

# SHARON RECREATION DEPARTMENT

## COACH'S HANDBOOK

### **General Information**

Coaches must remain in front of and within the length of their bench. Coaches are responsible for their players after practice and games to ensure the players are picked up and will be taken safely home. If a team has more than one Coach on the bench; only one Coach may stand at a time, the second Coach must sit.

### **Cancelled games due to inclement weather**

If the school programs are cancelled for any reason then games will also be cancelled. Should any scheduled game be cancelled due to inclement weather, the decision to cancel the game will be made by the Recreation Department. It is our intent to play all games as scheduled. Cancelled games WILL NOT BE MADE UP. Coordinators of each grade level will be notified of any cancellations by email. Coordinators are then responsible to call/email their Coaches who then email their teams. Cancellations will also be posted online at [www.sharonrec.com](http://www.sharonrec.com). E-mail blasts may be sent through sharonrec.com at anytime for news and updates; please be sure to check your spam folders as your email security may mark the email as a spam.

### **Cancelled Practices**

If school or after school programs are cancelled for inclement weather, practice times for that day are also cancelled. Practices are permitted on early dismissal days. If the schools are closed for vacation days or Holidays, basketball will be cancelled.

### **Team Practices**

The following is a guideline for conducting practices. Gym availability is limited, so it is important that practice time be utilized as efficiently as possible. It should be stressed to the players that they should practice their skills on their own if they want to improve. The first practice should include a parental meeting. At this very brief meeting, the Head Coach should provide handouts of the schedule (both games and practices) and player rosters with phone numbers. The Coach should also explain his/her basketball philosophy to the parents and allow the parents to ask any questions or submit input. The Coach should also ask the parents if any of the players have any medical conditions that the Coach should know about.

### **Planning a Practice**

Due to the number of players in the program and the limited gym space, all grades are allotted set gym time per week. This time should be used constructively and efficiently. If possible, utilize all the baskets on the half of the court the team is using.

Have a practice plan each week, below is a typical practice plan. Fill in the blanks...

1. Warm up w/ lay up's or a couple of laps around the gym.
2. Stretching the muscles. Start with the largest muscles (back, thighs) and work through to the smallest muscles (arms, hands). Follow with another warm up drill.
3. Dribbling and shooting drills.
4. Offensive techniques. Depending upon the grade level, this time could possibly be a basic instruction of holding the ball for proper release during shooting, or teaching the pick and roll.

5. Defense techniques. Teach the basics of man-to-man defense or the fine points of a full court press.
6. Scrimmage for last 10 - 15 minutes with each other. Let the kids have some fun and the parents will get to watch as they come to pick them up.

*Be on time and ready to commence your practice when your scheduled practice time is to begin. Leave the floor promptly after your allotted time is completed, if you have to meet with your player's before they leave do it in the hall. Do not overlap your practice into the time for the next teams practice. Also, please monitor the children's behavior as we are guests at the schools the children should not be wandering around the hallways.*

## **COACHES MANUAL**

This manual will help new youth basketball Coaches begin to understand their roll as Coach and mentor to the players on their team. Please take the time to read these pages and we strongly encourage you to seek additional sources of information on coaching youth basketball to ensure that you will be the best Coach possible.

### **THE BASICS**

Knowledge of the basics in any sport can never be under emphasized. Every young athlete should learn the basic principles and techniques about the sport they are playing early on in their experience of playing that sport. Before the player begins to excel at his or her sport, while the sport is new and they are unsure of themselves, they should be taught the basic skills that will stay with them throughout their athletic career. The fine points of shooting a basketball, good defensive positioning, a proper chest pass, all of these things must be learned early on or they may never "really" be learned at all.

### **1. RUNNING A PRACTICE**

Perhaps the most common dilemma for new Coaches in any sport is "How do I start?" or "How do I run a practice?" The short answer is to have players pass, defend, dribble and shoot basketballs until their arms fall off. The long answer follows.

#### **IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS**

##### **Five Key Goals for Practices**

1. Get the players in shape
2. Understand each player's potential
3. Work on individual skills and position skills
4. Work on making them a team with sharp execution of plays and defenses
5. Motivate, Communicate, Lead and Remember to teach the game!

Note: Coaches of grades K-4 should not focus on offensive plays. Encourage good ball movement and basketball skills during games. Let them have some fun!

### **THE PRACTICE PLAN**

Each practice should follow a written practice plan. It just takes a few minutes to think through what you want to accomplish, and it does wonders for efficient use of time. A practice plan follows a general routine. It varies somewhat in the amount of time spent on areas as the season moves along, and the actual drills used.

During the first weeks in the season, your plan should focus on (1) conditioning, (2) individual skill development, (3) evaluating your players and (4) "homework" time spent looking at play patterns. Then the plan/focus shifts to team dynamics and specialty plays.

## **FIRST GOAL; GET THE PLAYERS IN SHAPE**

Conditioning is very important in basketball as well as any other sport, and it does not take much to get grade school or high school children into shape.

