

Youth Basketball Drills

Pass and Catch

With 2 hands, make a bounce pass between your legs from front to back and catch the ball with 2 hands behind you. Then bounce the ball through your legs from the back to the front, and catch the ball in front of your body. This is a good drill for body awareness.

Sitpup Dribble

While doing bent-knees situps, dribble up with your right hand as you sit up, and around your feet, then switch hands to your left as you go back down, and then dribble with your left hand as you sit up, back around your feet, switching back to your right hand. Continue quickly as possible.

Squeeze the Banana

This is a drill that helps increase the strength in your fingers. Hold the ball in front of you at eye level with two hands. By squeezing your fingers and thumb together with one hand at a time, you move the ball from one hand to the other as quickly as you can. More finger and arm strength will improve your ball control.

Touch-Touch-Touch

This is another ball handling drill that seems very difficult at first, but with daily practice, will improve your handles. This drill is called the touch-touch-touch because that is what you do. While keeping the ball between your legs, you touch the ball once with your right hand (fingers) in front, then with your right behind you, and then with your left behind you. Continue in this manner as fast as possible. Before long, you will master this skill.

Figure 8 Dribbling

This is a drill to practice your ball handling. Dribble the ball as quickly as possible in a figure 8 through and around the legs. Use the fingers when you dribble, and dribble very low and quickly. Switch from the right to the left and back to the right. Example: start with the right hand dribbling the ball in front and then dribble through your legs with your right hand, switch to your left hand and dribble from the back, around your left side to the front and back through your legs. Then switch to your right hand behind the body and around the right side. Try to go as fast as possible and your dribbling skills will improve with daily practice.

Catch-Catch-Catch

This is a drill to work on your ball handling. Hold the ball between your legs, with both hands on the ball, right hand in front and left hand in back. Quickly switch your hands, (now left hand in front and right hand in the back), without letting the ball touch the ground. Do as quickly as possible. This is one of the hardest to master, but it just takes lots of practice.

Between the Legs Scissors

To start the drill, place your left foot ahead of your right hand and bounce the ball between your legs from your right hand to your left. As the ball gets to your left hand shift your feet so that your right leg goes ahead of your left and bounce the ball back between your legs. This shifting of your feet will occur with every bounce.

Crab Walk

This drill can go from baseline to half court. Step forward with your left leg and pass the ball from your right hand to your left under your left leg. As you take your next step with your right leg, pass the ball from your left hand to your right under your right leg. Continue this pattern all the way down the floor.

Figure 8 Running in Place

Move the ball around your legs as in the Figure 8 drill, but in addition run in place.

Figure 8 Drop Reverse

For this drill, follow the procedure described in the Figure 8 Drop Drill, except that when you bounce the ball, your movement will be reversed. After the bounce, circle the ball around the outside of your right leg, in front of your left leg, and around your left leg from the front to the back.

Figure 8 Drop

The ball is moved around the outside of the left leg from the back to the front. Then it is passed in front of your body and around the outside of your right leg from front to back. Now the ball is between your legs at the back of your body. Bounce the ball, and as it is bouncing, reverse your hands, bring your right from the back to the front and your left from the front to the back. Catch the ball before it bounces again. Continue to do figure 8s.

Up the Ladder

Hold the ball out in front of you and pass it back from hand to hand using only your fingertips. Go from out in front of your waist to above your heads and back. This will help you develop the fingertip control that you will need to properly handle the ball.

Ball Circle

A great way to become comfortable with the basketball is to take it and circle it around your head, then around your waist, and, finally, around your knees. Reverse direction and take the ball back up--around the knees, waist, and head.

Around the World

Around the World: Circling the basketball around your head, then your waist, finally put your legs together and take the ball around both legs at the knees. Then spread your legs, bend at the waist, and take the ball around one leg. Then the other. This will give you a feel for the basketball and help you become more comfortable in your ball handling. A good hand speed and coordination drill, also great conditioner for your arms.

