



# BASKETBALL COACHING MADE EASY



TEAM OFFENSIVE  
AND DEFENSIVE SKILLS



## Basketball Australia formed in 1939

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The National Coaching and Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) was established in 1978 with the primary aim of up-grading and expanding coaching expertise across a wide range of sports. Basketball Australia has embraced this scheme since its inception.

This Level 1 Manual is a substantial revision on previous editions and many thanks are due to Mr Ian Ellis for his work as well as the numerous other coaches who have been kind enough to have input. The manual remains the basis of Basketball Australia's NCAS Level 1 course however has been produced in separate booklets to make it easier for coaches to identify specific information they are after.

This manual is not designed to have all coaches around Australia doing the same thing, rather it is to allow coaches at all levels to perform more effectively and constructively. The application of knowledge remains flexible according to the talent and ability of the individual coach and the athletes they are working with.

Good luck with your coaching!

Basketball Australia would like to acknowledge the assistance from FIBA Oceania and the Australian Sports Commission in the production of the *Coaching Made Easy* series.

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### **Basketball Australia**

PO Box 7141 Alexandria NSW 2015  
Level 3, 256 Coward Street Mascot NSW 2020  
Telephone: (02) 9469 7200 Fax: (02) 9469 7201  
www.basketball.net.au



### **One Basketball Canberra**

PO Box 3268  
Belconnen ACT 2617  
Telephone: (02) 6253 3066 Fax: (02) 6253 3060  
www.act.basketball.net.au



### **NSW Basketball Association Ltd**

PO Box 198  
Sydney Markets NSW 2129  
Telephone: (02) 9746 2969 Fax: (02) 9746 1457  
www.nswbasketball.net.au



### **Basketball NT**

PO Box 42240  
Casuarina NT 0810  
Telephone: (08) 8945 3761 Fax: (08) 8945 3862  
www.nt.basketball.net.au



### **Queensland Basketball INC**

PO Box 1281  
Milton QLD 4064  
Telephone: (07) 3377 9100 Fax: (07) 3371 7239  
www.basketballqld.net.au



### **Basketball Association of South Australia**

PO Box 29  
Findon SA 5023  
Telephone: (08) 8444 6444 Fax: (08) 8444 6488  
www.sa.basketball.net.au



### **Tasmanian Basketball Association (Inc)**

PO Box 21  
New Town TAS 7008  
Telephone: (03) 6331 4287 Fax: (03) 6332 7896  
www.tas.basketball.net.au



### **Basketball Victoria (Inc)**

Box 3, MSAC  
Aughtie Dr, Albert Park VIC 3206  
Telephone: (03) 9927 6666 Fax: (03) 9927 6677  
www.basketballvictoria.com.au



### **Basketball WA (Inc)**

PO Box 185  
Floreat WA 6014  
Telephone: (08) 9284 0555 Fax: (08) 9284 0550  
www.basketballwa.asn.au



# INTRODUCTION

Australia has a proud history in basketball and in 2004 was ranked 3rd amongst all nations. This success is due in no small way to the tireless work of coaches throughout the country, from “learn to play” programs right through to the Boomers and Opals.

The National Coaching and Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) was established in 1978 with the primary aim of up-grading and expanding coaching expertise across a wide range of sports. Basketball Australia has fully embraced this scheme since its inception and has developed, in conjunction with the Australian Sports Commission, a systematic and on-going educational program for basketball coaches.

Basketball Coaching Made Easy has been formulated to provide the background of knowledge and expertise for aspiring Level 1 basketball coaches. This course applies covers general coaching principles and applies them specifically to basketball, with an emphasis on having sound knowledge of the skills and principles of basketball as well as better organisation of practice sessions, appropriate methods of teaching and correcting techniques and methods of analysing an athlete's performance.

There is a wealth of resources available to coaches – a simple search on the internet will identify many hundred websites with an amazing array of information. There are books and videos on all aspects of basketball coaching and a visit to the National Sports Information Centre at the Australian Institute of Sport is a must for any coach visiting Canberra. Indeed your local library is often a great source of coaching material.

With all this information available a coach could easily find enough drills to fill many years of training sessions! Drills are the “tools of the trade” for coaches but the art of coaching is about the teaching points that you highlight in a given drill. Coaches must focus on the teaching points as these are what make their players better!

The National Intensive Training Centre Program is the key component of Basketball Australia's national player and coach identification and development strategy. There are full time coaches in each state and territory who deliver the program with the assistance of a strong network of coaches. The NITCP has a heavy emphasis on developing individual offensive and defensive fundamentals as well as team principles of play. Coaches interested in learning more about the NITCP should contact the head coaches through their state associations.

Whether you are coaching a team of beginners who are just learning to love the sport or a representative team “Basketball Coaching Made Easy” has information relevant to you. For further information on coaching clinics or resources contact your State/Territory Association or log onto the Basketball Australia website, [www.basketball.net.au](http://www.basketball.net.au).

Books 1 to 5 of *Basketball Coaching Made Easy* are the text for the basketball component of the Level 1 NCAS Course.

Enjoy your coaching!



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# CHAPTER 1: OFFENSIVE TRANSITION

Offensive transition commences the moment that the team playing defence gains possession of the ball. This may be the result of:

- a steal
- a defensive rebound
- an inbound base line pass after the opposition has scored

In these play situations, the team goes from defence to offence quickly as the referee does not handle the ball.

Transition means the phase of the game between gaining possession and the more formal organization, which often characterizes half court offence.

Once in possession of the ball, the object is to move the ball from the backcourt to the front court as quickly as possible. This will often result in fast break opportunities, especially if the defence is slow on defensive transition. Where possible the offensive team should attempt to outnumber the defence (eg 2 on 1, 3 on 2, 4 on 3 situations) thereby generating early, high percentage scoring opportunities. The fast break, or offensive transition game, if executed correctly is exciting to watch and will often provide a high percentage shot.

The only way to get this advantage situation is to have players sprint down the floor to present passing opportunities.

Effective offensive transition demands quick reaction and execution, but organisation and structure are of great assistance too.

Before players can execute a fast break they must have developed the following fundamentals:

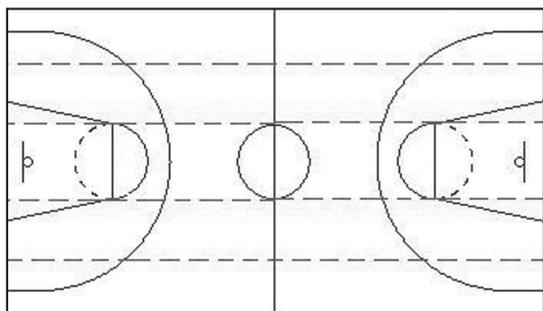
- handle (dribble, pass and catch) the basketball at speed
- be able to make a lead pass to a team mate on the move
- speed dribble
- make a lay up at speed
- rebound
- make a quick and accurate outlet pass

Generally, we consider that there are five 'lanes' on the court for the purposes of offensive transition.

For a team to be successful at running offensive transition they must fill specific lanes on the court. These can be seen in the diagram. Here the filling of the middle and two outside lanes are the first priority. This will lead to situations where the defenders who are slow to recover will not be able to adequately defend their offensive opponents.

When commencing transition from defence to offence the ball should move into the hands of the designated point guard (or a good ball handler) this is usually achieved through an outlet pass. Upon receiving the ball, the ball handler must then decide whether to dribble the ball hard down the court or to pass to a teammate down court in a better scoring position. If deciding to dribble, the ball should generally be dribbled to the middle of the court. This will create good passing angles and options, particularly if the two outer lanes are filled. The ball should move down the court using the fewest number of dribbles possible. For older, elite athletes three is often sufficient

Upon reaching the keyway, the point guard or player in possession of the ball must decide whether to keep driving and attack the basket, drive to a spot for a pull up shot, or to pass. A rule of thumb known as "driving lane" and "passing lane" can assist.

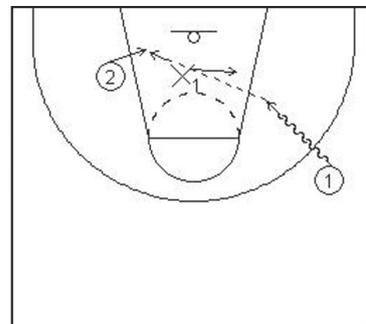
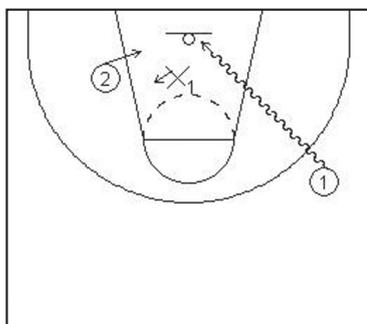
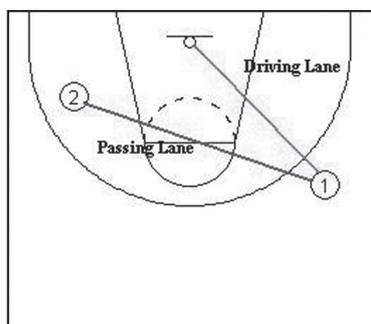


**Driving lane:** Is the imaginary line between the player with the ball and the basket. The player should drive to the basket until a defender commits to stopping dribble penetration.

**Passing Lane:** Is a lane between the dribbler and teammates in a position to receive a pass. A passing lane usually becomes available when the defence takes away the driving lane from the ball handler.

The rule of thumb is:

If the defence guards the driving lane, pass. If the defence guards the passing lane, drive.



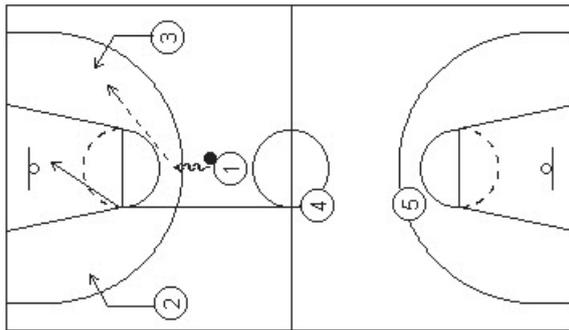
The athletes running the two outside lanes are generally the 2 and 3 spot players. Here the rule should be:

- Sprint to half court and to the sideline (to get as wide as possible).
- Turn and look (look over inside shoulder – closest to the middle of the court) for the ball after half court.
- Be ready to score.

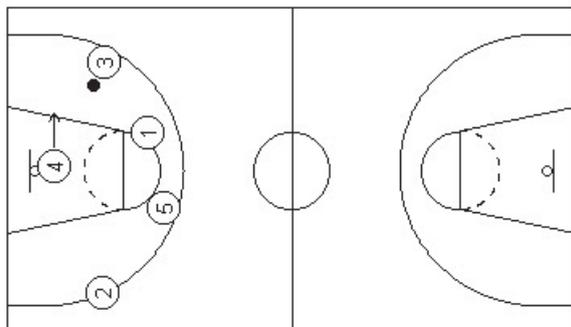
Whilst players should be generally encouraged to get the ball down the court as fast as possible, they do not have to take a shot straight away.

The 4 spot player should sprint down the inside lane adjacent to the 1 spot player dribbling the ball down court. They should look to beat the ball down the court and to present a passing option for the point guard.