### **DO: Warm Ups**

Make sure players warm up before practice. A half dozen laps around the gym at a slow pace should break a sweat and warm up major leg muscles. Tell them to run backward and shuffle-step part of the time. Lay-up lines do the same. Early in the season the large muscles are vulnerable for injury. Ankles and knees will be cold if the kids just came in from outside. Tell your players that muscles are like bubble-gum. Unless they stretch slowly, they can tear.

### **DO: Start on Time!**

You only have one hour at a time to work with your team, take advantage of every minute.

### **DO: End on Time!**

Leave the floor immediately when your hour is over. Other teams may be coming in and gym time is expensive!

### **DO: Monitor Your Players**

Be aware of the progress of your players and communicate with them and if necessary their parents if you have concerns about the health or mind set of a player.

### **DO: Practice Good Habits!**

Good habits will help the children develop into better players in the future.

### **DO NOT: Do Wind Sprints, Until the End of Practice**

Wind sprints require the loosest muscles, so they should normally be done at the end of practice.

Finish practice with a few half-court races, do some backward and some sideways. Wind sprints are essential for endurance and leg strength. If they are waiting for their parents, remind them that foul shots are hardest to shoot when very tired, and the best time to get a few in is after sprints.

## **SECOND GOAL; UNDERSTAND EACH PLAYER'S POTENTIAL**

You need to figure out what each player can do, so he/she can concentrate on developing the specific skills needed in his/her position. Especially when deciding on A/B players.

Generally bigger kids play underneath, and smaller kids are guards, but not necessarily. Some big kids have remarkable ball handling and passing skills, and these should be developed. Some average-sized kids have great leaping ability and have a knack at getting into position for rebounds. So, keep an open mind, and figure out what players you need to move around a bit. While it is important to get things set early in order to concentrate on the special skills required by each position, you should allow every player a chance to play multiple positions on the floor.

**Keep Track of Players' Strengths:** Run sprints to see who your fastest players are. Who can accelerate the best, that is, who has the best short-distance time? Who are the most agile? Who are the risk-takers, the fiercest defenders, the strongest players? Who has the best hands? Who wants the ball the most? Who are the natural leaders? Who has a three-point shot, a jumper, a great foul shot percentage? Who can dribble, pass, follow play patterns to the letter?

### **THIRD GOAL: WORK ON INDIVIDUAL SKILLS**

Each week introduce a new skill and run drills that put that skill into practice. Example; setting a pick, boxing out, rebounding, left hand lay ups. It is important that you teach them proper vocabulary of the game; this should be done at an early age so that they can understand and take direction when it is given to them.

### **FOURTH GOAL: TEAMWORK**

Organize 2 on 2 and 3 on 3 games during your practices. Direct the players to run screen roll plays and finding the open player on offense, and work switching on defense. Scrimmages are fun for the kids, and even 10 minutes at the end of practice is a good idea. However, in the first weeks of pre-season they have much to learn, and there will be little time for anything else.

### **FIFTH GOAL: MOTIVATE, COMMUNICATE, LEAD**

Many Coaches seem to spend a lot of time hollering, trying to motivate players, and to get them to increase their concentration. We understand sometimes energy is great, adrenaline is flowing and you have to yell to be heard, the screamer routine is often quite overdone. Still, there is a line that should not be crossed, and that is humiliating a player. The idea is to be firm, to let players know that they can do better if they focus a bit more.

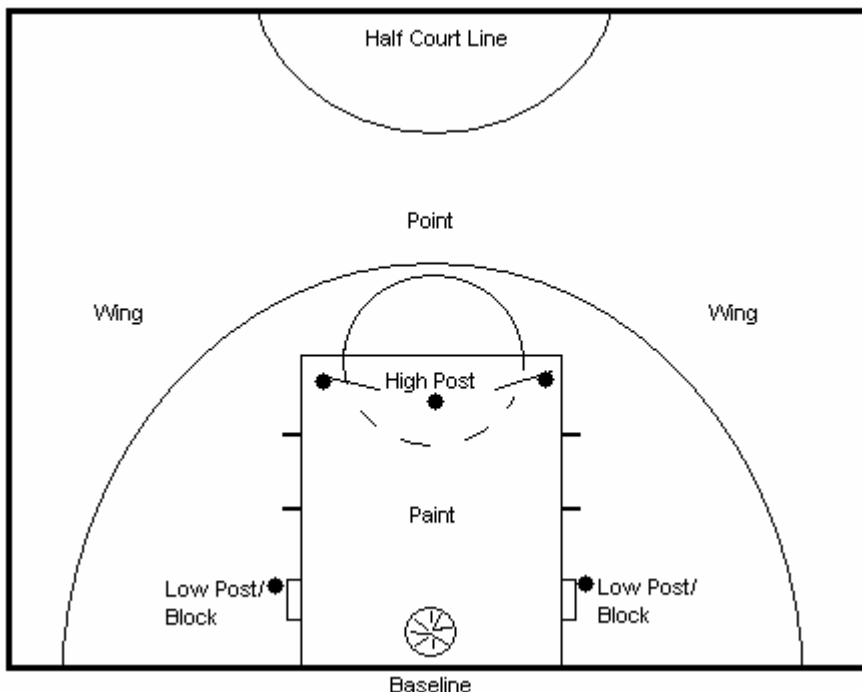
Ask yourself what your ultimate goal is. To help a young boy or girl learn how to face challenges, then try the positive reinforcement methods. Coach a child according to his/her needs—some need caring, some need a gentle push, some need patience.