Figure 8

Spread your legs, bend at the waist, put the ball through your legs, around one leg, back through your legs, and around your other leg, making a figure 8. This will help you get a feel for the basketball as you move it around. Keep your head up not looking at the ball and increase your speed.

Cutthroat

Play three-on-three or four-on-four game called cutthroat which is extremely effective in teaching kids how to move. The rules are simple.

1. The game is best played with three or more teams. (Extra players should be rotated in) To minimize confusion, each team should have its own practice jersey.
2. Every player on the team must touch the ball before it goes up for a shot.
3. If a player catches the ball and fails to face the basket in triple threat position before dribbling or passing, it is a turnover.
4. If a player passes the ball, then fails to cut to the basket and fill an open spot or go screen for a teammate, it's also a turnover.
5. A player can dribble no more than three times--either to open up a passing lane or to attack the basket.
6. Only the person with the whistle (the coach!!) is allowed to officiate. Points are automatically and instantly deducted if a player chooses to protest a call.
7. One point is awarded for each basket made, one point for each offensive rebound, and one point for each turnover. (Unforced turnovers don't count.)

At every change of possession (turnover and defensive rebound) and at every made basket, the ball is passed back to the coach. If there's been a change of possession, the offensive team sprints off the floor and the defensive team goes to offense. The third team, waiting on the baseline, sprints onto the court and matches up on defense. The coach encourages this quick change over by passing the ball to the offensive team almost as soon as he receives it. After a made basket, however, it is the defensive team that vacates the floor. The offense stays on as long as they continue to score, which they can only do by passing, and cutting, and staying in motion.

Ball/Man Line

When you are guarding a player without the ball in man to man defense, it is important it is important to be aware of the "ball/man line". The ball/ man line is an imaginary line between your man and the man with the ball. You should be on the basket side of the ball/man line and

away from your man enough to assist your teammates. This position helps form what is called the "defensive triangle".

1-2-3 Rebound

3 people line up in the paint. The first one is #1, the second is #2, and the third is #3. Put one person on the top of the arch and one outside the 3-point line down in the corner and another in the same position on the opposite site of the 3-point line. Someone should call 1, 2, or 3 and then pass to any of the lines. When they shoot, the number of the person that they called should go box them out. If the shooting team rebounds it, they can keep playing.

Fifty Passes Drill

This is a half court drill. Split the team into even groups. Players ARE NOT allowed to dribble the ball in this drill. Each team must complete fifty passes to win the game. Possession changes whenever a violation occurs, dribbling, stealing, out of bounds (regardless of who it goes out on). When a team regains possession they continue their count from where they left off.

2-Ball Dribbling Drill

Each player has two balls. Start off with stationary dribbling about waist high, as one ball goes down the other ball comes up. Then have the players quick dribble about 4 or 5 inches off the floor. Finally have the players move up and down the court slowly at their own pace.

Shooting 101

One player starts with the ball under the basket. The other player spots up from any spot on the floor. The ball is passed to the shooter who catches the ball low with his knees bent and shoots a jump shot. He gets his own rebound while the passer now spots up to shoot. After a pass is made get a hand in the shooter's face and go about at game speed.

1 ON 2

Divide the court in half lengthwise. Make up groups of three players to do the drill. You should have two groups going at a time. One on each half of the court. Give a ball to each group. One player on each group is offensive and the other two are on defense. The offensive player must reach the other end of the floor, trying to beat both defenders. If a steal or deflection occurs, the offensive player gets the ball back at the spot. At the other end of the floor, the offensive player moves to defense and one of the defensive players goes to offense and they come back. Then let the next groups go.

Block out and Outlet

The defensive effort is completed when we have POSSESSION OF THE BALL. When the ball is shot we must have ALL FIVE PLAYERS fulfilling their rebound responsibility until the ball is CHINNED. The team will rebound covering the paint in a triangle shape. Then you can outlet the ball and apply your offensive pressure with the primary and secondary break.

ECHO SYSTEM

Players should communicate using the ECHO SYSTEM. The coaches tell one player the drill or play, he calls it out to the team, team echoes it.

