



4 Common youth basketball questions

How do I conduct a good practice?

1st | Dynamic warm-up (10-15 min)

A dynamic warm up should start with dynamic stretching. This is stretching while moving. It allows players to warm up their muscles and prevent injury (avoid static stretching). A dynamic warm up should build up to jogging, skipping, jumping, sprinting, back paddling and slides. Anything you could do athletically in a game is great for warming up. This will help make your players more athletic overtime which will pay dividends in tenacity on the court and overall ability as they get older.

2nd | Teach skills or do games to improve skills (25-30 min)

Skill development is more important than plays / sets at the youth level! The more they can do as a fundamental basketball player, the more they will be able to contribute to the team and the better you can coach them. So spend time on...

- Ball handling
- Speed & direction changes
- Jump stops
- Pivoting
- Form shooting
- Passing & cutting
- Closeouts & box outs
- Lateral slides
- Etc



3rd | Competitive Play and/or Situational Games (20-25 min)

The most important thing to playing competitive games is to make sure everyone is involved. The problem with 5v5 is that the more aggressive players will dominate the ball, not allowing your less assertive players to get better. That's why we recommend a lot of 1v1, 2v2 and 3v3 to keep players involved and make sure no player feels obsolete. It also allows for more situational focused development which helps with instincts in games.

4th | Reflection (5-10 min)

Definitely the most underrated part of practice is reflection. Reflecting on how the players did as a whole allows them to set goals for the future practices/games and makes them feel they are making progress. Players should know during reflection what they are great at (team identity), what they are getting better at, and what they are bad at so they can improve. Failure to reflect can result in players losing focus and losing interest in the team dynamic; which is so important for them to learn early on.

How to keep young players focused?

- First off, don't make rules to follow, make games to play. For instance the "Focus Game" allows coaches to redirect attention back on them when needed. How this game works is once you notice that a few players are getting distracted or might not be listening you test their awareness by calling out a word or phrase for them to respond to. My favorite is, when I say, "God is..." they must complete the phrase by saying "Great!" I might repeat it a couple times to get energy going if needed. Another one could be as simple as saying focus and requiring them to respond with two claps. Either way this will get them redirected on you and allow you the time you need to explain a drill or articulate a point.



Youth Coaching Quick Start Guide

- Secondly, have a consistent flow to practice. You can always plug and play different drills and games but the players should have a basic understanding as to what they should expect from practice. This makes it easier for you to add more complexity to your practices because players will already understand the premise of the drill. For instance if you start every practice with defense, if you change the defensive drill to add offense to it the players will still know to focus on defense.

What should I be teaching my players?

- Most important thing to learn as a young player is **how to play**. Depending on the age that could be as simple as learning the rules and what the basic premise of the sport is (See [Top 10 Youth Drills](#)) or be as complex as learning how to read a defense. Teach players how to play and you'll develop basketball players, teach them plays/sets and you'll develop robots.
- The most important **skill** to learn is ball handling. I know I know, dribbling doesn't get you points on the board. However, players that are comfortable with the ball are more confident and are more likely to be aggressive than players that are not. It's best to have a team full of ball handlers than a team full of shooters at the youth level. Nobody's shooting 40% from 3 anyhow and the majority of your buckets are going to be at the rim. So spend time teaching them to be comfortable with the ball.
- Lastly, how **to communicate**! Basketball is a team sport, every drill should be a talking drill. They need to learn terminology and how to tell players where they are and what they are doing (See [Youth Terminology cheat sheet](#)). They should avoid clapping, saying "here", or calling the ball handler's name. This skill is highly underrated but it can help your players separate themselves later on in their career.



How to get players to buy into roles?

- When coaching young players it is important not to demoralize them and make them feel inadequate in any regard. Your worst shooter might grow up to be lights out as they gain strength and experience. This is why we insist that you highlight what they can do over what they shouldn't do. This will give them focus and confidence. If a player is small tell them that they are quicker than most and great defenders, if they are tall tell them they are incredible athletes and can dominate the boards which are both extremely valuable to the team. Remember, players only want to score because that's what coaches and parents praise the most and gets the most attention. Praise hustle, rebounding, passing and other core elements of the game and watch your kids soar to do what other teams and players neglect.



