

TIME TO TRAIN

The only way to improve on gameday is to make the most out of your training time! Ideally, your team trains 2 x 1 hour sessions per week, however, I understand some teams can only fit in 1 x 1 hour session. If that's the case, I highly recommend extending that session to 1 and a half hours, this time adds up over the course of a season and can have a dramatically positive effect.

COMMUNICATION

To get the most out of a training session it is important for as many members of the team to attend as possible. Everyone has different commitments, so it's critical to establish a training day and time early in the season that works for most members of the team. Another important element is communication - between yourself and parents, players, managers. Having a group messaging platform - such as: Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp or Text message - works well to distribute any important information. My advice to all coaches is to over communicate, don't be afraid to

communicate often, as this is usually reciprocated by parents who will let you know early if they are unable to attend a team event, giving you ample time to plan.

EQUIPMENT

Now that you have a training day/ time, and a platform to communicate, you have to consider what equipment you will need for your session. Some staples in my coaching bag are:

- Cones (10 +)
- Bibs (5)
- Tennis Balls (5+)
- Whiteboard + Marker (1)
- Whistle (1)
- Footwork ladder (1)

Make it clear that you expect players to bring a basketball, towel and water bottle. Not only is this important for the success of the training session, but is also something you can hold them accountable for and begin to teach them the value of planning before attending a training or game.

For context, middle school basketball teams in the USA practice 5 days

a week, often at 6am. I'm not suggesting we adopt this method, but I do want coaches to be acutely aware of maximising every second you have with your athletes. First and foremost, it's important that you (coach) are early to practice - at least 5 minutes to gather your thoughts and review your training plan. Secondly, you should expect the same from your athletes, asking them to be on-time is not unreasonable and is a sign of respect. As athletes progress into representative teams, this is a non-negotiable - as my first state coach put it:

“If you're on time, you're late.”

ALWAYS PLAN - DON'T LEAVE IT TO CHANCE

Even if it's on a napkin, 5 minutes before you start - get some idea of what you want to do. Below is an example of a training plan for a 1 hour session.

There is a sea of drills on the internet and it can be tempting to try a new one every training session, maybe you're concerned your athletes will get bored. My advice is to hold off on that and pick a few staples - that you will do at most training. This builds confidence in your athletes and will save time at practice because they'll know what to do, how to do it and the intensity it should be completed at.

YOU SET THE TONE!

Life happens, there'll be days that coaching feels like the last thing you want to do. However, your athletes don't know what's going on and frankly don't care, and nor should they. If you have the privilege to coach and influence young athletes it's your responsibility to show up to every training and game and give everything you have. Something I've learnt is that you never know how much you can impact someone's life, with even just a sentence - don't let that opportunity slip.

TIME	SKILL	DRILL
60:00 - 50:00	Physical Warm-up + Defence	Dynamic leg series/ Mirror Defence
50:00 - 40:00	Ball Handling/ Passing	Tennis Ball Series + Passing Tag
40:00 - 30:00	Finishing	Technique + Contested lay-ups
30:00 - 20:00	Shooting	Stationary, 1 Dribble, Contested
20:00 - 10:00	Tactics (set plays, team defence, adjustments to game)	5 out motion - Pass and Cut
10:00 - 00:00	Live Game Play (scrimmage or small sided game 3v3)	Live scrimmage - full court if possible with emphasis on using pass and cut

COMPETITIVENESS

I completely understand that many coaches are working with young athletes who are playing for fun, however, it is vital to teach them how to be competitive within the confines of the rules. Encourage healthy competition in training, they will only make each other better. Encourage aggression within the game, if an offensive player exposes the ball, encourage the defence to rip it out of their hands. This is how you build a winning culture.

WARM-UP

Injuries are a part of the game, it is our responsibility to ensure athletes are sufficiently prepared before engaging in maximum intensity activities (5v5). I always do some form of low intensity movements/ games before getting right into a session. I like to add a basketball wherever I can to add an extra element of fun. Below are 3 games/ warm-ups you could do.

- Dynamic w/ basketballs
- Ladder w/ basketballs
- Movement circuit_

INDIVIDUAL DEFENCE & REBOUNDING

There is a technical aspect to playing defence and rebounding, but truthfully - putting forth the effort to stay in front of someone and the personal pride of securing a rebound is key. This is one of our core values - effort - anyone



can be the best defender and rebounder on the team, regardless of height, and the impact this can have on the game is immeasurable. Below are some drills that can help build on this idea:

- 1v1 - Defensive progression
- 2v2 - Rebounding drill

BALL HANDLING

Ball handling is a fundamental skill that underpins a player's ability to do anything else on the offensive end of the court. The fact is, if your entire team can handle the ball confidently with their head up and read the game as it's unfolding, you put your team in a great position to succeed. There are a plethora of ways to incorporate ball

handling into your session, here are a couple examples:

- 1 Ball stationary series
- 2 Ball stationary series
- Tennis ball series

FINISHING

As the game of basketball transitions towards the 3-point line and beyond, it's our job as junior coaches to ensure athletes aren't negating the importance of executing close to the ring, using a variety of different finishes around the basket. If we, as coaches, can give athletes the skill of being able to finish lay-ups of their left foot, right foot, two feet and with either hand at a young age, we are setting them up for

success down the road. The younger the age group, the more time that should be dedicated to nailing the fundamentals of lay-ups and jump stops.