Upon arriving at the key the 4 spot player, if they do not receive the ball, should change direction and head toward the basket (commonly called a flash cut). Here they should attempt to seal and gain position (at the point of the basket) to receive a pass. If they do not receive a pass they should post up at the block.



The 5 spot player should trail behind in case of a turnover, or to present an easy pass if the guard is pressured. When running the court they should follow the 4 spot player and run the inside lane adjacent to the guard dribbling. The 5 spot player should end up beyond the three-point line above the elbow of the key.



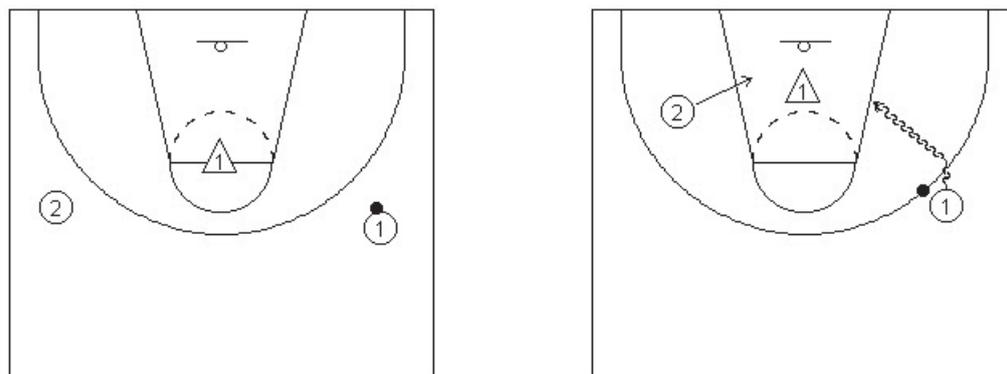
## 2 on 1

If the offensive team moves the ball quickly and sprints the floor they may create an advantage situation – two offensive players against one defender.

The two offensive players should fill the two outside lanes to maximise the court area the defensive player needs to cover.

At approximately the foul line extended, the ball handler drives to the basket. Using the “driving lane/passing lane” principles explained earlier, the ball handler may drive for the lay up (if the defence covers the passing lane) or pass the ball to the open team mate (if the defence covers the driving lane).

It is important at this point that the offensive player away from the ball, sprints hard to get ahead of the ball handler and cuts to the basket. This makes it more difficult for the defensive player to stop the penetration by the ball handler and recover to pressure the shot of the receiver.



### Key teaching points

- Fill the outside lanes
- Non ball handler sprint to get ahead of the ball
- Cut directly to the basket at the foul line extended
- Ball handler uses “driving lane/passing lane” principles when engaging defence

### 3 on 2

Another advantage situation that a hard running offence can create is 3 on 2 – three offensive players against two defensive players..

The three offensive players fill the middle and two outside lanes to maximise the court area the two defensive players need to cover.

The ball should be in the middle lane by the time the three offensive players reach the half way.

The ball handler in the middle of the court uses the “driving lane/passing lane” principles when approaching the first defensive player. At this point the two players in the outside lanes must be ahead of the ball handler and cutting to the basket.

If the defensive player covers the driving lane the ball may be passed to “the most open” of the two players cutting to the basket. If the timing and execution is correct this will often lead to a 2 on 1 opportunity between the two players from the outside lanes and the remaining defensive player as shown in the diagram.

Once the ball is passed to a wing player, that player has three options:

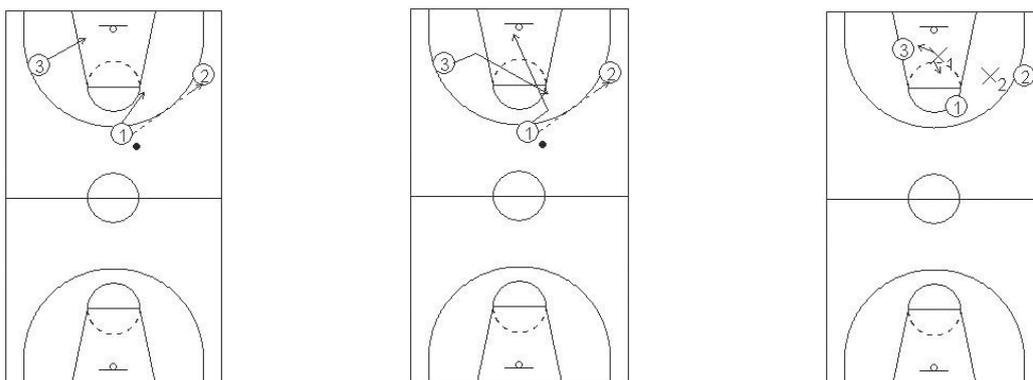
1. Draw the defence and pass to the opposite cutter
2. Stop and take the short jump shot
3. Pass back to the middle lane player (who is now positioned around the elbow on the ball side)

It is important after the ball has been passed to the wing that the other two offensive players play ‘high’ and ‘low’. This can be created in two ways:

- the middle player moves to the ballside elbow after passing and the other wing cuts to the basket
- the middle player cuts to the basket and the other wing moves to the ballside elbow.

The reason for playing ‘high’ and ‘low’ is to force the second defender to make a decision (assuming the first defender is guarding the ball at the wing).

If the defender guards the ‘high’ player, the ‘low’ player is open. If the defender guards the ‘low’ player, the high player is open



#### Key teaching points

- Fill the three lanes
- Ball in the middle lane
- Non ball handlers sprint ahead of the ball
- Players in outer lanes cut directly to the basket at the foul line extended
- Ball handler uses “driving lane/passing lane” principles when engaging defence
- First receiver look for pass to opposite cutter, own shot, pass back to ball handler
- Once ball is on the wing, other two players play high and low

## CHAPTER 2: DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

Defensive transition is usually defined as the period between losing possession and slowing the offence into more structured half court systems.

Effective defensive transition generally requires that all players react as soon as their team does not have possession of the ball. Just as the offence is trying to get an advantage (2v1, 3v2), the defence tries to get defenders back so that there is no advantage to the offence.

Clearly defined rules can assist defensive transition.

Here is an example of a system, which could be used for older players:

1. The player closest to the ball must attempt to slow down the dribbler. The defender should call "ball" to alert teammates to indicate that the ball is covered by a defender.
2. Every other defender must attempt to defend the basket as a priority.
3. The first player down the court must defend the basket, calling "basket" to alert teammates that the basket is covered.
4. The second player down the court should look to defend or anticipate where the next pass will be made.
5. The third player down the court should anticipate and defend where the second pass is going to be made.
6. The fourth player back must help to protect the basket, then finally any undefended player.

Good communication is essential in defensive transition. For example, the second player down the court moves to guard the next pass only once they know the basket has been covered. The best way for them to know is for the first player to communicate.

Of course for younger players defending the basket and the ball, in that order, are the most critical decisions to be made, so rather than trying to anticipate passes they may simply cover the basket.

Good defensive transition starts as soon as the offensive team does not have possession of the ball. Accordingly, as soon as a shot is taken, the offence must consider defensive transition.

There are generally two roles offensive players perform once a shot is taken:

- contest the rebound
- move to a 'safety' position toward the halfway line (ready to guard the basket).

Different teams and coaches will have different rules for how these roles are undertaken. For example, a coach may designate that 3 particular players always contest the rebound and the other 2 move to a safety position.

Another important aspect of defensive transition is:

- Defending a 2 on 1 situation
- Defending a 3 on 2 situation

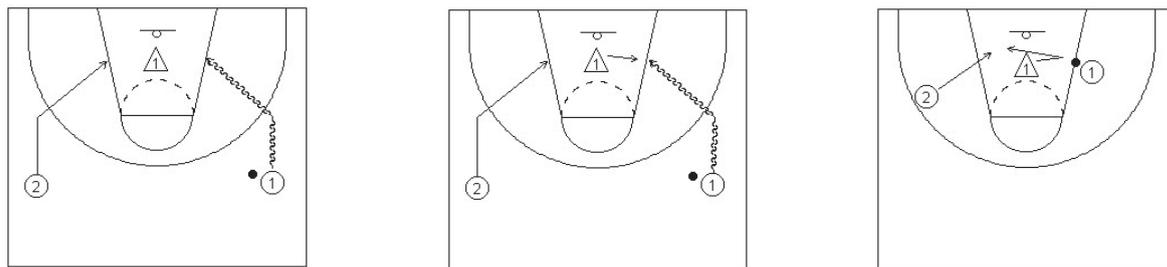
### Defending a 2 on 1 Situation

A lone defender against two offensive players is always going to present problems for that defender. The first priority must always be to defend the basket and really the offence should score.

For younger players it is essential that easy shots, especially lay-ups, not be conceded. Protect the basket first, encouraging the dribbler to stop and pass. This will allow time for other defenders to assist.

For older players the common method taught is to “hedge” towards the dribbler in an effort to show that they are about to aggressively defend the ball. The moment the dribbler stops their dribble by picking up the ball, the defender recovers, leaving the player with the ball and descending on the potential receiver. This means the player left with the ball is either forced to take a lower percentage shot, or pass to an additional player once they arrive down the court.

If the defender is able to put doubt in the mind of the dribbler so they take a little longer to decide what to do, the defender has done a good job. This extra time, gives the defender’s team mates time to recover.



### Key teaching points

- Protect the basket
- Hedge toward the dribbler (try to put doubt in their mind)
- Recover to receiver once the ball handler kills the dribble
- Force a lower percentage shot or pass

## Defending a 3 on 2 Situation

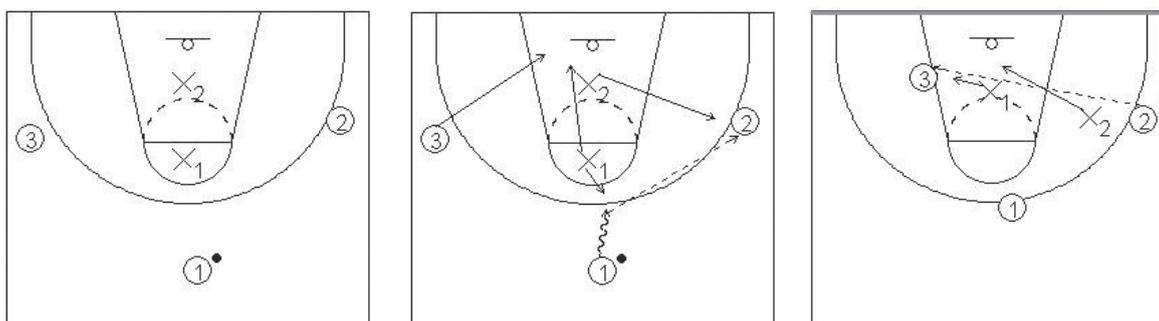
When there are two defenders and three offensive players the two defenders must work together.

One player must defend the basket, the other must be ready to defend the ball as it arrives at the offensive end. The defenders should adopt an "I" formation referred to as tandem defence as diagrammed below. Communication is critical between the two defenders

The defenders must communicate with each other, calling "ball" (high defender) and "basket" (low defender) and this communication must continue throughout the play. The high defender should start above the foul line.

As the ball approaches the top of the key the defender X2 should call 'ball' as soon as they start to move toward O2. X1 must slow the dribbler and force a pass. X1 will call "Ball". Upon O1 passing the ball to O2, X2 must move to closeout and defend O2. X1 must then rotate down to defend the basket. If an additional pass is made X1 again defends the receiver of the pass while X2 rotates back to defend the basket.