10 Effective Youth Basketball Drills

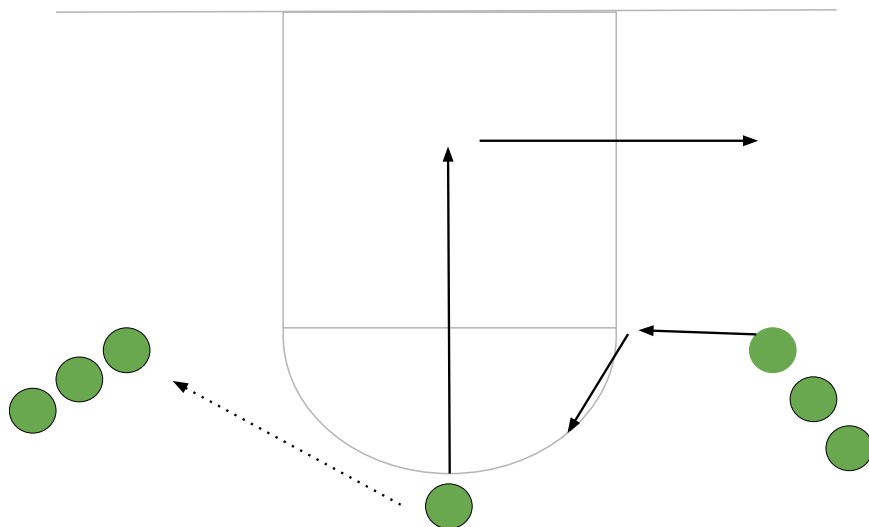
“3 Spot Passing” (10yrs+ recommended)

Rules:

1. The ball starts with the player at the top of the key.
2. Player at the top of the key passes to the wing. Once they have passed the ball they will make a basket cut.
3. Whichever direction the player passes the ball, they will come out the back side (opposite ball) and return to the line on that side.
4. The player next in line opposite the ball will make a V cut to enter the top of the key position which is now vacant.
5. Once the top of the key position is occupied a pass can be made to its player who will then continue the motion in the opposite direction.

Focus:

- When making a basket cut emphasis players to get their heads under the basket before coming out the back side.
- To help learn timing players should only move to the open spot after the basket cut is made.
- The player with the ball should always be squared up to the basket.
- You can have this drill be timed or count passes.





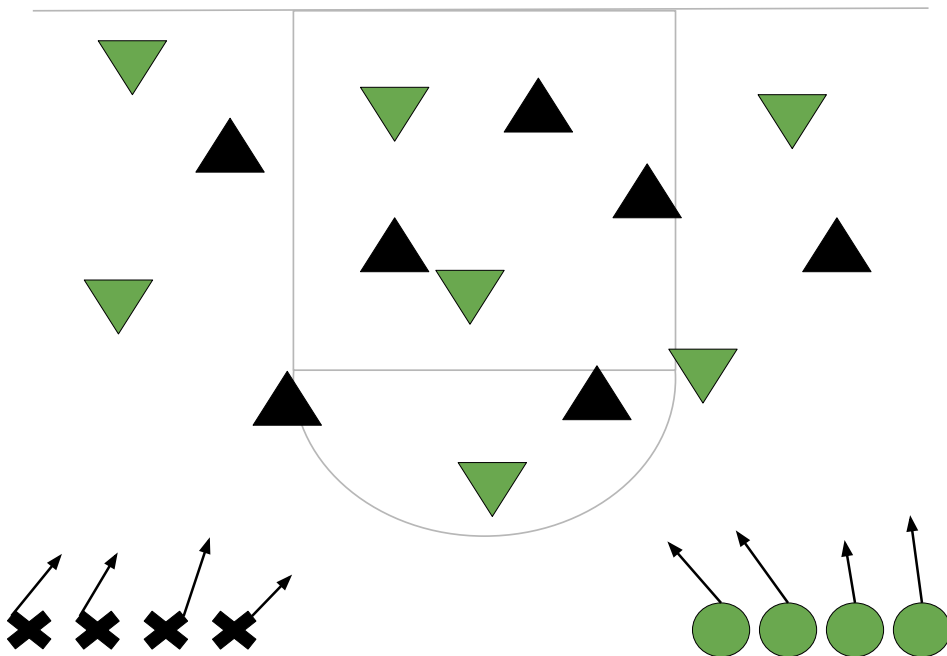
“Construction Site” (all ages)

Having fun! Getting comfortable on the comfortable

1. The drill starts with two teams of players standing outside of the three point line with cones scattered throughout the mid range and paint area. Some cones will be standing up while others laying down.
2. You will have a “Team UP” and “Team DOWN”
3. Team up’s objective is to place as many cones standing up as possible. Team down will try and lay all the cones down.
4. The team with the most cones up or down after the time limit has expired will win.