- 1. [No dribble lay up](#)
- 2. [1 dribble lay up + Jumpstop](#)
- 3. [1v1 defender on hip](#)

PASSING & CATCHING

Passing and catching are a crucial element of the game that is often left off training plans, however, an improvement in passing and catching can significantly decrease how many turnovers your team has and increase how many uncontested shots you'll get. A skill that needs to be developed is the ability to dribble at speed and be able to pick the ball up and pass it ahead without slowing down. Basketball is a game of advantage - however that advantage might only be there for a second or two, so we have to teach our athletes to capitalise on that.

- 1. [1 ball partner passing](#)
- 2. Jumpstop pivot passing
- 3. [Transition passing](#)

When completing passing drills, coach your athletes to "challenge each

other", kids will learn to catch the ball quickly when the consequence is a basketball to the face - we've all been there.

SHOOTING

Where art meets science

We aspire for all our players to have confidence and comfort in their ability to shoot the basketball. A key element in developing good shooters is for them to understand that they have no control over the end result - you may have picture perfect form and the shot still misses. Players must only focus on what they can control - the work they've put in prior to the game and their shooting preparation when their opportunity arises.

TECHNIQUE/ FORM

I'm a firm believer that shooting the basketball is not one size fits all - look at the best shooters in the

world and it's clear that there isn't a "perfect" shooting technique that reigns superior. However, there are certainly elements of shooting that are consistent amongst good shooters that can help guide how we should teach shooting to our athletes.

Stance - Balanced and comfortable alignment of feet (straight or turned isn't hugely important here)

Knees/ Hips - Both should flex in order to lower the body (imagine a spring being coiled)

Torso - Upright, not leaning backwards or forwards too much

Grip/ Fingers - Shooting hand spread on the ball

Guide Hand - On the side, not used to generate power

Arm Action - From a "V" to an "I"

Follow Through - Snap elbow and

wrist - fingers pointed to the floor



CONSIDERATIONS

Young athletes who don't have the necessary strength to shoot the basketball properly will develop "compensation patterns" - a sequence of movements that may increase the power on their shot but significantly decrease the accuracy. (e.g most under 10's/12's shooting 3 pointers). The most common compensation is

using both hands to propel the ball towards the ring, rather than a shooting hand and a guide hand. Not only is this much less accurate but also very inconsistent. It's our job to help young athletes understand why shooting technique is important for their long term success as a basketball player and launching 3 pointers every time they get on a court isn't doing them any favours.

- 1. [1 hand form shooting](#)
- 2. [Partner C/S \(midrange, 1 dribble, 3 pointers\)](#)
- 3. [Competitive Shooting](#)

TEAM OFFENCE

How can your team find the best shot possible on every possession?

Firstly, the priority should be trying to get an advantage in transition (running up the court) - you should encourage the players without the ball to sprint towards the hoop and the ball handler to look for them in an attempt to get a quick, uncontested basket. However, if the defence does a good job and doesn't allow for that, you should have a plan on how to score in the half court.

There are many factors that contribute to a good offensive possession, here are three of the most important:

1. SPACING

Once the ball crosses half-way, the biggest challenge is finding space to attack the hoop with as little resistance as possible. It's important to teach your players to maintain **5 out spacing** (link below) and not all rush to the ball, bringing their defenders with them.

2. BALL AND PLAYER MOVEMENT

To avoid players all rushing to the ball, move it! Then move yourself. **Passing the ball and "cutting"** is the quickest most efficient way to create scoring opportunities in the half court.

3. FREEDOM

Most importantly, encourage freedom and creativity - don't allow your players to get so caught up in running a play that they pass up a scoring opportunity to "make the right pass". Offences are designed to get a high quality shot attempt, if a player can achieve that by dribbling past his defender, that should be your best offence!

To apply these concepts in a game takes patience and repetition in training. However, it can not be understated the importance of teaching these concepts at an early age, giving athletes the fundamental understanding of how to play the game "the right way"

Motion Offence - <https://www.basketballforcoaches.com/5-out-motion-offense>



TEAM DEFENCE

What tactics can you implement to force the opposing team into a contested shot or turnover?

Team defence is the backbone of your team, it takes exceptional communication, accountability and effort (value) - zero talent required. The challenge is for all five players to work as one, with a common goal of keeping the opposing team from getting close to the basket or an uncontested jumpshot. Three foundations for good man to man defence are outlined below.

1. TRANSITION DEFENCE

If transition offence is the best way to get easy baskets, transition defence should be an absolute priority. This begins the moment you no longer have possession of the ball (after a shot or turnover). There are two objectives as soon as this happens:

Protect the hoop - A player must sprint back and obstruct the path of any offensive player running to the hoop.

Pressure on the ball - Another player must locate the ball handler and put pressure on them as they're dribbling up the court to affect their ability to make an easy pass.

2. STAY BETWEEN YOUR MAN & THE HOOP AT ALL TIMES!

This is a golden rule, and the consequences for not doing so usually result in an easy basket for the other team. Teaching your players to conceptually understand where they should be standing in relation to their player and the hoop will automatically boost your team defence.

3. SEEING YOUR PLAYER AND THE BALL AT ALL TIMES!

Similarly to point 2. This is a non-negotiable. Teaching your players to maintain vision of both their player and the ball automatically makes them a good team defender. This really stands out if a teammate gets beaten off the dribble and another player is able to rotate over and help.

Man to Man Defence - <https://www.basketballforcoaches.com/man-to-man-defense>