The primary goal for both defenders must be to slow down the offensive players until further defenders can recover and assist.



If the wing player passes to the middle player, the basket defender may hedge rather than close-out to the player because it is difficult for the other defender to rotate back to stop the lay-up.

Good communication is essential to successful defence.



### Key teaching points

- Tandem defence
- One player must defend the ball, the other the basket
- Both defenders should communicate: "ball," and "basket"
- Defender closest to the ball must defend the ball
- Defender off the ball must defend the basket

# CHAPTER 3: TEAM OFFENCE

## Man to Man Offence

Team sports require coordinated effort from teammates to achieve outcomes. Most sports have evolved to include team concepts and structure as key elements that help teams score. In basketball this is called team offence.

Critical to most offences is the identification of the roles of players. Team offence incorporates many specific activities, from progressing the ball up the floor to rebounding to shooting. Players need to know the expectations of the coach. One successful method is to identify and define player positions and roles. We refer to playing positions through the use of numbers. i.e.

1. Point Guard
2. Off guard
3. Small forward
4. Power forward
5. Centre

Once coaches have defined the roles of each position to their players it is important to also allow each player the experience of playing in a range of positions. Often this process presents problems to coaches. How does the coach provide a range of experiences but also allow the team to succeed with players filling roles to which they are most suited? Generally coaches play most games with a mixture of a range of “developmental” experiences mixed with players playing their optimal role.

It is vital for the development of all players and will ensure they do not become stereotyped to particular roles. Often a taller player in the under 12's only plays as a centre but subsequently the player may grow less rapidly and need to play in other positions as they get older.

Accordingly, every player should be taught, and practice, skills in each position.

### What to Teach?

Teach simple concepts, not elaborate plays. Tailor team offence to the developmental capacity of players. Focus on fundamentals at all times.

The best method to teach team offence is presenting it using the “whole-part-whole” method. Coaches should show the whole offence, then teach this with breakdowns for two and three players prior to teaching five player offence. This helps to provide specific focus on the execution of parts of the offence and allows each athlete to clearly understand what is required in each component.

The following are key components of any team offence:

- Court balance and player spacing
- Timing and awareness
- Ball movement and ball reversal (passing the ball from one side of the court to the other)
- Player movement without the basketball
- Shot selection

## Court Balance and Player Spacing

Often young players will spend much of the game attempting to chase the basketball. This provides the defence with an easier task, defending a smaller area of the court. For the offence it makes it very difficult to pass, drive or cut, as other players will be in the way. Good court balance and spacing also means that there will usually be players available to receive the ball. Further spreading the floor provides the offensive team with the ability to obtain better rebound positions when a teammate shoots the ball.

For these reasons it is vital that players spread across the court and maintain good spacing. This will spread the defence out and provide room for the offensive team to cut or drive. Generally for young players it's useful to attempt to have at least two players opposite the ball on the help side, in other words compel the players to spread the floor.

If playing away from the keyway (on the perimeter), players should be at least beyond the three-point line.

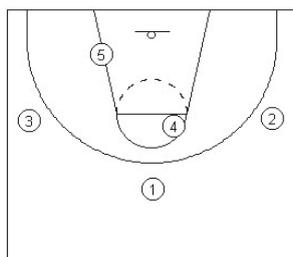
## Starting Sets

The positions on the floor where players will commence offence are called "sets". Common sets include:

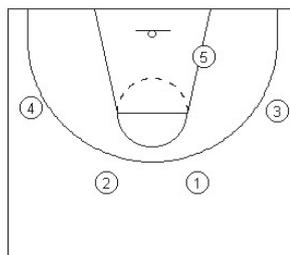
- 3 Out - 2 In** (3 perimeter players, 2 post players)
- 4 Out - 1 In** (4 perimeter players, 1 post player)
- 5 Out** (5 perimeter players)

If playing in the post, appropriate spacing would involve starting on the edge of the keyway, avoiding a three-second violation, in either high, mid or low post. (see diagrams below)

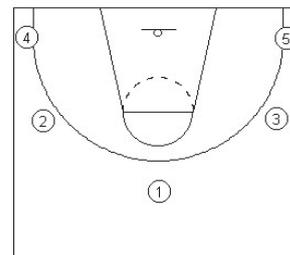
Young players may benefit if the coach marks the appropriate positions on the court with chalk so that players clearly understand the concept of court balance and spacing.



3 Out - 2 In



4 Out - 1 In



5 Out

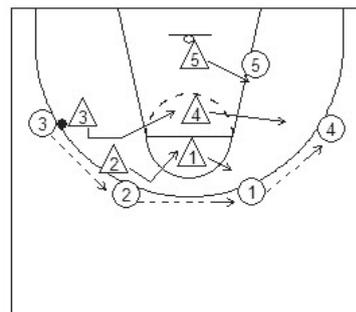
## Timing and Awareness

Timing relates to when to cut and drive while awareness relates to what other teammates are doing. An example of this would be where a perimeter player drives hard to the basket and at the same time a post player cuts towards the ball. Essentially this means those two defenders are now able to defend the player driving. It is important for players to read the intentions of their teammates and ensure that they don't get in each other's way and thereby limit the team's opportunities to score.

### Ball Movement and Ball Reversal

When implementing an offence it is important to emphasize appropriate ball and player movement. This will force the defence to adjust their positions making offensive players harder to defend.

Ball reversal is the concept of quick ball movement from one side of the floor to the other. Most defensive systems focus on defending the ball and providing help to the player defending the ball with the ball.



Those providing help tend to move away from their player towards the ball. When the ball is moved defenders providing help must recover to their man, and players nearer the ball must react to provide help.

These defensive adjustments provide opportunities for the offence to shoot or drive.

### Player Movement Without the Basketball

Players should be encouraged to look for a way to get open or to assist a teammate to get open. Often beginner players stand around and watch the ball, which makes them easy to defend and allows the helpside defence to remain available to defend any penetration.

Offensive options away from the ball include:

1. Cut to the basket
2. Cut towards the ball (Flash cut)
3. Clear out for a team mate
4. Set a screen to assist a team mate to get open (see "Screen Away from the Ball")
5. Move into a receiver or rebound spot (see "Penetration and Receivers")



## Shot Selection

To maximize scoring opportunities a team must work to get the best available shot. At all times players should work towards shooting high percentage shots. For example, a lay up has more chance of being made successfully than a three point shot.

A general rule can be made that you should always pass the ball to a teammate who is open and in a better scoring position. Often the team that plays with poise and patience will be the one taking better shots with a greater chance of success. Of course, the best shots can often be those taken before the defence arrives, so fast breaks help create good shots.

Coaches should also be aware that some players will have preferred areas from which to shoot. Helping these players get open in their preferred area may be a factor in determining the team's offensive priorities.

## Building an Offence

It is important as a coach to teach each part of whatever offence is selected so that it is game specific. This way players can identify why it is necessary to make that type of cut or screen.

The key team skills for team offence include:

- Pass and Cut
- Flash cut
- Penetration and receivers
- Dribble entry and shallow cut
- Screening technique; on the ball and away from the ball

### Pass and Cut (Give and Go)

A pass and cut, simply put, is passing and then moving to the basket.

After making the pass, the player should 'read' their defender to determine what cut to make. There are two ways to set up the defender.

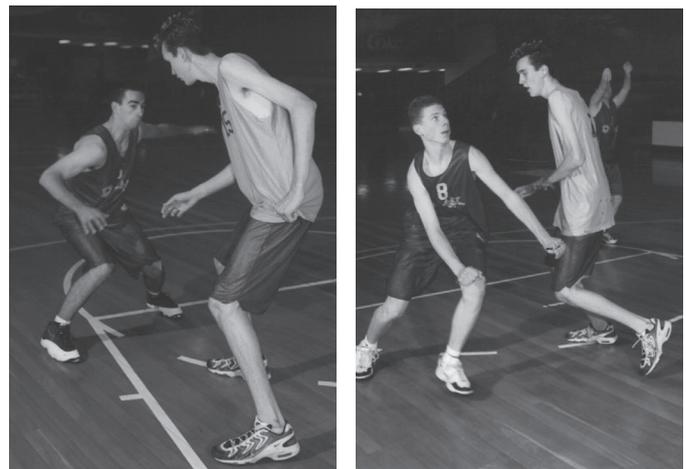
The passer can step away (in the opposite direction of their pass).

- If the defender moves in that direction, the cutter changes direction to cut quickly toward the ball and then to the basket with target hand up ready to receive a pass (inside cut)
- If the defender does not move, the cutter should accelerate and cut quickly to the basket.

The passer can also step toward the ball, with hands up as if to catch a return pass.

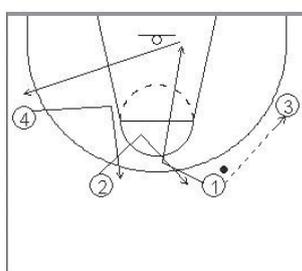
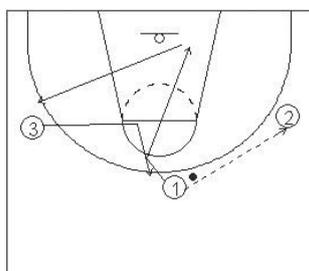
- if the defender does not move, the cutter makes an inside cut (quickly moving toward the ball and then the basket)
- if the defender moves toward the ball, the cutter quickly changes direction to cut the basket (back cut).

Change of pace on these moves is very important.



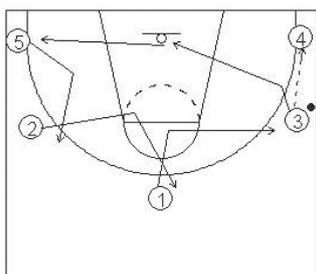
### Pass, Cut and Replace

Pass and Cut is one of the simplest, and most effective plays in basketball. It is also the foundation of offensive movement involving the rest of the team. With three or more perimeter players on the court it is important to maintain court balance. The diagrams show that once the passer cuts to the basket another player cuts to move into the position they were in. This is usually referred to as "replacing" and is done by whoever was closest to where the original passer was. When that player replaces it creates another 'gap' on the perimeter and again the nearest person 'replaces' into that gap. After cutting to the basket the original passer looks to move back out to the perimeter (to maintain good team balance and spacing) and they move to where ever the gap is. A general rule for the player making the pass and cut is that if they do not receive a pass they should sprint to get outside the three point line to maintain both court balance and spacing.



Sometimes the passer may cut and 'replace themselves', which means cutting back to the position they started in. When this happens other players can still look to cut (effectively exchanging) places, rather than standing still.

These diagrams are just examples of cuts that can be made and there are many more that a coach might use with their team. Some more examples are given later in this section.



### Key teaching points

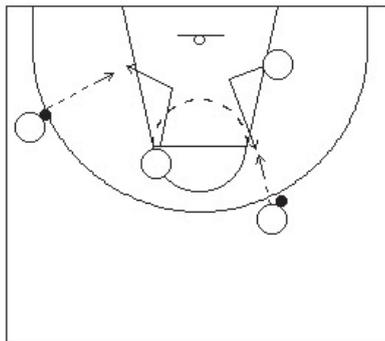
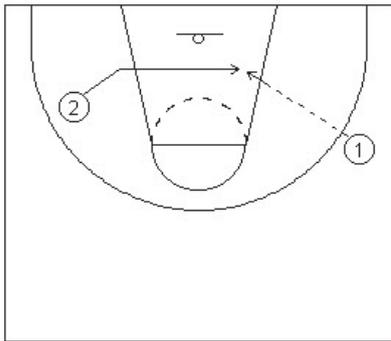
- Upon passing, read the defence
- Sharp change of direction and pace
- Walk to set up, sprint to cut
- Target hand up
- Clear the key way after the cut

## Flash Cut

A flash cut is generally made by a player away from the ball, to the ball side of the court. If executed correctly the flash cut is extremely difficult to defend.