Focus:

- Players must dribble the ball the entire time while going through the course.
- Players must have the ball in the correct hand and keep the ball in that hand while picking up the cone in the other.
- Players can only flip over the same cone once before moving on to a different cone. They can come back but can’t stand in one spot until the time has expired.
- A little bumping / contact is okay but no colliding with other players or kicking of cones.





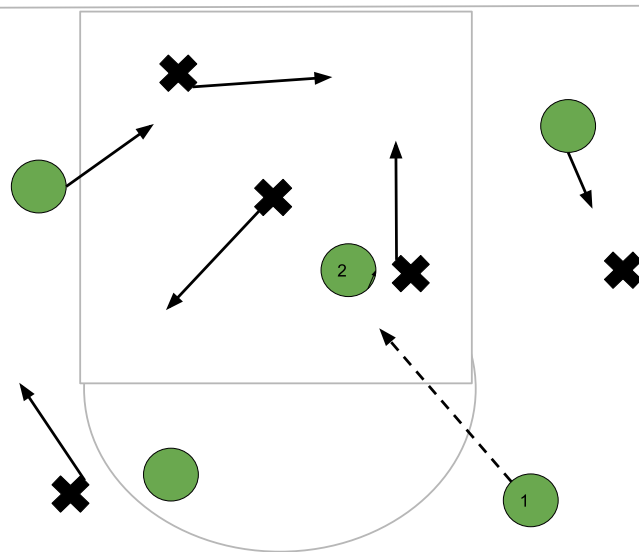
“Pivot 2Pass TAG” (10yrs+ recommended)

Aggressive swinging of the ball and court awareness drill.

1. This drill starts with the offense on the perimeter and the defense inside the perimeter.
2. One of the offensive players will have the ball and once the coach starts the drill they can only move on a pivot until they pass it off.
3. Whoever they pass it to has to catch and pivot as well with the objective being to tag a defender with the ball.
4. If you do not have a ball you are free to run around the court trying to get close to a defender to receive the ball and tag them.
5. Defenders are not allowed to go too far past the three point line (volleyball line extended) or out of bounds.
6. If tagged they are out and have to hope that their teammates can make it the entire time without being tagged.
7. A good time limit for this game is one min. But can be adjusted as needed.

Focus/Rules:

- If the catcher or the player with the ball travels one player from the other team can re-enter the game.
- Defenders cannot steal or deflect a pass intentionally.
- Players might have to make several passes to get to a point where a tag can be made. Emphasis on swinging the ball and not holding it for longer than 3 seconds.
- No pushing or holding

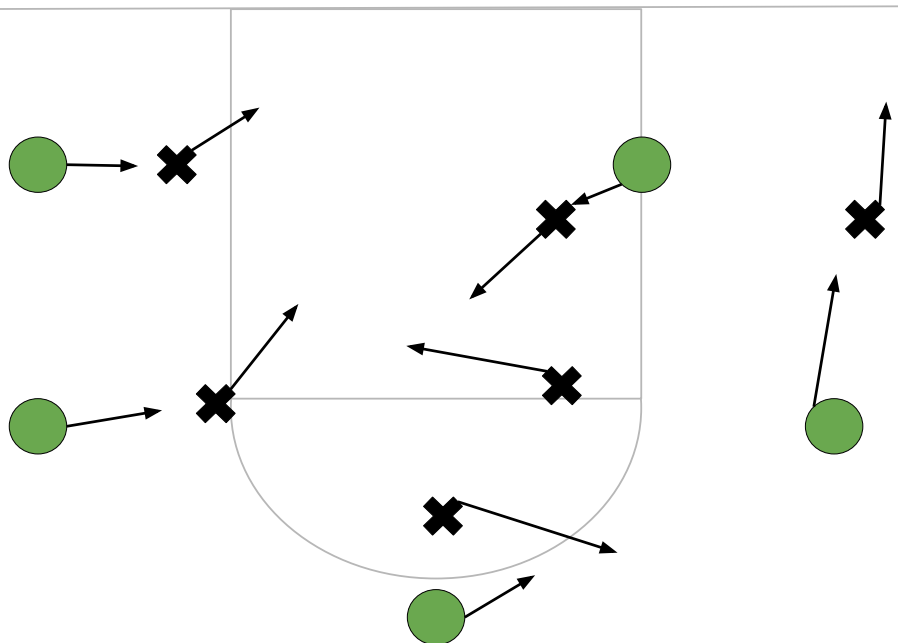




“Dribble and Tag” (all ages)

Getting comfortable on the court and having fun!

