1). Make 5 shots and then move to the opposite side and make 5 more there (spot #2).
- Move directly in front of the basket, five feet from the hoop (spot #3), and make 5 more shots.
- Still just five feet from the basket, move diagonally on a 45 degree angle (spot #4). Make 5 shots using the glass. Then repeat this on the other side (spot #5).
- Make 5 free-throws
- Now repeat the 5-spots drill above but at a distance of 8-10 feet, for each of the 5 shooting spots. Make 5 shots at each spot (spots 6 - 10 in the diagram).
- Make 5 free-throws
- Repeat the 5-spots drill at a distance of 12 feet for all 5 spots, making 5 shots at each spot (spots 11 - 15 in the diagram). As you get further from the hoop, you do not have to use the glass on the 45 degree shots.



- Make 5 free-throws
- Next, starting in the free throw circle, spin the ball back to yourself, catch it, and take one dribble right followed by a jump shot (diagram B). Make 10 shots. Repeat this with one dribble to the left with a jump shot, making 10 shots.
- Make 5 free-throws
- Now start at the top of the key (3-point arc). Spin the ball back to yourself, one dribble right - jump shot. Make 10. Then make 10 going to your left.
- Make 5 free-throws



Keep a record of your shooting each day. You should gradually see improvement in your shooting percentage (percentage = number of shots made divided by number of shots your actually took). If you are not seeing improvement over a few weeks, have your coach check your shooting form.