To execute a flash cut it is important to set up (moving slowly) the defensive opponent and then flash towards the ball to get open. To execute a flash cut the offensive player should walk toward the basket or baseline (away from the ball). Upon the defender reacting, the cutter makes a sudden and rapid change of direction, cutting towards the ball, essentially wrong-footing the defender. The cutter should present a target by fully facing the ball with hands up ready to receive a pass.

This type of cut can be used by a post player or perimeter player. It is important before making this cut that there is sufficient space available to cut into. This will ensure that the keyway does not become overcrowded. Again, it is important to retain adequate spacing.



### Key teaching points

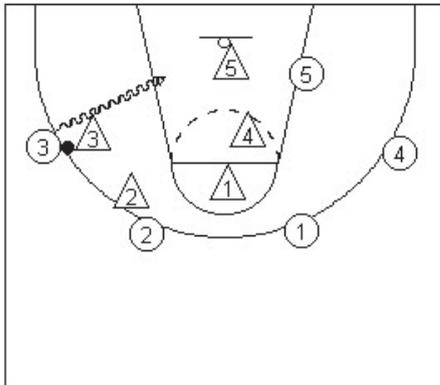
- Walk the defender down
- Sharp change of direction and pace
- Walk to set up, sprint to cut
- Present a target
- Hands up to form a target for the ball

### Penetration and Receivers

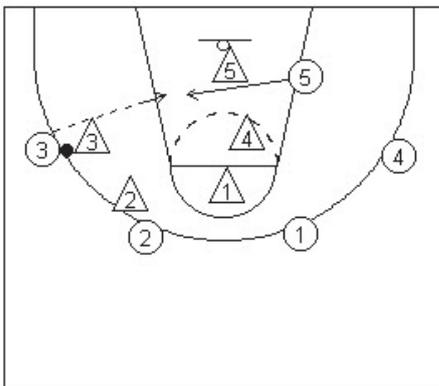
One of the hardest aspects of the game to defend is regular penetration of the ball inside the key. Penetration of the ball inside the key is important as this means the defence may have to help or rotate which may in turn lead to open shots.

There are two ways the ball can be penetrated into the key, **dribble penetration** and **pass penetration**.

**Dribble penetration:** a player driving past their defender at the basket

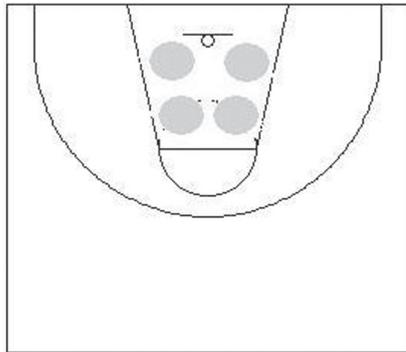


**Pass penetration:** a pass made to a player inside, or around the keyway.



Often penetration alone may result in a score. However, a good defensive team will rotate to help the defender that who has been beaten by the penetration. Therefore, it is important for the offensive team to provide passing options. Players who move into areas where a score may result are termed **receivers**.

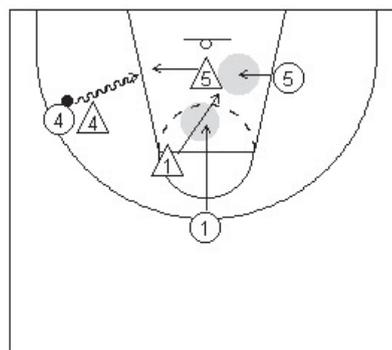
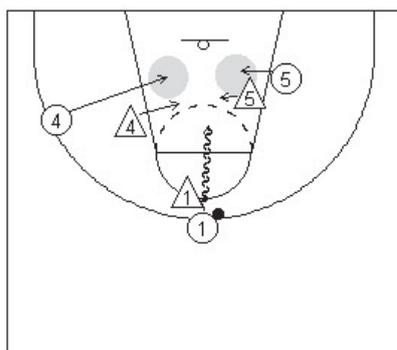
There are four 'receiver' spots in the key and these are shown by the shaded circles.



The diagrams show examples of where dribble penetration has been used and where the receiver's spots that need to be filled as a result of this. It is essential that any time the ball is caught or penetrated inside the key that three of these spots are filled. This will ensure passing opportunities are available and will make the defence work hard to provide help. Whenever there is penetration into the key both receiver spots near the baseline should be occupied and one of the top receiver spots should also be occupied.

In moving to a receiver spot, a player's exact position will be determined by where the defenders are. They should move to a spot where the person with the ball could pass it to them.

The players in receiver spots are also in good rebounding position if the shot is taken.



### Key teaching points

- Ball handler must have head up to see passing options
- Players must fill "receiving spots" when penetration occurs with hands up, ready to catch a pass or rebound a missed shot.
- Ball handler uses "driving lane/passing lane principles"

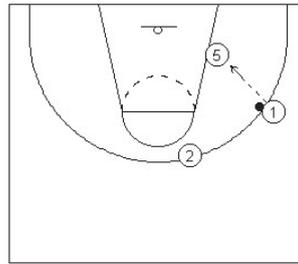
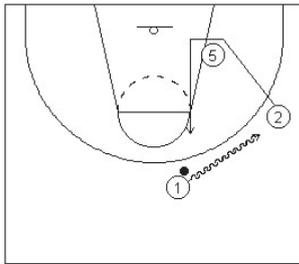
### Dribble Entry and Shallow Cut

A dribble entry is used when a pass is difficult due to the defence taking away all-passing options. Generally it is executed by a player who dribbles from a guard position above the foul line to the wing. Often the ball needs to be moved to the wing to gain a better passing angle into the low post. A dribble entry allows this to happen.

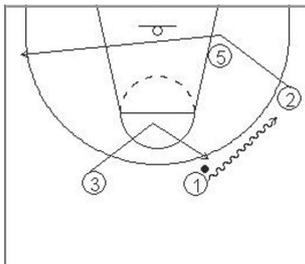
Adequate spacing is essential. Players while executing a dribble entry should stay outside the three-point line to maintain adequate space into which teammates may cut.

A shallow cut is made by circling through the block and elbow of the key to the position left void by the dribbler. At all times cutters should maintain vision on the dribbler so they are ready for any pass or shot.

Often a change of pace can assist the player executing a shallow cut to get open.



If the wing player does not shallow cut, then another player can 'replace' the top.



### Key teaching points

- Maintain spacing
- Cut through the elbow
- Cutter to maintain vision of the ball
- Replace into the space left on the perimeter

## Screening

Screens involve one or more players on the offensive team legally blocking the progress of a defensive player. Screens enable teams to improve scoring and can be used against man to man and zone defences.

There are two types of screens that can be set:

- Screens on the ball
- Screens away from the ball

With all screens it is important that the screener has come to a complete stop (in a low, balanced stance) before any contact with the defender.

### Screen on the Ball

A screen on the ball is designed to either free a player currently dribbling or to free a player who is yet to commence a dribble.

To execute a screen on the ball communication is essential. This is achieved by the screener calling the name of the player with the ball and using a clear signal (eg a clenched fist above the head).

Once clear communication has been established the screener should move to a position immediately adjacent to the side of the defender. Where possible the screener should line up the opponent's shoulder with the middle of the screener's body.

Generally the screener should be side on to the basket, (ie if a line was drawn from one shoulder to the other it would point at the basket).

Once in position the screener should assume a strong, balanced stance, with feet shoulder width apart, knees bent and arms held together as diagrammed opposite. Upon establishing this position it is critical that the screener does not move until the screen has been completed. A foul may result if the screener moves too early. The dribbler should then look to use the screen, running the defender into the defence. If the player defending the ball goes behind the screen a shot may become available.

Once the dribbler has passed the screen, the screener should step through or roll looking to get open by cutting hard to the basket. The dribbler then has the option of attacking the basket and scoring or looking for the screener who has rolled or stepped through.

### Key teaching points

- Communicate the screen
- Screener to set a strong balanced screen
- Screen one step away from the defence
- Screener does not move until screen has been used
- Roll or step through once screen has been used



### Screen Away from the Ball

To execute a screen away from the ball it is essential to communicate. The screener should communicate his or her intentions by calling the name of the player they are about to screen and signaling using a clenched fist held above the head.

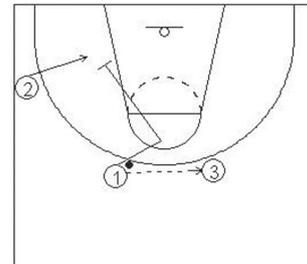
Once clearly communicated the screener should establish their screen. This should be immediately adjacent to the side of the defender. Screeners should attempt to line up the defender's shoulder with the middle of their body. The screener should establish a strong balanced stance, with feet shoulder width apart, knees bent and arms held together as pictured. Upon establishing the screen it is important that the screener does not move until the screen is used. A foul may result if the screener moves too early.

The cutter should then look to read the defence and cut appropriately. (the appropriate cuts are discussed later in this section)

There are a number of different types of screens.

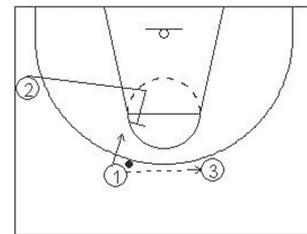
#### Down Screen

When the screener moves down toward the baseline to set the screen. This screen should be set so that the screener's back is to the ball.



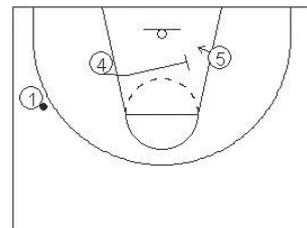
#### Up Screen

When the screener moves up toward the half way line to set the screen. This screen should be set so that the screener's back is to the basket.



#### Cross Screen

When the screener moves across the key to set the screen. This screen should be set so that the screener's back is to the basket.



#### Key teaching points

- Communicate the screen
- Set screen with a strong balanced stance
- Do not move until screen has been used
- Cutter should read the defence

## Reading Screens: Some General Rules

Once a screen has been set it is important for the cutter to read the defence and/or move to the space, which provides the best scoring opportunity. Below are various scenarios that occur as a result of a screen being set. The general rule is to walk toward the screen and see where the defensive player is. Take a step toward the defender and put your hand up as if to catch a pass. After setting them up with this movement, cut where the defender isn't!

### Straight Cut

If the defender is on the low side of the screen, the cutter should cut to the high side of the screen. If the defender moves into the screen, the cutter should cut straight toward the ball.

The cutter should call "high" or "straight" to signify where they have cut.



### Curl Cut

Again, if the defender is on the low side of the screen the cutter should go high. If the defender follows the cutter ("trailing" the cutter) the cutter should curl toward the basket.

The cutter should call "basket" or "curl" to signify where they cut.



### Back Cut

If the defender is on the high side the cutter should cut towards the basket.