1. This drill starts with every offensive player having a ball.
2. The players with the ball has to try and tag the players without the ball.
3. Once tagged the defense becomes the offense and they try to tag other players.
4. Every player tagged must take the ball to center court then dribble down before attempting to tag.
5. No players can stand out of bounds.
6. Players must dribble with the hand the coach says to dribble with at the beginning of the drill.
7. Coaches can set restrictions like; defenders have to stay in the midrange and paint area or have it a half court game depending on team size.
8. This drill can go as long as you want:)





“Pass Relay” (10yrs+ recommended)

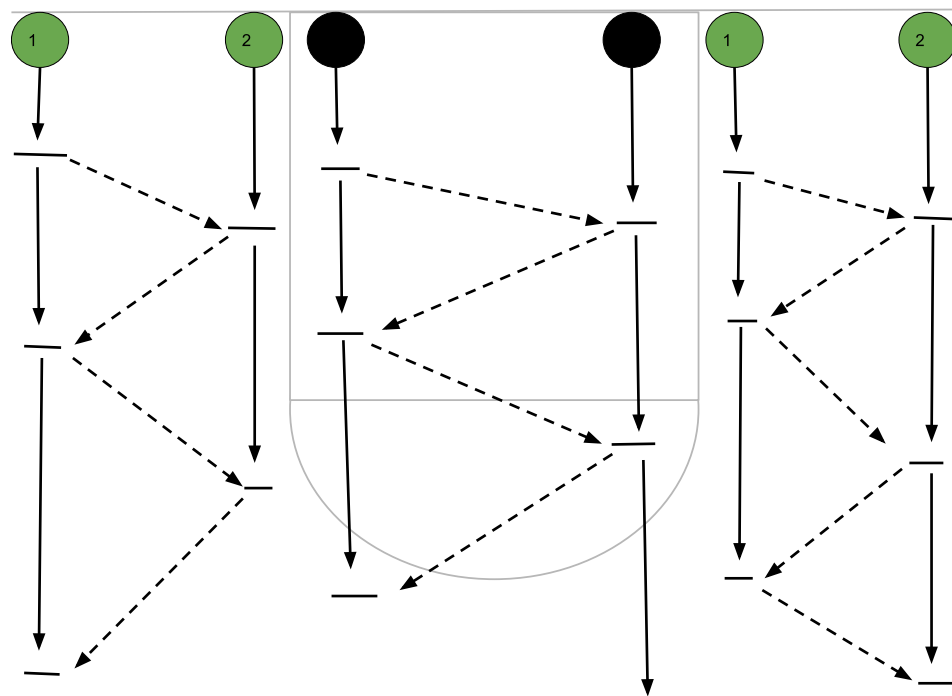
Create Space Above Lane

1. Break players up into groups of two.
2. Each group needs one ball
3. Players are trying to get from one end of the court to the other by passing.
4. Once a player catches the ball they cannot travel and must pass the ball to their teammate to advance the ball.
5. First team down the court wins
6. If a player travels or drops a pass the team must start over.
7. You can change the drill to have one dribble and a jump stop before passing.

Goals:

- Teach passing with a sense of urgency
- Teach catching and not traveling
- Understanding limits to distance and passing abilities
- Have fun!

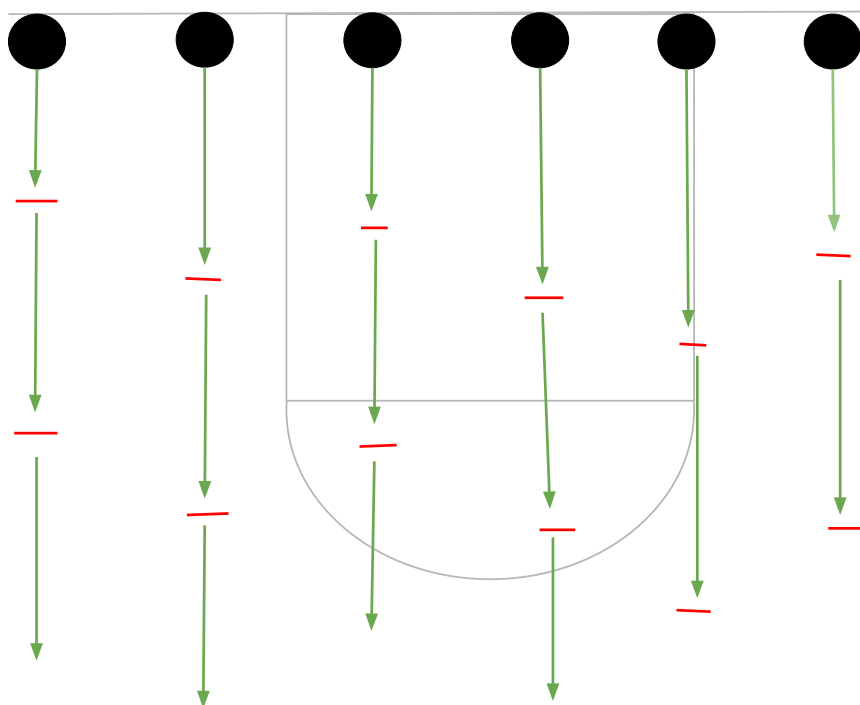
Fun game to compete and get better at passing and pivoting