Transition and Communication

Quick, organized transition with communication by all five players is a must for a great defensive team. You must STOP THE BALL. You must sprint to the level of the ball, eliminate all cheap baskets, and make opponents go against your set defense. NO LAYUPS, NO THREES, NO FOULS, NO SECOND SHOTS

Cover Down

Whenever the ball penetrates on a pass or a dribble, all players should cover down to the level of the ball and force it back out. When the ball is dribbled toward the baseline, the nearest help side defender must quickly stop the ball before it reaches the lane. If the ball is passed to the post, we keep him from dribbling by quickly covering down. When we cover down to the baseline from on top. When the ball is passed back out, all players recover to their man. USE THE CLOSEST MAN TO THE BALL RULE ON RECOVERY.

Quick Help and Early Recovery

There is no such thing as helping too quickly. When your teammate steers the ball into the next gap, be ready to provide quick help with your rear to the ball. When you help, you must recover on line to your man as the ball is picked up. In all screening situations you must talk, provide quick help and then recover early.

Jump to the Ball

Any time the ball is passed YOU MUST JUMP TO THE BALL. Make gradual, quick, immediate adjustments in your stance. You must be in position before the ball is caught. Jumping to the ball allows you to be in proper position to front cutters, avoid screens (be a moving target), and help teammates. Any time the ball is dribbled you must make the proper ball side or help side adjustments in positioning.

Ball/Man Line

When you are guarding a player without the ball in man to man defense, it is important to be aware of the "ball/man line". The ball/man line is an imaginary line between your man, and the man with the ball. You should be on the basket side of the ball man line and away from your man enough to help your teammates. This position helps form what is called the "defensive triangle"

Low Post Defense-he's pushed you out

The low post player might try to push you out after you "full front". If you get out too far you can release and get behind so that your feet are OUTSIDE of the key. Now you are between him

and the basket and have him 12'-15' away. This makes it a tough shot for the offense and you have rebounding position.

Low post defense-ball is below the free throw line

If the ball is below the free throw line try to get around the post player and "Full Front". Your teammates will need to help you on any lob pass. The post player probably is not going to want you in this position, so it is a constant fight for position between the post player and defender. Be active and try to AVOID contact. The post player will have more trouble "pinning" you in a position where they can receive the ball.

Close Down

This is a strategy to use when you are coming to defend a player from a distance away, such as sprinting out to your man on a skip pass after help defense. What you do is sprint half way to your player and then in a low defensive position, use shuffle steps to assume good defensive position.

Double Down

This is a defensive strategy that is used when a very good low post player gets the ball. When the ball is passed to the post, the perimeter (outside) player quickly will double team the post player. This will make it difficult for a good post player to make their offensive move and force them to pass the ball back out.

Low Post Defense-ball above the Free throw line

If the ball is above the free throw line extended (imaginary line extending from the free throw line to the sideline), then you should deny on the high side. You should be chest to chest with the post player with your arm closest to the ball in the passing lane.

High Post Defense

The basic rule for guarding the high post (post player at the free throw line) is to deny the pass in from the side. This is a position where the defensive player is at the ball side of the post player, with the forward arm denying the pass into the post. Use the back of your other hand to maintain contact with your man. When the ball moves to the other side, go on the basket side of your man and assume the side denial position on the other side.

Weak side Lane Closure

You are in your weak side defensive stance in line with the basket, pointing to your man and the ball. Weak side lane closure to how you defend a player on the weak side who cuts to the ball. What you must do as your player cuts towards the ball is to slide up into deny position, make contact with the cutter, and make him cut behind you. As he cuts behind you, you then still deny the pass into your man.

Outside Hand Passing

Outside hand passes: Many turnovers can be avoided if players develop the ability to pass with either hand, thus enabling them to use the outside hand to pass the ball and avoid the defense. Players need to possess the ability to turn the dribble directly into a pass. If a player must bring the ball through the middle of his body to make a two-handed pass or worse a pass with the inside hand, the defense has a chance to defend the pass and the pass becomes slower, thus getting to a shooter a second late, rather than perfectly in stride. The outside hand push pass is preferable and is an important pass to teach.