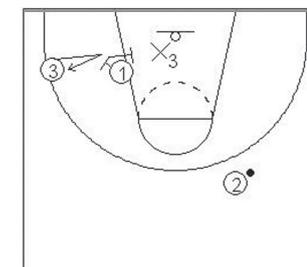
The cutter should call "basket" or "back" to signify where they cut.



### Flare or Replace

When defender goes behind, or slips the screen so they are ball side of the screen the cutter should cut back or **flare** to the original position ready for a skip pass over the screening action.

The cutter should call "flare" and the screener should then pivot to set another screen on the cutter's defender (to stop them running out on the pass).



### Screener Looks for the Ball

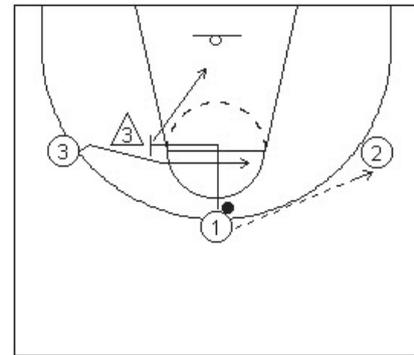
Once the cutter has passed the screen, the screener should roll or step through and look to receive a pass. A general rule is that 'one goes to the basket, one goes to the ball.

So, if the cutter has gone to the basket the screener should step toward the ball. If the cutter went to the ball the screener should go to the basket.

In the case of the cutter making a flare cut, the screener should look to post up once the ball has been passed to the cutter.

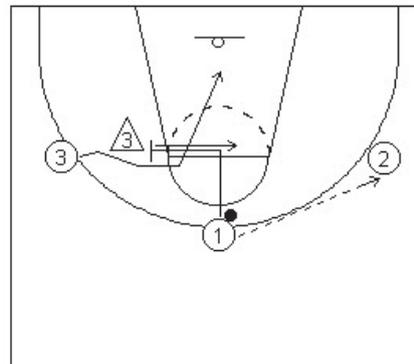
The following diagrams are examples of these rules.

If the cutter goes to the ball, the screener should roll or step through to the basket. This situation may occur when the defence switches ie the defensive player on the screener switches onto the cutter as the cut is made off the screen.



If the cutter goes to the basket, the screener should roll or step through to the ball.

At all times there should be two players looking to get open out of one screening situation. Often it is the screener who will be best placed to score.



## Types of Team Offences

Team offences are broadly (but not exclusively) broken down into three types:

1. Continuity offence
2. Motion offence
3. Sets

### Continuity Offence

Continuity offence is one manner in which teams utilize structure to improve scoring opportunities. Continuity, as the name suggests, is about offence action which "continues" to be executed in the same manner until the defence breaks down and a shot is created. Usually such offences feature the same cuts and screens used in the same sequence. Often many players will revolve through the various positions on the court, executing each of the key components of the offence in turn.

Continuity Offence may provide the following benefits:

- Prescribes where and when shots can be expected
- Maintains spacing and timing so that players move to predetermined positions which enable the offence to continue
- Players generally play a range of positions, and for young players this may help learn offensive concepts whilst providing experience at playing a range of positions on the floor.
- Simplicity is often a feature. Continuity tends to be an uncomplicated introduction for inexperienced players to the sport.

Continuity offence may also have the following problems:

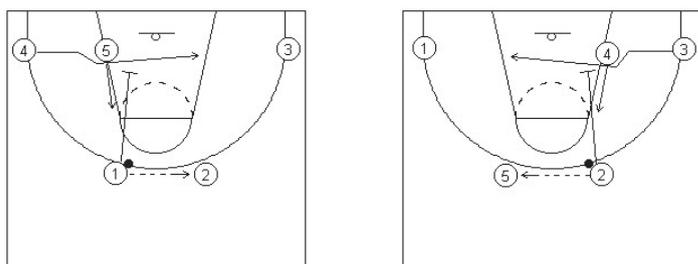
- Young players often become dependant on the offence. Exposure to only one system has the potential to limit learning opportunities.
- Often players best suited to a particular position find themselves regularly away from that position
- Continuity is very easy for opponents to scout. Opponents learn the action and can plan counters to manage the best continuity options.

Continuity offence may include either partial or complete rotation of positions. The following are examples of commonly used continuity offences:

## Flex

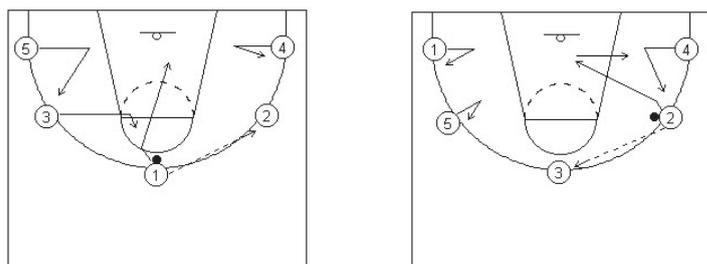
The flex features three key actions which are repeated to achieve the "continuity" aspect of the offence. The basketball is "reversed" from one guard to the other. The player in the corner, 4, cuts off a screen from 5. 1 then down screens for 5. The ball is then passed back to 5. 3 cuts off 4's screen and 2 down screens for 4.

The 'screen the screenr' action is commonly used in many offences.



## Pass & Cut

In this offence all players must cut after they pass. When 1 passes to 2 a cut is made, followed by the remaining players filling the vacant spots on the floor. Again when a pass is made the passer must cut to the basket.



These offences are usually used for younger age groups. This is not to say that continuity is inappropriate for experienced players. Indeed many experienced teams will have a continuity offence in their arsenal.

## Motion Offence

Motion offence could be characterized as "concept-based" offence. Here coaches rather than pre-prescribing cuts screens and action will provide a framework within which players will make decisions. These decisions will be determined through observation of the defence, the need to keep spacing, the strengths and weaknesses of the players involved and the coach's emphasis at a given time.

It is recommended that all young players receive some exposure to motion offence. Whilst most coaches of younger players would argue that motion is impractical, being concept-based, for most young players, the fact remains that much of what motion represents can be applied to all other offences. For example, reading the defence and understanding of timing and spacing are integral to all offences. Younger players developing understanding of such concepts will have positive long term outcomes.

Broadly then motion offence has the following advantages:

- It is difficult for opponents to scout as there are no set actions
- It teaches concepts rather than actions and therefore is seen as promoting understandings more effectively
- It encourages responsibility in the players
- It can be altered by the coach relatively easily to emphasize particular aspects of the game

Motion offence does, however, include some disadvantages:

- Teaching concepts takes longer, and application of concepts is also a demanding requirement of young players
- Coaches often have a sensation of being "out of control". Players make the decisions so sometimes the coach may feel the outcomes they really desire for a particular situation become difficult to achieve.
- When things go badly for a team, players often will be less inclined to collaborate to solve problems, where if there were set plays in place the collaboration occurs through organisation.
- It has been argued that many players lack the athleticism to effectively run motion offence. It could also be argued that effectively teaching overcomes such problems.

When using motion with inexperienced players the coach may introduce some rules to reduce the number of decisions that need to be made.

For example, they may introduce a rule that after passing players either cut to the basket or cut to the opposite side of the floor.

In teaching motion offence, it is important to give the players the cues to read in making their decisions.

## Sets

Sets, or set plays, may be used in combination with either of the aforementioned offensive systems. Sets are simply plays which are designed to produce one or more very specific outcomes. A set might produce a shot in a particular place for a particular player. A set may isolate a player in a particular area to maximize that player's chances of penetrating to score. A set may have three or four options in a row. Broadly then sets are "terminal" plays. They are not designed to provide continuous action, such as what would occur in the continuity, nor is the decision-making process left largely up to players, as in motion offence.

It is common for sets to lead to motion, or even a continuity offence (although when playing with a 24 second shot clock there is often little time to move into a continuity offence). A team may run a specific play for a key scorer, then revert to motion at the conclusion of the action.

Sets are not often used for younger or inexperienced players.

The advantages of sets include:

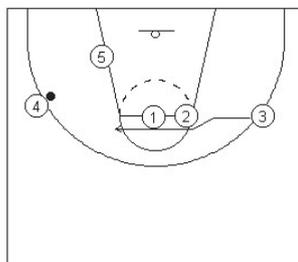
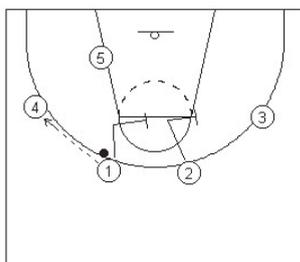
- Coaches can design plays to achieve very specific outcomes
- Players learn precise action with specific outcomes. This can help improve the resolve of the team to achieve the goal set.
- Coaches can add new options and plays as required, emphasizing particular aspects as the situation requires.
- The coach can go to a specific practiced play in times of crisis.

The disadvantages of sets are:

- Sets are limited to what's been practiced. They do not deal well with new and unusual situations.
- In a developmental sense sets limit understanding of players to the specific actions being taught. Players may be less able to adapt to new situations.
- If the set does not produce the desired outcome, something else needs to occur. If it is another type of offence this increases the time needed to teach the new offensive system.

### Sets - an example

The following set attempts to isolate the post player (5) to receive a pass from the forward (4). If 5 cannot get open or cannot score, the ball is passed to 3 who has cut off screens from 1 and 2.



## **Teaching Offence to Younger Players.**

Very young players will be limited in regard to what they will be able to master with regard to team offence. For young children, say 10 and under, often the only aspect of offence they will be able to grasp will be simple concepts such as:

- Passing to players who are open down the court
- Dribbling with the head up
- Shooting when open and in shooting range
- Using the dribble to penetrate to score

They will soon be able to take on more complexity with concepts such as:

- Penetrating to create for a teammate.
- Cutting and leading
- Reacting and moving to scoring position when team mates drive (receivers principles)

Most coaches would probably advocate implementation of more formal offensive systems from around age 11, and certainly most players have the cognitive development by age 14 to handle a structured, systematic approach to offence.

Recent trends have been to introduce motion to younger and younger players but some coaches still advocate continuity as the most effective means of introducing young players to structure.

Coaches introducing any offence for junior players should ensure that the fundamentals are the key teaching area. Skill acquisition is the single key contributor to players taking up and staying with particular sports. If you acquire skills you achieve success and the experience is intrinsically more rewarding.

### Motion for Young Players

Young players can be introduced to motion offence. Perhaps the best means to achieve this is to introduce a range of concepts which children could relate to. The key issues to be addressed would be:

- Penetration & receivers principles
- Cutting
  - pass & cut
  - flash cut
  - back cut

Note that screening is often first taught at older age groups, when the more complex decision-making process involved is more capable of being comprehended and therefore executed effectively.

### Putting an Offence Together

Whether looking at “3 out - 2 in”, “4 out – 1” in or “5 out” offensive alignment, an offence should be based around the same principles:

- Court Balance and Spacing
- Ball Movement and Ball Reversal
- Timing and Awareness
- Player Movement Without the Ball
- Good Shot Selection
- Dribble and Pass Penetration

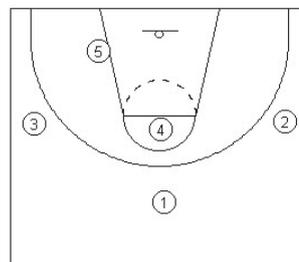
Before reading the following section it is important to understand that offensive movements are simply examples of options available. This is merely the tip of the iceberg in running motion offences and coaches should not restrict their players to the examples provided.