“Red light, Green light” (all ages)

1. Every player has a basketball to start
2. Coach tells players to dribble either with the right or left hand.
3. Once the coach says red light the players have to jump stop without traveling
4. If a player travels then they have to start over.
5. Green light means to run. However if they lose the ball then they have to start over.
6. First one to the finish line wins:)





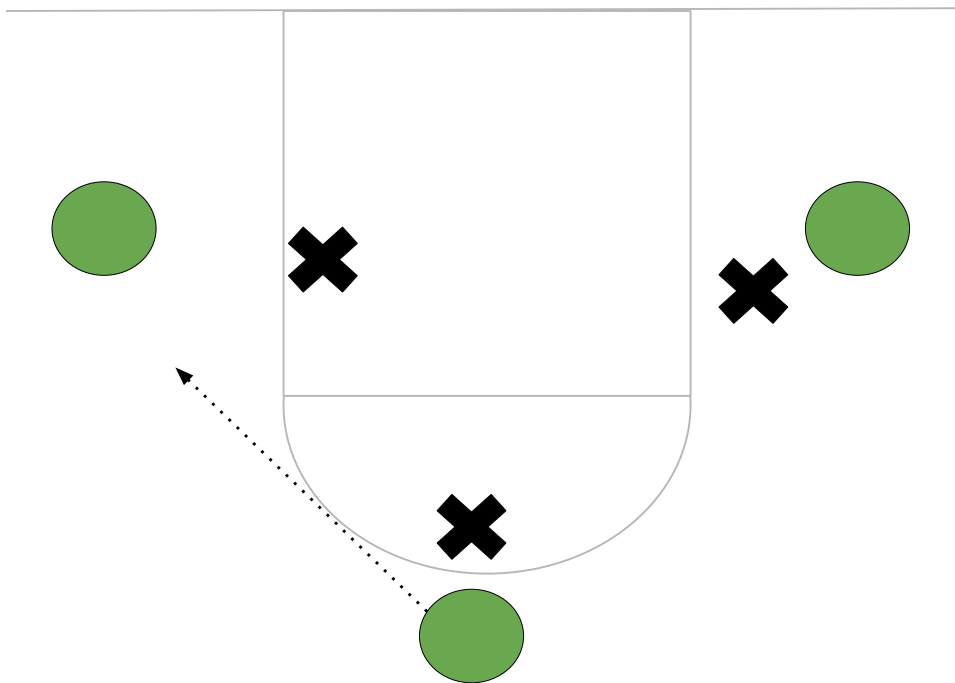
“Keep Away” (all ages)

Rules:

- You can start with no dribbles then add 1 or 2 as a max.
- You can choose the amount of players.
- You can do a pass amount to have the offense when or a time limit that they have to make it to.
- Defense job is to steal the ball without fouling.
- If the defense can steal the ball before the time has expired or before the amount of passes required are exceeded then they win.
- Players should be under pressure when they catch it to pass the ball within 5 sec.

Focus:

- Consistent movement off ball
- Pivoting while protecting the ball.
- Defense staying in between the ball and their man.