L-Cut

When executing an "L-Cut" you start at the block on the edge of the free throw lane and walk your defender up the side of the lane. When your teammate is ready to deliver the pass you step into the defender, make contact, and change speeds quickly by pushing off of your inside foot to pop out to the wing.

V-Cut

A "V-Cut" will help you get away from your defender to catch a pass. To make a V-Cut you should take a couple of steps in one direction, and while your feet are a little closer together, plant your foot, and QUICKLY push off in the other direction with a BIG step to get away from the defense.

Entry Passes

To enter the ball to the wing, the passer and receiver should ensure a proper passing angle. The passer from the guard spot should attempt to get to, what we call, the "Entry Line". The Entry Line is a line drawn from the basket THROUGH the corner of the key and the free throw line, on out to half court. The passer should attempt to get as close to that line with the dribble prior to passing to the wing. This ensures a good angle to the wing and cuts down on the defense's chance of denying or intercepting the pass.

See the Defense

As important as seeing your teammates is, seeing the DEFENSE may be more important. You are going to KNOW where your players should be through practice and naturally react to their same color uniforms. It is better if you have a "soft focus" on the floor and see your teammates through your peripheral vision. However, you should concentrate on where the defense is, attack their weak areas and pass AWAY from the defensive player.

Bounce Pass

The bounce pass should travel from your waist to receiver's waist. The ball should bounce about 2/3 of the way to the receiver. You should follow through as in chest pass with your thumbs down. The backspin that this creates slows the ball down when it hits the ground and makes it easier to catch.

Chest Pass

The chest pass should go from your chest to receiver's chest. You should step into the pass with your knees bent and follow through, with the ball coming off of your fingertips and your thumbs down. This creates good backspin and makes the pass easier to catch.

Pass up the Court

Put a player at each end line, one at each free throw line and another at mid court. Have those players relay the ball from one end line to the other and back again. To do so take EIGHT passes. Then take the FASTEST dribbler and have him try to dribble to the opposite end and back before the group of FIVE players throw EIGHT passes. The passing team ALWAYS wins (unless, of course, they drop the ball or really miss a pass). This demonstration usually enlightens young players as to the importance of passing.

Behind the Back Pass

One of the most deceptive passes is the behind the back pass. This should become a fundamental pass in every good basketball players game. Although the pass looks hard it is quite simple. First place the ball in your dominant hand and hold it there. Then put the ball behind your back. Then you flick your wrist in the direction the ball should travel. This pass is deceptive and is a great way to build up finger pad control and to build up wrist flexibility and strength. This should really become a fundamental pass and not a pass used for "showboating."

Different Types of Passing

There are several different types of passes, to be used in different situations: the chest pass is used primarily in the open court and on the perimeter; the overhead pass is used on the perimeter and on the outlet pass; the bounce pass is a pass that is used anytime under defensive pressure; and the baseball pass is used when you need a long pass.

Focus Under the Basket

In order to be a better passer who gets the ball to the right player at the right time, learn to focus under the basket. As you develop your peripheral vision, you will learn to see all the players on your team and be able to pick out who is open without telegraphing your passes.

Passing

When passing the ball, step toward your receiver to put more power behind your pass.

Fake a Pass-Throw a Pass

When you are prepared to pass the ball while being pressured by a defender, pass fake (which is a fake throwing the ball in one direction) then pass the ball other way. Fake a bounce pass and throw overhead. Fake overhead and throw around. This will usually make the defender go for the first pass and clear some lane for a pass in the opposite direction.

Feeding the Post

One of the biggest problems with passing the ball into the post is passing from bad angles. The passer, the post player and the basket should all be in a direct line. This forces the defender to pick a side to guard, and you can get a good angle from which to feed the ball into the low post.

Baseball Pass

The baseball pass is most often used to advance the ball up the floor. The ball is held with both hands on the ball, one on either side with the throwing hand usually a little higher on the ball. The ball is cocked up near the ear to aid in a quick release. The passer's hand must be BEHIND the ball so the pass doesn't have too much side spin, making it hard to catch. The pass is made over the defense, leading the receiver.