Most importantly, reward good effort. Praise good hustle.

## **2. BASKETBALL POSITIONS**

### **Basketball Terminology**

Look at the "half-court" diagram below to define areas of the floor.



The "paint" is the area inside the lane lines from the baseline to the free-throw line. If your offensive player has a foot on, or inside these lines for 3 seconds or longer, he/she will be called for the 3-second violation. There is no restriction on the time defensive players can occupy the paint.

"Free throw line", is the line you must stand behind when shooting a free-throw.

"Low post" area is the area near the "block" on either side of the lane (or "paint" area), to about half way up the lane toward the free throw line.

"High post" is that area along the free throw line, and both "elbows".

The "point" is out front, and the "wings" on either side. The "short corner" is between the corner and the basket, about 12 feet out.

"Ball-side" refers to the side of the floor where the ball is. "Weak-side" is the opposite side away from the ball. Players that make a cut the weak-side of the ball, toward the hoop, are using the "back-door".

"10 second line", or half-court line, is the line down the center of the floor. It divides the "full-court" (entire playing area) into two "half-courts". Your "fore-court" is the half-court with your basket, and the "back-court" is the half-court with the opponent's basket. Once a team gets possession of the ball, it has 10 seconds to get the ball across the half-court line into its fore-court. Once across this line (all three points - the ball and both feet), they may not pass or dribble the ball back across this line, or step on the line (while having possession) or the "over and back" violation occurs. The offense may retrieve the ball without penalty if deflected across by a defensive player.

### **Numbering Players, Offensive Terminology**

Most Coaches use a numbering system with players playing in multiple offensive formations. Using a numbering system makes it easier for Coaches and players to understand plays, sets, and know their roles. Different numbering systems exist and Coaches have their own favorite ways of doing this.

The "point guard" is #1. The right "wing" is #2, and the left wing is #3. The right low post is #4, and the left low post is #5.

This is easy for young players to learn if you tell them that the even numbers (2 and 4) are on the right side, and the odd numbers (3 and 5) are on the left.

In this set, you have three guards, or "perimeter players", and two "post players", rather than the old definition of two guards, two forwards and a center.

"Pick and roll" -- a play where an offensive player sets a "screen" ("pick") on a team-mate's defender, thereby freeing up the team-mate, after which the screener moves, or "rolls" off the screen to the hoop, or an open area for the return pass.

"Give and go" -- a very basic play where after passing to a team-mate, the passer quickly cuts toward the basket, and receives the return pass back from his/her team-mate for the lay-up.

"Reverse the ball" -- this means to quickly move the ball, by passing, to the opposite side of the fore-court, either by a series of quick passes, or by means of a "skip pass" (a pass directly across court, thereby "skipping" one or more offensive players in the succession around the perimeter).

"Post up" -- offensive move where a low post player positions him/herself, and "seals" his/her defender off so that he/she can receive the pass down low on the block, where he/she can use a "post move" for a score, or quickly pass the ball back outside to an open team-mate for a three-pointer.

### **3. SHOOTING**

#### **Shooting Can Be Learned**

It takes thousands of shots to significantly raise a shooter's percentage, but remember it really does not take that long to shoot a thousand shots!

#### **ABOUT OUTSIDE SHOOTING**

In practice, give your kids a chance to show what they have, and stress to them that an outside shot is not only developed during team practice but is developed on his/her own time.

#### **The Mechanics**

##### *o The Gooseneck Wrist Flick*

The gooseneck wrist flick is as important to shooting as pointing the elbow at the hoop is. Most kids develop all kinds of crazy hand techniques, such as closing the fingers into a fist as they shoot, or coming down with the middle finger or the pinkie finger. The natural and correct form is to flick the ball out of the cradle by turning the palm down and out. The little finger stays in the same position, pointing upward, before and after the shot. The thumb and index finger move forward, down and out.

When the shooting hand turns down and out, this puts a reverse spin on the ball. That is how you know it has been done properly. The final position of the shooting hand is called a gooseneck.

The left hand does not add any power on a right-handed shot. It passively cradles the ball and then merely falls away during the shot. The shooting hand does not snap back, but either gently follows through the shot in a downward arc, or is held relatively stationary for a moment. Either style is OK.

If your player does not properly flick the ball from the cradle, this can be remedied with some drills, particularly if you catch it early enough. Perhaps the best way for the child to change form is to shoot repeatedly against a high wall, and go through a few hundred wrist flicks, concentrating only on the form of the hand movement. A few such practice sessions will help make any correction needed. Good form is essential to shooting.

##### *o Arcing the Ball Is Optimal*

An arced ball has the best chance of scoring because it drops through the largest possible hoop opening. A lot of players shoot straight at the basket. These linear shots utilize a smaller window through the hoop than arced shots and therefore have less chance of scoring. A very high arc, however, is unnecessary, and lowers the percentage. For a comfortable arc, a good rule of thumb is to peak the arc at about 3 to 4 feet higher than the basket on a 15-foot jump shot. If the child is close, a 1- to 2-foot arc is OK.