Ultimately offensive movements should always be based on the defence, so players need to be aware of “counter moves” to attack a defence that is overplaying their primary move.

### 3 Out - 2 In

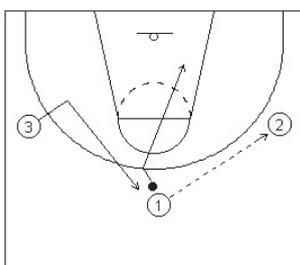
This offensive alignment is based on 3 perimeter players and 2 post players as diagrammed opposite.

It is important for all players to understand that all movements should be based around reading the defence and reacting to what the defence is "giving you".

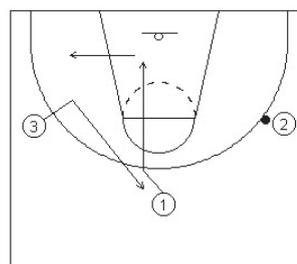


### Range of Options for Perimeter Players

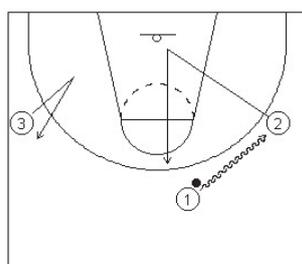
Pass, Cut and Replace



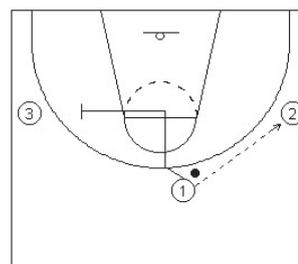
Pass, Back Cut and Replace



Dribble Entry, Shallow Cut and Replace



Pass and Screen Away

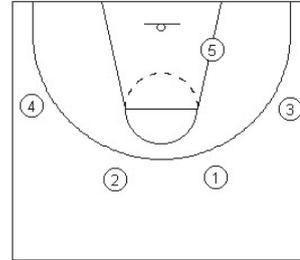




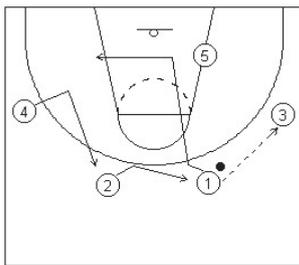
### 4 Out - 1 In

This offensive alignment is based on 4 perimeter players and 1 post player as diagrammed opposite.

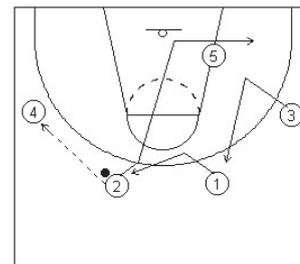
All movements should be based upon reading the defence and reacting appropriately.



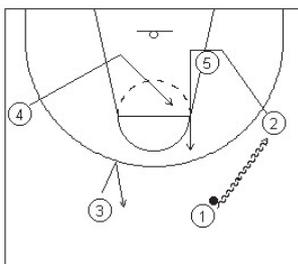
### Range of Options for Perimeter Players



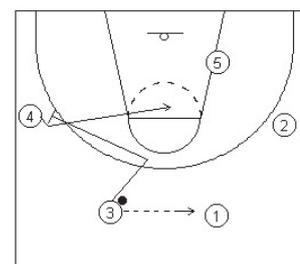
Pass, Cut & Replace



Pass, Back Cut & Replace

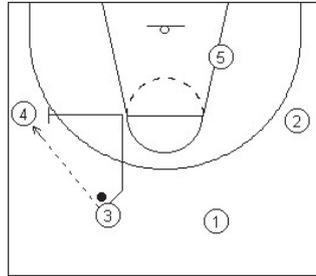


Dribble Entry, Shallow Cut & Replace



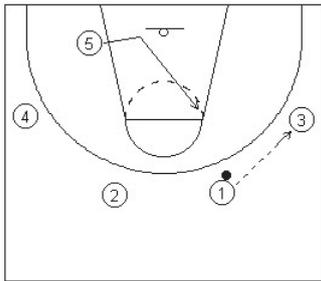
Pass and Screen Away

### 4 Out - 1 In (continued)

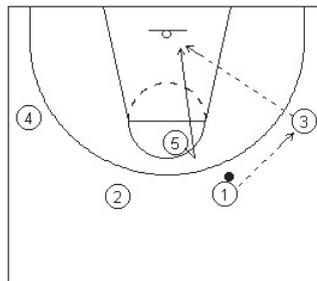


Pass & Screen on the Ball

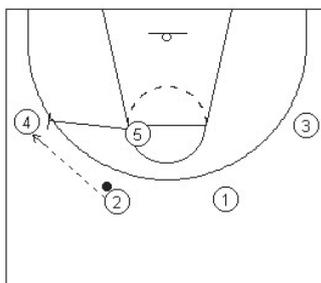
### Range of Options for Post Players



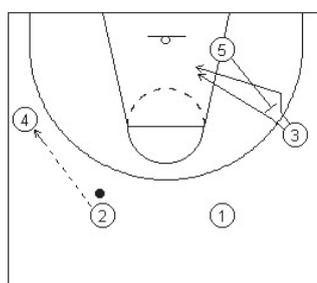
Flash Cut



Back Cut



Screen on the Ball



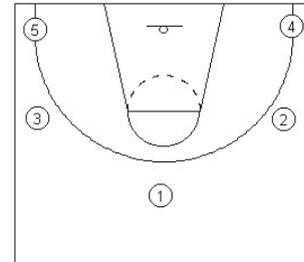
Screen Away from the Ball

## 5 Out

The 5 out offensive alignment is based around 5 perimeter players as diagrammed opposite.

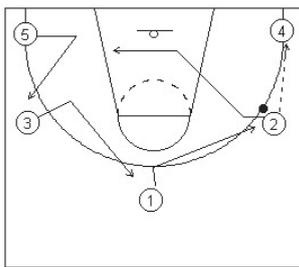
As mentioned in the previous offensive alignments, movements should be based around reading the defence and reacting appropriately.

In 5 Out, players may cut into the key and can establish a post up position at the end of the cut. If they do not get the ball through, they move back out on the perimeter.

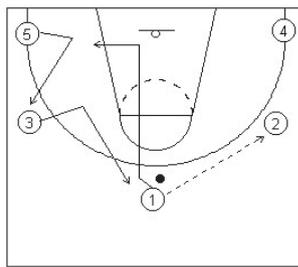


## Range of Options for 5 Out

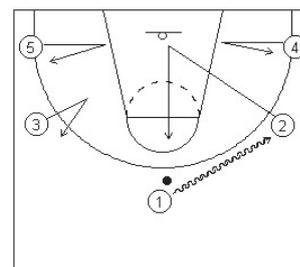
Pass, Cut & Replace



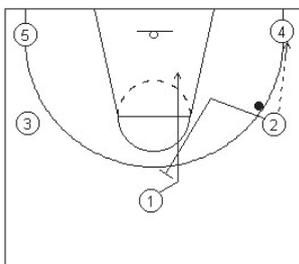
Pass, Backcut & Replace



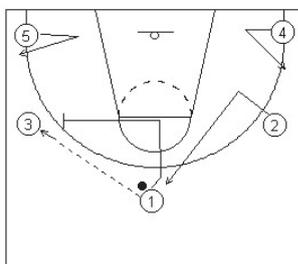
Dribble Entry, Shallow Cut & Replace



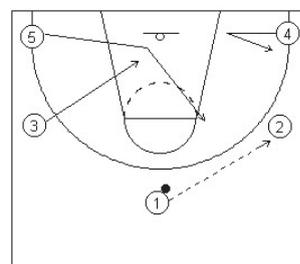
Pass & Screen Away



Pass & Screen on the Ball



Flash Cuts



## Zone Offence

In developing a zone offence a coach needs to consider the strengths and weaknesses that are typical of every zone defence.

The zone defence requires each defensive player to defend an area of the court (in contrast to man to man defence where each defensive player has the responsibility of guarding a particular offensive player). This basic principle is the key to building an effective zone offence.

Consequently the following factors need to be considered by a coach when developing an offence to counter a zone defence:

- Individual Offensive Fundamentals
- General Principles
- Fast Break (score before the zone is established)
- Player Positioning ('gap' the zone)
- Dribbling
- Post Play
- Break Down Drills

### Individual Offensive Fundamentals

To effectively attack a zone defence players must be proficient in many of the basic individual offensive fundamentals of basketball. Players must be able to:

- . **Catch** the basketball and **Face** the basket
- . **Pass** with right and left hands
- . **Dribble** with right and left hands
- . **Dribble Penetrate** with right and left hands
  - pull up shot
  - commit defence and pass off
- . **Jump Stop** on balance
- . **Jump Hook** with right and left hands close to the basket
- . **Fake** the pass, drive and the shot
- . **Lay Up** with right and left hands
- . **Catch and Shoot** the perimeter shot

## General Principles

A number of general principles must be considered when attacking a zone defence. The principles include:

### Ball Reversal

Ball reversal is the concept of quick ball movement from one side of the floor to the other. This movement forces the defensive players to change quickly from help side defence to on-ball defence. Conversely the on-ball defence must change quickly to help side defence. Effectively the whole zone must shift and adjust to a new alignment. It is at this point of adjustment that the zone defence is most vulnerable. Ball reversal will either open up the weak side player receiving the ball for a shot/shot fake dribble penetration, or open up players cutting into the newly created gaps in the zone.

### Player Movement

Defence positioning depends upon where on the court the ball is. The movement of players in a zone offence is often linked with ball reversal. This creates the opportunity for a player away from the ball to flash cut or flare into a gap created by the adjustment the zone defence is forced to make to cover the new position of the ball. The movement of one player may create a gap for a team mate to exploit. For example, an inside player may flash cut through the zone. The defence must cover the cutter otherwise they will be open to receive the ball. This often creates a gap which may be filled by a second offensive cutter.

### Pass Fakes

The faking of a pass is very effective against a zone defence as players in a zone will often anticipate the next movement of the ball and either overplay the passing lane of the expected next pass or commence shifting in the direction of the expected next pass. A pass fake will therefore often open up a player away from the anticipated direction of the pass. It may also create a gap in the zone, for the player with the ball, to dribble penetrate.

### Shooter Opposite the Ball

The zone will pressure the ball and sag to a help out position away from the ball. Having a shooter opposite the ball will create opportunities to get them open by quick ball movement.

### Skip Pass

A pass usually made over the zone from the opposite side. The benefits of this pass are the same as in the ball reversal detailed earlier. Following a skip pass the help side of the zone must quickly convert to on-ball defence, creating opportunities for the ball receiver to shoot, shot fake and dribble penetrate or pass to flash cutters.

This is a hard pass to throw and requires a good technique and strength. The pass should be as flat as possible to make it as quick as possible. Players should only be encouraged to use this pass once they have developed the strength and technique.

### Fast Break

The fast break (or offensive transition) must always be the first option in combating a zone. Chapter 13 Offensive Transition provides full details of the concepts of the fast break.