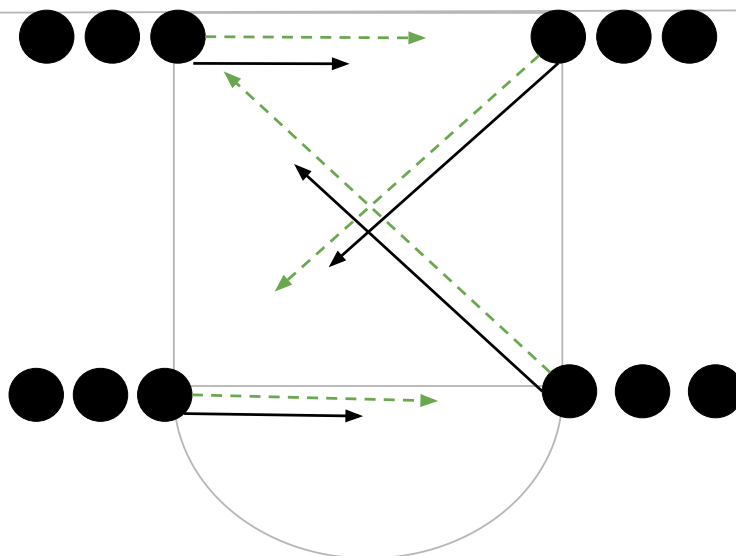
“Right-Cross Box Passing” (10yrs+ recommended)

Rules:

- Whoever starts with the ball has to pass it right.
- After the swing the ball they follow behind it into the line it goes to.
- The player who catches the ball swings it across and follows their pass in the same manner.
- This continues for as long as the coach permits. (Right, Across, Right, Across, ect)
- At any moment the coach can say left, in which case the players will do the same passing sequence to the left instead of the right.

Focus:

- Swing the ball quickly and accurately to prepare for game passing
- Call names to communicate
- Hustle after the pass to get use to moving and cutting.





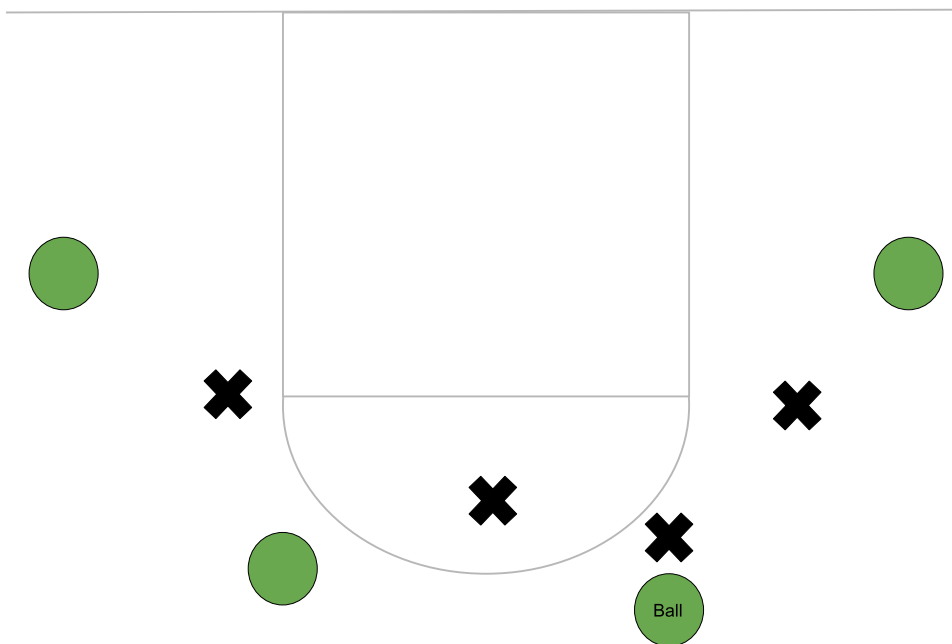
“D-up” (9+yrs Recommended)

Rules:

- You can do this drill with groups of 2- 5 players each team.
- Only the defense can score points, either by forcing a turnover or securing a rebound.
- If the offensive team scores then they get to go on defense.
- If the defense gets a stop then they remain on defense.
- You can play to 5 or whatever you deem necessary.

Focus:

- Make sure to focus on blocking out.
- Being in the right spot defensively.
- Giving max effort.





“Pass-Pass-Pass Box Drill” (8+yrs recommended)

Drill to increase communication and passing ability.

Rules:

- Drill starts with one ball in either corner shown as 1 on the graft.
- Player one passes to player two, two reuters the ball to have player one, while running, return it right back. Hence pass pass pass.
- After player one has passed it twice they will go into the back of the line they were passing to.
- Once player two retrieves the ball for the final time, player two will continue the sequence in the opposite direction.
- Every pass is to the right unless the coach changes the direction.
- Drill continues until the coach feels the players have had adequate reps.

Focus:

- Swinging the ball swiftly and accurately
- Calling names to get used to communicating on court.
- Sprinting to the back of the line for exercise and habit.