#### **The Lay-Up**

A lay-up is still the most exciting shot in basketball, and it is also one of the simplest.

##### *o Get the Proper Footwork*

Pump up the knee on the same side as the shooting hand and drive straight up with the opposite foot. Kids often push off the wrong foot, and it is important right away to get the proper footwork. If the lay-up is right-handed, then the right arm needs to stretch up, and the whole right side should lift with it. Raising the right knee high does this. The concept is to raise the whole right side on right-handed lay-ups (vice versa for left handed lay-ups). It comes after a few practice sessions. Note this means that, coming off the dribble, the first free step for a right handed lay-up is with the right foot.

At the beginning of that step, the player grabs the ball with both hands and prepares to shoot, driving off the left foot. Lifting the right knee also adds to the height of the jump. Finally, the player needs to remember to jump straight up. This not only adds to the height of the jump, but it also slows down the forward movement of the body so the ball hits the backboard a bit more softly.

#### ○ *Use the Backboard*

Pick a spot and lay the ball up softly off the glass. Since the majority of lay-ups are shot off the backboard, you should teach even your youngest players to use it for this shot. The hardest thing about shooting lay-ups is controlling the speed of the ball bouncing off the backboard. Most missed shots occur because the ball hits the backboard too hard as a result of the body's forward speed and momentum. Jumping straight up slows the ball a bit, but it still needs to be laid-up softly.

The ball sits in the right hand, palm turned partially inward toward the shooter. The shot can be done with the palm outward like a jump shot, but it is much tougher to control the ball speed. The hand must soften the ball's impact upon the backboard to adjust for the forward motion of the body. This is done by flipping the ball backward a bit to decrease its speed. As a player becomes experienced, spin may be applied to compensate for odd angles.

The backboards are usually marked with a square, and the player lays the ball up against the lines of the square. Teach the team to find the right spot and hit it every time, and with practice, a player will shoot automatically and not need to focus on the square.

#### ○ *Practice the Left Handed Shot*

Be patient here since, for righties, developing a left handed lay-up is the toughest thing in basketball. Start slowly. Urge your players to try it a few times. It will feel very awkward, and will progress slowly. To execute a left handed shot, reverse the footwork. On the left side of the basket, a left handed shot is more effective since it places the body between the defender and the ball. That is why all your players should be comfortable doing it.

### **Short Jump Shots and Chip Shots**

The mechanics of short shots are similar to those of longer outside shots except that you need to be much more concerned about the defender. The shot needs to be carried out very quickly, with quick moves and quick release.

Fakes are even more important in close to the hoop. The best fake is to raise the ball quickly as if to shoot, get the defender to jump, and then go up as he/she comes down. Sometimes, a few fake pumps with the ball are needed to get the defender to react. Often, a short jump shot can effectively use the backboard. It is a bit tougher, but it provides a higher, off-line arc, which is harder to defend. Ordinarily, any shot within 4 to 5 feet of the hoop and to the side should use the backboard. Jumpers in front of the hoop go directly to the rim. Remind your player to focus on the point of the rim closest to him/her and to arc the ball softly to that spot. A dish off to an open player can also be a very effective option.

### **Foul Shots**

Foul shots certainly deserve special mention. It can be said that foul shooting wins or loses most close games, and this is so at all levels of play. At youth ages, good foul shooting is rare, but since scores are usually low, a foul shooter can win a game. Shooting foul shots is much like shooting jump shots, except the feet do not leave the ground. The highest percentage shots, as said before, are one-handed flicks from a cradle. The ball is brought over the head, cradled and shot with one hand. The shooting

hand ends up in a gooseneck, just as with jump shots. The head and shoulders are square to the hoop. The shooting elbow points at the hoop.

Much foul shooting comes from the legs. They must bend and extend into the shot. The body starts low and fully extends, up on the toes, and the player stays up on the toes while the ball is in flight. *The key is to stay extended into the shot.*

It is also important to point the front foot, usually the right foot for a right handed shot, at the hoop. Do not let it turn in because that will limit full extension. The other foot can be back a comfortable distance. Remember, as with all shooting, shoot with the legs.

Foul shots should be practiced, preferably a minimum of ten, at the end of each practice session, while the players are tired. Shooting while tired simulates game conditions.

#### **4. DRIBBLING**

##### **HOW TO DRIBBLE**

Here are the seven key aspects of good dribbling.

##### **Finger Control**

The ball is dribbled with the fingers, particularly the thumb and the three middle fingers. Some kids initially use the palm of the hand. However, the palm has only a limited role in helping the fingers to receive and cradle the ball, the fingers do most of the work. You want the ball out on the fingers and the upper palm near the fingers as much as possible. The upper palm and lower thumb area often receive the bounced ball, especially if the player is on the run, but then the fingertips take over. They direct the downward dribble as the ball rolls off the fingertips.

##### **Develop Both Hands**

If a player can dribble with only one hand, his/her ability to move will always be limited. Defenders usually lean to the left a bit to cut off the space to the dribbler's right. The ability to then switch to the left hand and drive to the left side opens a whole new dimension and substantially improves a player's offensive potential. You need to continually remind your players to use both hands. Encourage them to devote some time for the other hand. Use drills to get them started.