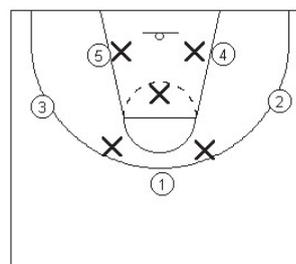
### Player Positioning ('Gapping' the Zone)

The coach and players must learn to recognise the alignment of the zone they are facing. Then the offensive players should either occupy gaps or occupy positions that make the gaps as large as possible by forcing the defence to match up with them (eg see the positioning of post players in the following diagrams). The position of the gaps may alter as the ball is moved. Players particularly on the weak side (opposite to the ball) must look to reposition themselves by flash cutting or flaring into the new gaps.

The 'gaps' of a zone are simply the areas where the defensive responsibilities overlap. By occupying these positions, the defenders may be confused who has responsibility to guard that player.

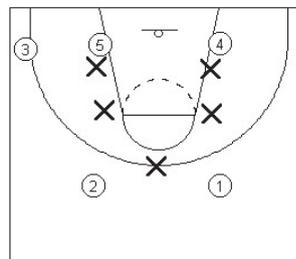
### Even Front Zones – 2.1.2 (or 2.3) Alignments

Offensive players 1, 2 and 3 are positioned in the perimeter gaps of the zone. Players 4 and 5 are positioned low to extend the gaps where 2 and 3 are positioned.



### Odd Front Zones – 1.2.2 (or 3.2) and 1.3.1 Zones

Offensive players 1 and 2 are positioned in the gaps at the top of the zone. Players 4 and 5 are again positioned low for spacing and to extend the size of the gaps. Player 3 is positioned where the defensive player must try to cover two offensive players (ie 3 and 5). This is the concept of overloading.



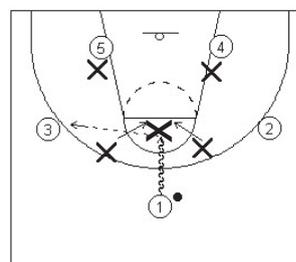
Standing behind the zone (as 4 and 5 are) can also be effective as defenders will often watch the ball and will not be able to see the offensive player.

### Dribbling Against the Zone

Dribbling can be an effective weapon against a zone defence when used in conjunction with ball movement.

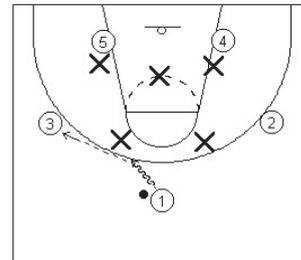
Dribbling can be used in three forms:

**Gap Dribbling** – dribble into a gap to penetrate the zone to create a shot or draw two defensive players to create a passing opportunity to a team mate.



**Freeze Dribbling** – dribble directly at a defensive player to commit them to the ball, setting up a pass to an open teammate.

This stops the defender from moving early to guard an anticipated pass to the wing.



**Dribble Entry** – dribble directly at a teammate who shallow cuts through the zone.

This replaces a pass to the new position and usually initiates a ball reversal.



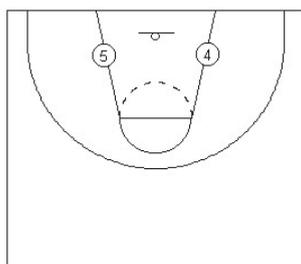
### Post Play

Post players are primarily used to attack the inside of a zone but can be used in some movements on the perimeter.

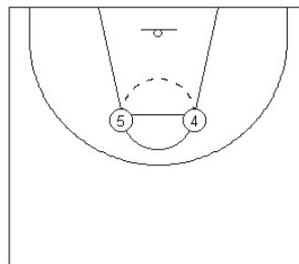
### Post Positions

Post Positions commonly used are:

- Low Posts
- High Post
- High/Low Posts
- Short Corner
- Long Corner

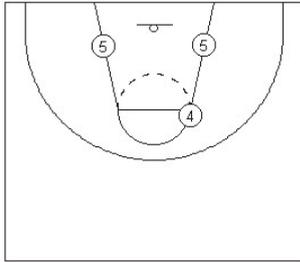


Low Posts

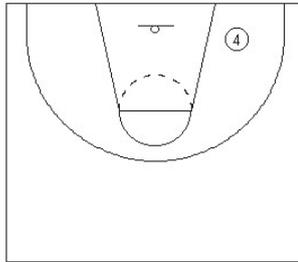


High Posts

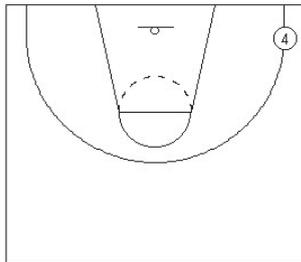
High/Low Posts



Short Corner



Long Corner



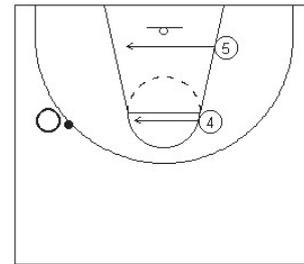
### Post Movement

The Post Player must maintain good spacing in the offence particularly in relation to the other inside player. It is important the Post Player faces the ball at all times in preparation for a pass and to read the gaps that may be created by the ball movement.

Common Post Player movements are as follows:

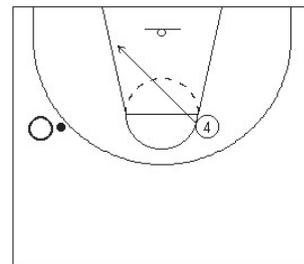
### Post Flash Cut

A cut through the zone, to the ball side



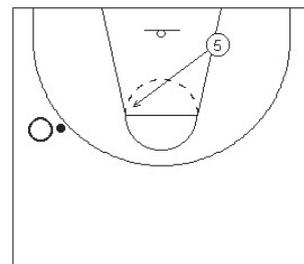
### High to Low

A cut from high post to low post



### Low to High

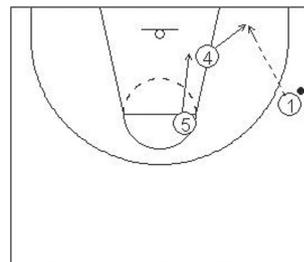
A cut from low post to high post



### Post to Short Corner

This is simply a cut from the low post to the short corner. This is often used in conjunction with a second post player cutting from high to low.

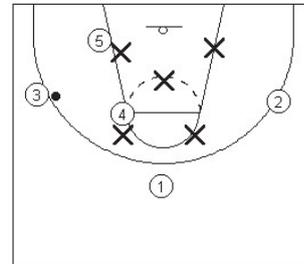
The post player must be prepared to shoot from the corner if the defence stand off them.



### Overloading

Positioning more offensive players in an area of the zone, than there are defensive players to match up with them

Because zone defenders guard an area rather than a particular player, 'overloading' the zone can be an effective offensive strategy.



### If One Post Receives the Ball the Other Gets Open

The inside post players should work together and be constantly looking for each other. If one receives the ball inside the zone the other should cut or seal the defence to create a passing lane to receive the ball.

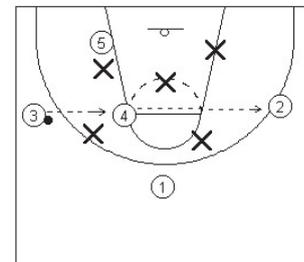


### Inside/Outside

If the ball is passed inside the zone (usually to a post player) the zone will often collapse, creating open players on the perimeter. The ball can be passed to one of the open players for a shot opportunity.

Inside players are often encouraged to pass to the opposite side of the zone from which they have received the ball.

The post player must keep the ball at their chin to stop defenders from knocking it out of their hands.



### Balance/ Posts Rotating

Maintaining balance both on the perimeter and inside the key is important to allow good ball movement and to keep the gaps in the zone as wide as possible. When the ball is reversed and one post player makes a flash cut, the other post player should "read" any new gaps this movement may have created and cut into them. New post positions after the cuts should maintain balance and spacing.

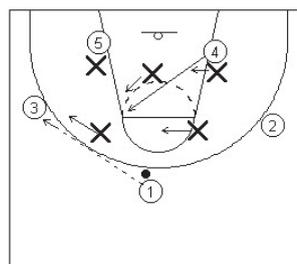


## Developing a Zone Offence

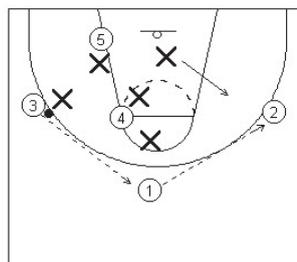
In linking the concepts shown above to develop a zone offence, the following examples will use alignments against an even front zone (ie 2.1.2 or 2.3 zone) and an odd front zone (ie 1.2.2 or 2.3 zone and 1.3.1 zone).

### Even Front Zone

Players are positioned in the gaps (1,2 and 3) or in positions to make the gaps wider by forcing the defence to match up with them (4 and 5). The first pass from 1 to 3 (or 1 to 2) usually will not create any scoring opportunities but will make the zone adjust to the new ball position. Player 4 will flash cut low to high to provide an initial overload.



A ball reversal (3 passes to 1 who passes to 2) will now force the zone to make some major adjustments and create some gaps, particularly if the defence follow the ball with their eyes and lose vision on players behind them.

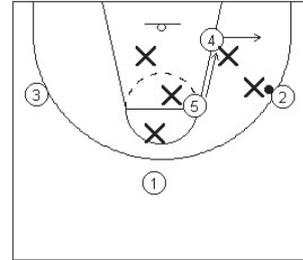


As the pass from 1 to 2 is made post player 4 looks to read the gaps but will generally be looking to exploit the high to low flash cut.

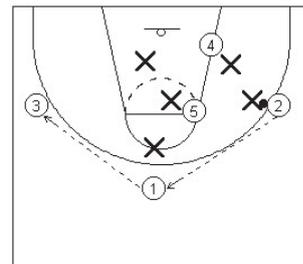
The defence (usually the centre) must go with the cutter otherwise 4 will be open inside. The second post player 5 reads the new gap and flash cuts (usually a low to high cut).



Once in the low post position, player 4 has the option of flaring to the short corner and facing the basket. If the ball is passed to player 4 in this position, the post movement principles of “when one post gets the ball the other post gets open” apply. In this case post player 5 would look to cut into the new gaps, often in this case a high to low cut on the same side as the ball.



If no passing or scoring options have been created by the first ball reversal the offence is balanced as in the first ball movement. The ball may again be reversed with similar player movement attacking the gaps in the zone.



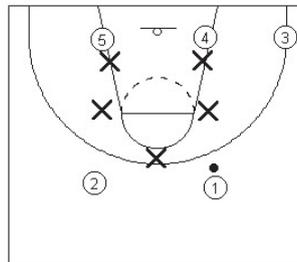
If the ball is passed inside to player 4 or 5 the principles outlined in Post Movement are employed:

1. Look for shot
2. If one post receives the ball the other gets open
3. Inside/Outside – pass to open player on the perimeter

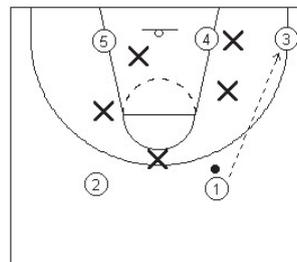
At any stage of the ball reversal the perimeter players 1, 2 and 3 should be ready to attack the zone with fakes, dribble options and catch and shoot opportunities.

