



Basketball is a unique sport in that it is so skill-based. We want to be a program that is committed to doing what is best for the players and the program over the long haul. We are not interested in how many wins we can get at the lower levels, rather, we always want to be focused on the process of helping the boys become complete players.

I have created this document as a reference for coaches to help them focus their practice sessions. With only three hours of practice time each week, it's important that the time is used effectively and efficiently. By having this document to refer to, coaches can insure that their hard work pays off in the long run.

Please check out the following youtube clips to see many of the following drills/concepts performed:

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)

[Part 4](#)

Grades 3-4

Here's what to teach, ordered by priority:

1. **Ball-Handling** - We teach 4 basic moves in our program (Crossover, Inside-Out or Fake Crossover, Between the legs and behind the back). At this level, we feel like they should all be proficient with the Crossover and that the Inside-Out will be introduced. Some of your more skilled kids will want to experiment with Between the Legs and Behind the Back, but it is not appropriate to expect all players to be able to perform these skills.

In order to help players to be able to perform the desired 4 moves, we do a lot of 1 ball and 2 ball drills. Our feeling is that if a player can perform the drills with 2 balls, he will certainly be able to do them with 1.

The biggest thing you can do, as it relates to dribbling, is to create an expectation that all players will be able to dribble equally well with either hand. There are a lot of people, including me, that think that if a player isn't a proficient dribbler with both hands by the time he begins his 3rd year of playing, he probably never will be. Don't let them rely on their dominant hand!

2. **Shooting form** - This is the most important thing you will be teaching this year. Teams that can shoot the ball are going to be more successful. Period. For this age group, we want them to concentrate on putting ONE hand in the basket. It will be a challenge for them to shoot the ball with perfect form, simply because of their size and strength. Don't worry too much about how much they are involving their guide hands in the shot, instead really drive home the fact that we want to see ONE hand in the "cookie jar."

3. **Lay-ups** - You should practice lots of lay ups with both hands. Your goal should be to get all players to make lay ups with their left and right hands equally well. Teach them to jump off their inside foot. Do NOT talk about Left foot or Right foot. Instead, talk to them about which is the inside/outside foot (and inside/outside hand). This is a much more simple approach for everyone. It will be difficult for many of them, but work on it. You'll probably need to start really close to the basket, with no dribble, and take just one step to practice the footwork. Once you add the dribble, they should dribble with their outside hand when shooting lay ups.

4. **Footwork** - We are a program that spends a lot of time talking about and working on footwork. We always want

a player to have his power foot (same as shooting hand) free when he catches the ball. We do this for a couple of reasons. First, we want him to be able to step into his shot with his power foot if he has a good shot. Second, we want to be able to incorporate our jab-step series (this will come later)

5. **Passing and Catching** - An under-taught and under-emphasized skill set at all levels of basketball. Spend the time teaching these things in isolation and emphasizing them within other drills. Teaching points:

- Passing
 - We make all passes with 2 hands
 - Step toward your target (do not throw a pass from your heels)
 - Call out the name of the person you are passing to
 - Pass away from the defense (to the outside hand)
 - A receiver shouldn't have to move his hands to catch the ball
- Catching
 - Give the passer a target (have your hands ready to catch and SHOOT)
 - Catch with your hands and your eyes
 - Have your power foot (same as shooting foot) free as you catch

6. Offensive Principles

- Please do NOT teach plays, teach them HOW to play.
 - You may find it necessary to provide some structure for them in terms of where they should start on the floor (1-2-2 or 1-4 Hi), but beyond that, they need to learn how it feels to simply play the game.
 - The foundation of the motion offense is the Basket Cut. If you can get your kids to simply pass and cut to the BACK of the rim every time they make a pass, you have done a great job!
- All players need to learn to handle the ball facing the basket AND to play with their back to the basket for 2 primary reasons:
 - First, we have no idea if the big kids will still be big when they are in HS
 - Second, big kids who can handle and shoot are great, as are little kids who can post up and score around the basket
- Spacing - players at this age should be within 12-15 feet of each other and/or the ball
- The best way for any level of player to gain an understanding of the way this game is supposed to be played is to play 2 on 2 or 3 on 3.
 - Within these games, you can do a lot of teaching and explaining of important concepts as they arise within game situations
 - Also, within these games, by placing restrictions on them, you can work on developing court awareness. Some examples of restrictions
 - No Dribbles (or 1-2 dribbles within an entire possessions)
 - Only "X player" can shoot
 - gets the kids to focus on getting "X" open and getting a great shot for him
 - Must score a lay-up
 - Must score within 3 passes (must be a GREAT shot)
- Scrimmaging 5 on 5 should be less than 20% of your practice time.
 - When you do scrimmage, make it a focused scrimmage
 - Play to 3, win by 2
 - First team to score 2 lay-ups (not fastbreak), wins
 - First team to score on a basket cut, wins

10. **Defense** - Keep it simple. At this level, if you can get kids to understand these two things:

- On the ball: Keep the ball in front of you by sliding your feet
- Off the ball: Keep your body between your man and the ball while maintaining vision of both

The only defense we will play is a non-switching man-to-man (the ONLY exception to this is on a Ball Screen). No

teams in Cardinal HOOPS will EVER play a Zone defense.