If a player is a right handed, have him/her spend time using only the left hand. When you apply pressure to his/her right side, be sure he/she attempts the left-handed drive. It will be difficult and awkward for him/her at first, so be supportive. Remind him/her that he/she will improve, praise the first sign of improvement. Remind him/her how hard it seemed to ride a bike at first, and how easy it was once he/she got the hang of it.

##### **Head Up, Eyes Front**

A child initially dribbles with his/her head down, keeping the ball in his/her field of vision. As he/she improves and develops a feel for the ball and its rhythm, he/she will be able to direct his/her attention more to what is going on around him/her. To the extent that he/she keeps his/her head down, he/she will be unaware of opportunities around him/her: Who is open for a pass, what lane is available for advancing the ball, which way is the defender leaning, what opportunities are developing from the flow of play?

The head will come up as the player becomes experienced enough to know where the ball is by feel instead of by sight. You need to talk about the concept and why it is helpful to be able to focus on the whole floor. There are practice techniques which can help, such as closing the eyes while dribbling in order to force more reliance on feeling the ball's motion. Patience is needed here since much practice is required before the feel of the ball

is sufficiently developed. Remind your players to try and lift their heads, to be more broadly aware of what is going on around them.

### **Keep Everything Low**

Keep the ball low in traffic, the body balanced and relaxed. A high bouncing dribble is easy to steal in traffic. Also, the longer the ball is away from the hand, the fewer the opportunities to change direction or react quickly. During practice, and especially during drills, remind your players to keep the ball, the dribbling hand, the dribbling elbow and the body's center of gravity low.

Practice keeping the dribble at knee height. Have them observe and feel the differences between a high and low dribble. In a low dribble, the temp and rhythm are much faster and the ball is more under control.

The body should always feel balanced and graceful, weight forward on the balls of the feet. Staying in touch with the rhythm of the ball and staying relaxed help greatly. The great players make it look effortless because they are balanced, relaxed, in touch with the ball and confident in their ability.

For speed dribbling, the ball bounces much higher. The hand pushes the ball out in front, just a bit to the side. High dribbles are for speed; low dribbles are to maintain possession.

## **DRIBBLING DRILLS**

### **Cone Drill**

Set up a half dozen or more cones in a line about 4 to 6 feet apart and have players dribble, weaving through the cones. When a player gets to the end, he/she speed dribbles back outside the cones. Then start over again. Use a stopwatch or a watch with a second hand to measure the best time and then have them run against the clock. Have players do a series, switching the ball from right to left-handed dribbling.

**Keep Away**-Two players stay inside a 10-foot square. One dribbles. One tries to get the ball. The drill teaches how to use the body and to shield the ball.

**King of the Hill**-Several players dribble in a square area and try to tap each other's ball away, with one hand, while dribbling with the other. The last one "alive" wins.

**Dribble Race**-Divide players into two or three teams which form lines at one end of the court. The lead player in each line must dribble-race to the other end and return, handing the ball to the next in line who then repeats the sprint-dribble. Do the second race left-handed.

## **5. PASSING**

Nothing is more important to team play than good, sharp passing. A child will play less if he/she tends to throw the ball away, so he/she must learn the importance of sharp pass work. A bad pass causes the receiver to lose momentum and usually results in a lost shot opportunity or a turnover.

A good pass can set up an easy shot. Kids often just want to go out and shoot, shoot, shoot. There is no problem with shooting, as long as it is put in perspective and other skills are also developed. Good dribbling and good passing lead to good shots.

## **PASSING IN YOUTH BALL**

Passing is a team skill, so it requires “two to tango.” If either the passer or the receiver makes a mistake, the ball can easily be lost to the opposing team.

## **PASSING TECHNIQUES**

When it comes to passing, setting up a good pass is key. Good passing is less a technical skill and more the result of good individual or team dynamics. There are, however, some basic techniques for passing and receiving the ball.

### *o Use Two Hands*

A basketball is pretty big and it can be tough to control with only one hand. The activity on the court is fast and furious and full of sudden movements. Nearly all short or mid-range passes are two-handed, and the main reason for this is to control the ball as it is passed. A one-handed pass can roll off the hand as it is thrown so it should be controlled with two hands.

A more important reason to use two hands is that passes must happen very quickly. The ball is usually already in front of the body, and there is no time to wind up for a one-handed pass. The ball is passed from the front of the torso, and the second hand is needed to give strength and power to the pass.

A full-court pass needs the full power of an extended arm and must be thrown like a baseball. Otherwise, use both hands.

### *o Use Proper Hand Position*

Spread fingers and rotate up toward chest area. Hold the ball on its sides, spread the thumb and index finger to form an oval with each other. The other fingers are spread at a relaxed distance from each other, not too far. This hand position maximizes both control of the ball and power coming through the fingers.

When a ball is caught or taken up from the dribbling position the hands are on the side, fingers out and thumbs up; and the ball is usually waist high. The passing motion begins by bringing the hands up and back to the chest. The fingers rotate upward and a bit back toward the upper chest as far as is comfortable. When the hands rotate, the elbows lift a bit to get more shoulder strength into the ball. The farther the hands rotate, the more power can be placed on the ball as the fingers snap or whip outward.