Power Dribbling-Dirt Dribbling

This drill actually requires you to leave the basketball court and find a patch of dirt. Do a Power dribble on the dirt for 1 or 2 minutes. You will need to power dribble the ball even harder than usual in order to get the ball to bounce on the dirt. This drill is an extremely good arm workout with power dribbling.

Power Dribbling-3 Chair Dribbling

Set up 3 chairs or cones in a line, spacing each chair/cone 10 feet apart. Power dribble around the chairs/cones in different shapes, such as figure-eights, circles, or any shape. Use your imagination.

Power Dribbling Sprints

This drill requires you to power dribble for an extended period of time and run back and forth on the basketball court. Stand at one end of a basketball court. Dribble to the nearest foul line, and then return to the baseline. Dribble to the middle of the court, and then return to the baseline from which you started. Dribble to the farthest foul line, and then return to the baseline from which you started. Finally, dribble the entire length of the court, and return to the baseline from which you started. This entire continuous power dribbling exercise counts as one complete cycle of the drill.

Repeat multiple times to practice your dribbling, speed, and direction-changing abilities.

Power Dribbling-Double Ball

Power dribble two balls, one in each hand. This will increase your arm strength for dribbling and enhance your dribbling control. Since you can't look at both hands at the same time, this drill will also practice your ability to power dribble without looking at the ball.

Power Dribbling-Dribble between legs while walking

In order to do this drill you will need a segment of floor, such as a basketball court floor, a street's sidewalk, or a wide hallway that is deserted. Power dribble while walking up and down the walkway. Power dribble the ball between your legs to practice fancy dribbling skills. To enhance the drill, perform the drill at a quicker walking pace, maybe at a light jogging pace.

Power Dribbling-10-5 repeat drill

This drill exercises power dribbling with one hand at a time. Choose which hand you would like to practice. Power dribble for 10 seconds, then soft dribble for 5 seconds. Repeat multiple times. This exercise teaches your arm muscles how to alternate between various dribbling speeds that occur during game play.

Power Dribbling Crossovers

Power dribble in your right hand, and then quickly bounce the ball to your left hand. Power dribble with your left hand for a few seconds before bouncing the ball back to your right hand.

Speed Dribble Heads Up

Put 4 lines at each baseline and a coach at each FT line. Have one player speed dribble up the floor and around 1/2 court; the coach can then hold up fingers (1,2,3 or 4). The passer must throw the ball to the appropriate line and then the receiver speed dribbles to the other end and repeats the process. More advanced teams can have players going in both directions at once to increase reps.

Full Court Heads Up

In a full court dribble drill, the coach stands up court and when he shows his target hands, the dribbler must deliver a pass, then cut to the basket and receive a pass back from the coach. With a couple of assistants or managers, you can do this at various spots on the floor.

Heads Up

This is stationary dribble drill with your players on the baseline demonstrating a good form dribble. As a coach you have a basketball in your hands and toss it softly to various players and have them tap the ball back to you with their free hand.

Use Angles

One of the most important techniques to bringing the ball up the floor is to use angles to your advantage. Rather than trying to put on some great move and go by someone, the novice point guard should concentrate on a low dribble, protecting the ball with their body and an arm bar, then advance the ball up the floor using 45 degree angles. When they feel pressure and the defense is in front of them, they should change directions and attack at another 45 degree angle.

Speed Dribble

The speed dribble is used to advance the ball quickly up the floor, against little or no defensive pressure. The dribblers hand should be behind the ball pushing it in front, then running to catch up. This prevents a "palming" or "carrying over" violation. The speed dribble on the open floor can be a little higher than other dribbles. Control dribble moves should be around the knee, but a speed dribble can be waist to chest high.

Bottom Line

If you are:

1. knowledgeable and organized
2. work as hard as you expect your players to
3. care about them as people

Your players will:

1. listen and try to understand
2. show the desire to play as well as they can
3. play hard