The ball is passed from in close to the chest for maximum power. The chest moves forward and down as the player steps toward the target.

### *o Step Toward The Target*

This action helps both accuracy and power, getting the body in motion with the pass; it must be a very quick step; add power and accuracy by taking a step toward the target.

## **TYPES OF PASSES**

The two-handed chest pass is described above.

### *o Bounce Passes*

These passes are good in close situations, especially when the traffic is heavy. The bounce pass helps to get the ball down under the defender’s hands. This pass needs to be caught fairly low, to prevent the defender from stealing it. A bounce pass is used when needed to get the ball under and past a defender. Top spin helps speed the ball up after it bounces.

### *o Overhead Pass*

The two-hand overhead pass is commonly used to get a pass over the head of a defender. It is a very effective pass and is also a good pass fake. The pass is made with a quick flick of the wrists and a short step toward the receiver, and is used often after a rebound to

the outlet. The player holds the ball high over his/her head, arms fully extended. His/Her body snaps forward at the waist, and his/her shoulders snap forward as well.

○ *Baseball Pass*

The baseball pass is a one-handed throw, like throwing a baseball. It is used primarily for very long passes, usually as part of a fast break or to break a press. At very young ages, it is not used often since it is rather hard to catch.

## **RECEIVING PASSES**

The art of passing is mainly in the pass itself. Receiving the pass is not complicated.

○ *Move to the Ball*

The receiver must always step and reach for the ball. Defenders will look to steal the pass, so it is important to beat them to it. Many passes are stolen because the receiver was stationary, waiting for the ball. Teach your players to step to it, reach out their hands to receive it.

○ *Give a Target*

It is much easier on the passer if the receiver puts up a hand, palms out, to the spot he/she wants the ball. For instance, if a defender is on the right side, he/she should put up a left hand as the target.

○ *Hands Must Be Soft*

Many kids tense up when the ball approaches, and this increases the chance of the ball bouncing off their hands, resulting in a missed catch.

*Soft hands* is a term used in many sports. Tell your player he/she must try to relax. Shake the hands to loosen them up. Practice passing and receiving and discuss this concept. Tell him/her to notice his/her hands, to make them soft, and then to notice the difference.

○ *Keep the Eyes on the Ball*

This is the key to catching in any sport. The ball is pretty big, and easy to see, but that does not lessen the need to concentrate on it. Watch the ball from the moment it leaves the passer's hands until it is in your hands. Maintain concentration. It is OK to divide concentration, to begin to sense what to do with the ball, but never take your eyes off it. The transition from the catch to the next movement, whether it is dribble, pass or shot, requires control of the ball. Control begins with a solid reception.

## **6. OFFENSE**

### **OFFENSIVE CONCEPTS**

The objective of offense is to move your players around the court in such a way that one of them is able to take a high percentage shot. If you have a dominant big player, get the ball to him/her under the basket. If you have a great outside shooter, run plays that will free him/her from his/her defender for a shot. If you have a great passer, use that ability with plays appropriately suited for quick passes. You must assess your team's strengths and run plays that maximize those strengths. If you know your strengths and also understand how the following basic offensive concepts can utilize them, you can run the plays that will give your team its best chance to win.

○ *Take the High Percentage Shot*

You have got to put the ball in the hoop! The bottom line of basketball is the team with the most points wins!

There are many aspects of scoring. Offense grows out of defense, so scoring starts with a defensive rebound or a steal. It includes being able to control the ball through good

passing while bringing it up the floor. Scoring comes from good shooting and good shooting comes from good shot selection.

This means that you need kids who can shoot, but more importantly, it means that you have to get them into a position for a *high percentage* shot, a shot as close to the hoop as possible and relatively free of defensive pressure. The way to get the open shot is a combination of speed, screening, faking, quickness and a lot of motion.

Each Coach has his or her own system, a series of offensive plays within the context of an overall offensive strategy. The best strategy is usually to try to get the ball safely into the hands of the post players underneath, or to pick off a defender so someone has an open jump shot. The plays are designed to get all players moving in a pattern designed to break up, frustrate and confuse the defense. The ultimate goal is to free someone up for a high percentage shot.

#### ○ *Get It to the Post Man*

The highest percentage shots are directly underneath, in the low post area. The bread-and-butter play of basketball is a pass to a post player underneath, posting up his/her defender or “flashing,” cutting back and forth under the hoop from free throw lines. If a team has a good, big center that knows how to post effectively and can make power moves underneath, that is about all they need.

#### ○ *Attack from the Wing*

The real attack does not start from the point. The point is like a hinge on a door, feeding the ball to the wing. The point is usually too far from the low post to get a good pass into that area. Likewise, the corner is not the optimal place to start our attack since a player can easily get trapped there. The wing area is the quarterback zone for the actual attack. The great majority of passes from the point are to the wing area, and that is where the real action starts. The wing man, usually an off guard (#2) or shooting forward (#3), can either make an individual move, shoot or drive; or he/she can pass to the post, to the corner, or back out to the point.

#### ○ *The Pick*

The workhorse offensive play is the pick or screen. These terms are pretty much used interchangeably, although traditionally it is called a “pick” if the player to be freed has the ball, and a “screen” if the idea is to free up someone else to get the ball.

The screening technique is fairly simple. A player runs up to the side of the defender to be picked, preferably from a bit behind so he/she does not see him/her coming. Timing is important. If the offensive player approaches too early, the defender will have time to avoid him/her; too late, and a foul is possible from running into the defender.

Once there, the player spreads his/her feet wide for a solid base, holds his/her elbows out, and pulls his/her hands in close to his/her chest to avoid a foul. Have your player brace him/herself because the defender is likely to bang into him/her, and referees will rarely call a foul, unless it is flagrant.

#### ○ *The Pick and Roll*

The pick and roll is another bread-and-butter move, and your players must learn to appreciate its value. The pick and roll is based upon the pick concept and means that as soon as your player picks a defender, he/she pivots or rolls in the same direction his/her freed-up teammate is moving parallel to him/her, with hand up, expecting a pass.

Usually, the picked defender is now out of the play so there is a two-on-one situation with the picker. Often, the picker becomes free, since his/her defender now switches to cover the dribbler. Then the picker rolls toward the basket for an easy pass and shot.

Often, one player on offensive can play at the high post in a stationary position while a guard dribbles close to him/her. The high-post player picks the dribbler’s defender. If the

pick is successful in freeing the ball handler, then the picker can roll behind the dribbler. In this case, the picker becomes a trailer and can get a rebound.

○ *Give and Go*

The Give and Go is a great move in basketball. It does not involve a screen, just pure speed. A player simply passes to a teammate, and as he/she passes, he/she explodes forward, past his/her defender, and looks for a quick return pass. If done right, it often leads to an easy lay-up. The give and go works very well at young ages. It goes without saying that the player must also act as the middleman on a give and go, receiving the pass and giving it back quickly.

○ *Do Not Be Too Quick to Dribble*

Kids develop a bad habit of dribbling too quickly after receiving a pass. However, once you begin dribbling, you eliminate other options. Encourage your players to take the time to look inside toward the hoop for an opportunity. If there is an opening or some space in front of the dribbler, he/she should advance the ball. But, if your player is guarded, he/she should not dribble or “put the ball down” too quickly. Dribbling is only one of the initial opportunities. The best players look for the opportunities even before they get the ball.

○ *Jab Step*

To execute a jab step the player steps toward the defender and then suddenly and quickly stops and comes back to his/her original position. The defender will tend to back up a bit at first, which gets his/her weight going backward, off balance. Usually, the jab step will get a player open for a quick pass.

○ *Move Off the Ball*

Many skills are hard to achieve, but the easiest of all is one of the most important: hustling. Hustle is key to basketball, and moving, even without the basketball, is what makes teams winners. It is the movement off the ball that creates possibilities for successful action on the ball. With or without the ball, a player should think about where to go. His/Her play pattern will give him/her a direction; but he/she must then choose how best to get there.

○ *Taking the Shot*

When an open player catches a pass within his/her shooting range, especially within 12 feet of the hoop, the first thought must be to shoot. That is the name of the game. High percentage shots must be taken quickly. Even a poor shooter has a good chance to sink a short jumper and he/she should not hesitate. He/She must shoot very quickly before a defender comes on.

○ *Following the Shot*

Once the shot is off, unless you instruct that player to stay back to stop a fast break, the shooter must follow the shot. About one in six rebounds will bounce back toward the shooter, and a good follow-up move will get many of them. Offensive rebounds are usually those that bounce out a good distance, since defensive players usually have the best position for short rebounds.

## **7. DEFENSE**

You need to talk regularly to your players about the importance of defense. Kids often play poorly on defense. They fail to stay between their opponent and the hoop, allow players to drive around them, and are easily faked out and miss opportunities to steal the ball by not being alert.

## DEFENSIVE CONCEPTS

There are a number of defensive concepts which need to be impressed upon young players. Remember, defense is mainly attitude, and if your player gets that idea, it will help him/her greatly.

### ○ *Transition Play: Get Back and Set Up*

You cannot play defense on the wrong end of the court. Players must get back to their defensive post as soon as the other team gets the ball. It is one thing to see a tired player come up court slowly on offense. It is entirely another to react slowly on defense. Getting back on defense is a time to sprint. Many games are lost in this transitional part of the game.

### ○ *Catch the Dribbler, Pivot and Defend*

When a player is beaten by a ball handler, he/she must quickly turn and run down-court, try to get in front of the ball handler, and set up to defend again. Remember, a defender can almost always outrun a dribbler. The common error is going directly for the ball, reaching in or bumping the dribbler, often resulting in a foul. Get back and set up. Catch the player first, then pivot and defend.

### ○ *Stay Low and Apply Great Pressure*

This is the heart of a good defense, upsetting the player with the ball in every possible way. Flailing arms, shaking hand movements, anything that works to distract the opponent. As long as your players do not foul!

A player does not need a ball to fake. A defensive player can and should fake body movements pretending to charge the ball handler to get him/her to commit him/herself to a move. It all serves to confuse the opposing team.

The big idea in defensive play is to stay low in the triple-threat position. The low position allows your players to stay fairly close, about a step or arm's length away, and apply great pressure.

### ○ *Keep the Action Wide, Away from the Lane*

This just makes common sense. The free throw lane area—the low and high posts—is where high percentage shots are taken. We want to always deny this inside route to the dribbler or passer. Force the play to stay wide, along the sideline.

The lowest percentage shots are those taken from the corners. These shots are long, and there is no backboard to afford perspective or to allow a lucky bank. Your players should force the ball into the corner if at all possible. Also, the corners act as a natural trap to a player, eliminating options and allowing the defense to bottle up and really frustrate a player. On a baseline drive, you must protect the line and force the ball back out into traffic, where other defenders can help. A successful baseline drive yields a very high percentage offensive shot.

○ *Hands Up*—It is very easy to make body contact underneath. Any movement of the defensive player when attempting to block a shot will usually result in a foul call. Many youth referees will blow the whistle automatically on attempts to block a shot if the players' bodies are close. The best recourse when defending a chip shot or short jump shot under the hoop, where bodies are always touching, is just to stand still with hands straight up.

○ *Deny the Ball*—When an opposing player is underneath, you want to deny him/her the ball, that is, prevent him/her from receiving a pass. Denying players is the cornerstone of defensive strategy today. If a player is in a low post close to the hoop, he/she will nearly always score if he/she gets the ball. Make sure he/she does not get it by fronting him/her, that is, playing between him/her and the ball, or at least playing to the inside

of him/her and getting an arm around him/her into the passing lane. This occurs most within 6 feet of the hoop.

- *Defending Against a Pick—Switching* is a tricky defensive concept to apply, but an effective defense to avoid a pick or screen. When an offensive screen or pick successfully frees a ball handler from his/her defender, a new defender needs to cover the ball handler. The defender who was guarding the offensive screener is the one who must usually switch to cover the free player.

*The best way to defend a pick is to fight through it.* Usually other defensive teammates will see the pick as it is being formed and alert the player to be screened so he/she can step through it, that is, step carefully between the screener and the dribbler or step behind the screener. The best course is usually to sink back to avoid fouling the screener. The defender who was covering the screener should also step back to let the defender covering the dribbler through, and also be prepared to switch quickly if needed.

## **DEFENSIVE STANCE**

The most important fundamental in most sports is proper form. It is the foundation upon which a player uses his/her individual ability. Good form will best position a player to execute a move. It maximizes quickness, the ability to react and the balance needed to launch a good shot. A proper stance is the easiest thing to Coach and is achieved by constant drilling and repetition. However, in the heat of play or when a player is tired, a poor defensive stance is the first thing to fall apart.

- *The Triple Threat Position*

In the defensive position, a player lines up one long step from the person with the ball, just far enough so the defender can reach out and touch the opponent's chest. The triple-threat posture allows the defender to move forward, sideways or vertically to stop a dribble, a pass or a shot. Triple-threat is simply the position which best allows the player to make any one of those three moves in a split second.

- *Rebounding*

Rebounding is a skill used for both offense and defense, but the fact is that most rebounds are defensive and should be if played properly. Rebounding has much more to do with position and strength than with height. Since the defender is usually inside the play between the offensive player and the hoop, he/she is in an excellent position to box out or screen opponents from the ball.

## **BOXING OUT**

- *Boxing Out an Opponent*

A key defensive strategy is to box out the opponent as a shot is taken. Upon release of a shot by an opponent, the center hesitates a second before turning to face the hoop for the rebound. This hesitation allows the center to see in which direction the opponent is going to get the rebound. Then your center should step in the opponent's way, rotate him/her back after the opponent is blocked off, stick his/her backside into the opponent and outstretch his/her arms sideways a bit to make it tough for the opposing player to get around, thereby making him/herself wide. Once the center gets the rebound, he/she looks to the sideline for a teammate, usually a guard, designated as the outlet and passes to him/her.

- *The Rebounding Jump*—The rebounder jumps up, preferably straight up to avoid a foul. Do not go over another player who has better position—it is an easy foul for the referee to see.

- *Catching the Rebound*—Caution players against getting into the habit of always tapping the rebound away. A well-placed tap against a bigger player may be needed, but always try to catch it. Catch it with both hands and land well, both feet spread out. Keep the ball high for an overhead outlet pass. If you must bring it down, do so with strength—elbows out, ball into chest—and pivot quickly. A lot of hands will attack the ball, so be strong and ready to make a quick decision.

***Coaching should be enjoyable for you and the time spent with your child. As a member of your basketball team this experience should be rewarding and uplifting for both of you.***

Be assured, the effort you make now to improve your ability to communicate effectively will pay off for you in the long run. You will have a more positive and enjoyable Coaching experience!

Many excellent Books on Coaching Basketball are available, here are a few:

- ◆ Coaching Youth Basketball: The Guide for Coaches & Parents
- ◆ Basketball Skills & Drills
- ◆ The Basketball Coach's Bible
- ◆ Basketball Basics
- ◆ Youth Basketball Drills

Many web sites also cater to Basketball Coaches. There is a great deal of helpful information available.

Take a look at these - [www.breakthroughbasketball.com](http://www.breakthroughbasketball.com), [www.powerbasketball.com](http://www.powerbasketball.com).