### Odd Front Zone

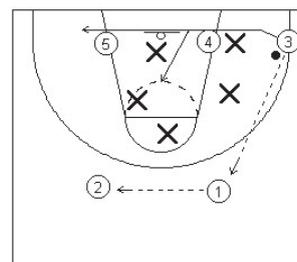
Players are placed in the gaps (1 and 2) or in positions to make the gaps wider by forcing the defence to match up with them (4 and 5). In this alignment 3 starts in an "overload" position.



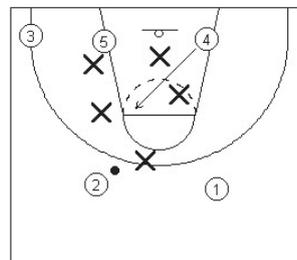
If 1 passes the ball to 3 we immediately have a scoring opportunity. The base player of the zone has two players to cover (3 and 4). If the base player does not get out to 3 they will be open for a shot. If the base player covers 3, gap is left to pass to 4.



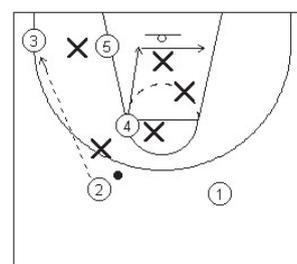
Ball reversal (3 to 1 to 2) initiates cuts from behind the zone. Player 3 cuts off the post players to create an overload on the opposite side. Player 3 also has the option of breaking up to the ball through the inside of the key if the base players of the zone do not cover the cut.



As player 3 cuts off 4 the base of the zone has two players to cover. If the base player covers the cutter, 4 reads the gap and flash cuts to the ball (low to high).



If the pass goes to 3, player 4 cuts to basket (high to low) and adopts low post position opposite the ball again. The offence is again balanced and ready for another ball reversal.



As in the even front zone at any stage of the ball reversal the perimeter players 1, 2 should be ready to attack the zone with fakes, dribble options and catch and shoot opportunities.

Any time the ball is passed inside to 4 or 5, the principles outlined in Post Movement are employed:

1. Look for shot
2. If one post receives the ball the other gets open
3. Inside/Outside – pass to open player on the perimeter

## Break Down Drills

### Attacking the Gaps

This drill breaks down the scoring options created by:

- player positioning in the gaps
- dribble opportunities (including after shot or pass fakes)
- catch and shoot opportunities

O1, O2 and O3 are positioned as the perimeter players against an even front zone. Defence players X1 and X2 represent the top of the even front zone. A third defensive player X3 can be added as the centre of the zone (this player is not allowed outside the key).

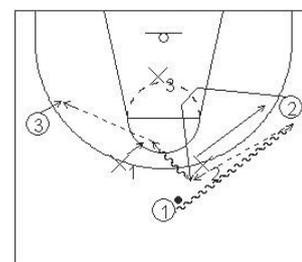
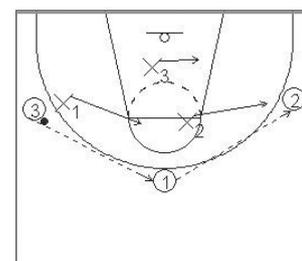
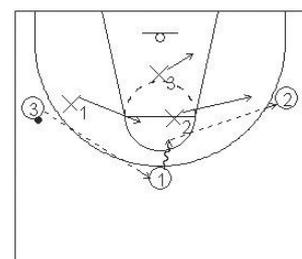
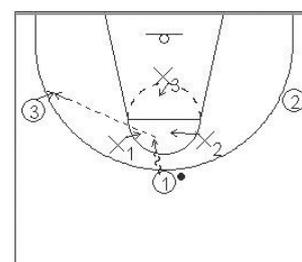
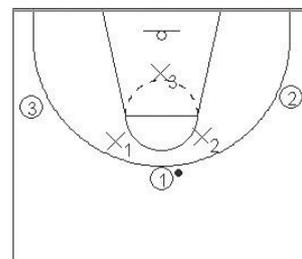
Through ball movement, dribble penetration, freeze dribble or dribble entry, O1, O2 and O3 look to create shot opportunities for themselves and each other through catch & shoot and dribble pull jump shot options. O1 may dribble into the gap or freeze dribble X2 to create a catch and shoot opportunity for O3.

If the defence recover before O3 can shoot a skip pass or quick reversal to O2 may create a shot opportunity.

Shown is ball reversal to O1. By freeze dribbling toward X2, O1 can create the shot for O2. As shown in the next diagram, if O1 passes the ball straight to O2, X2 may anticipate the pass and not guard O1 at all. The freeze dribble, commits X2 to guarding O1.

O1 could also use a fake shot to commit X2. O1 must be ready to drive and shoot if X2 does not guard them.

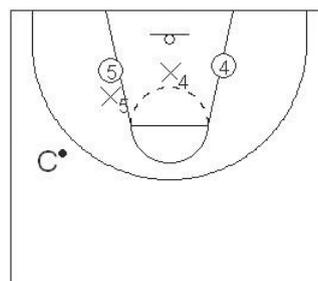
Using a dribble entry is likely to 'drag' the defender to the wing. Reversing the ball quickly back to the top can then create shot opportunities.



## 2 on 2 in the Key

This drill breaks down the scoring options for the post players inside an even or odd front zone.

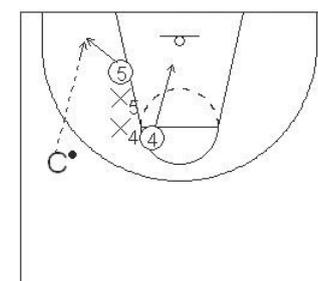
O4 and O5 start in opposite low posts with base line defensive players (X3 and X4). Another player or a coach starts with ball on the wing.



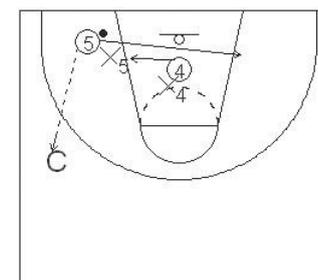
All post movement options detailed earlier can be practiced, particularly "when one post player gets the ball the other post gets open". If O4 flash cuts low to high and receives the ball, O5 cuts to a gap to look for a pass from O4.



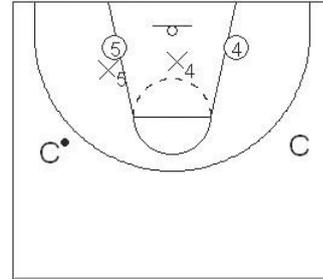
If the pass to O4 flash cut is covered, O5 may cut to the short corner to receive a pass from the coach. O4 now looks to get open by cutting into a gap (usually a high to low cut).



If scoring options are covered the ball may be passed back out to the coach and O4 and O5 can recommence movement to receive a pass.

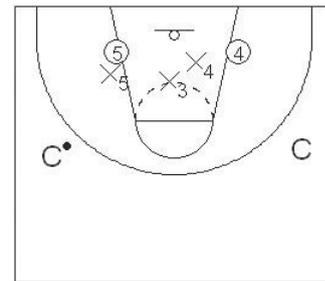


A second feeder, either a coach or another player may be added on the opposite wing to provide another passing angle for the post players.



### 2 on 3 in the Key

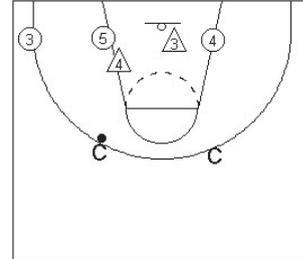
To create more defensive pressure for the inside post players a third defensive player can be added. Inside player movement is practiced as in the "2 on 2 in the key" but with the added defensive pressure of a centre in the zone.



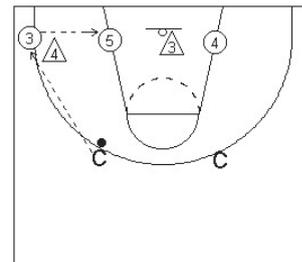
### 3 on 2 Swinger

O3 is added to the "2 on 2 in the Key" break down drill to provide a "swinger" used against the base of an odd front zone. One or two feeders can be used to pass the ball from the perimeter.

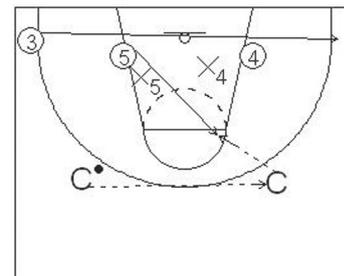
O3 uses the extended base to base cut to get open for the catch and shoot opportunities.



If the defence (X5) leaves the post player to cover the shot from O3, can look to pass O3 to O5.



At any stage (particularly after O3 has cut along the base) the post players may cut low to high.



Options available if O5 receives the ball at the high post include:

- a) when one post gets the ball the other post gets open
- b) inside/outside – passing to O3 for the catch and shoot



## CHAPTER 4: TEAM DEFENCE

Effective team defence requires good individual defensive skills. The key skills are:

- |    |                                      |  |
|----|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. | <b>Defensive stance and movement</b> | - 'Big to bigger' - Drop Step          |
| 2. | <b>Close out</b>                     | - Stutter Step or Bunny Hop Techniques |
| 3. | <b>Defend dribbler</b>               | - Turn and Channel                     |
| 4. | <b>Denial defence</b>                | - Closed Stance                        |
| 5. | <b>Defending a back cut</b>          | - Head and Hand Snap and Open Up       |

Over recent year's, coaches have debated the argument of the importance of teaching man to man or zone defences. The fact is both forms of defence have their place. All players throughout their careers should be taught both styles.

There is a strong argument that a good zone defence is made up of man to man principles. If players do not understand these principles they will struggle to play effective zone defence. Zone defence is based around defending an area and any player who comes into that area. In man to man defence, players have responsibility for guarding a particular player and also have responsibilities to help guarding the player with the ball. help responsibilities mean that defenders will be in a different area of the court to where the player is and they must always see the ball and their player.

In a zone defence players are defined as guards, forwards and a centre and may end up playing their whole life in one area.

It is expected young players will develop at a faster rate if first introduced and taught man to man principles and fundamentals. The main arguments underlying this include:

- It gives each participant the experience of defending a player in a wide variety of situations.
- It gives each participant the necessary understanding of team defensive concepts to play effectively no matter what type of defence is implemented.

## Basic Defensive Principles

In every defence the principle concern is defending the player with the basketball. We utilize the team concepts that follow to assist in achieving effective team defence.

All defenders guarding a player who does not have the ball must rely on maintaining vision of both the ball and their opponent. Two concepts can help to assist this teaching process, they are:

1. **Ball - you - man ('Point the Pistols)**
2. **Flat triangle**

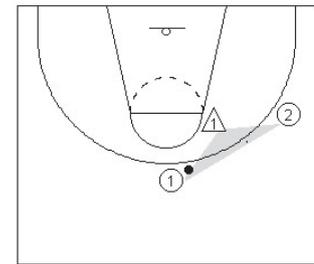
### Ball - You - Man:

This concept addresses a player's position on the court in relation to the ball and their own opponent. It is a simple phrase that players can easily remember. Its total emphasis is on maintaining peripheral vision of both the ball and their opponent.

When a defender's opponent does not have the ball, the defender must be between the player they are guarding and the player with the ball. This puts them in a position to help their team mate who is defending the ball. Moving to this position is often referred to as 'jumping the ball'.

The further the player you are defending is from the ball, the further away from them you can be. This distance will also be influenced by the speed of the defender and whether or not their opponent is regarded as an outside shooter.

Coaches often tell defenders to 'point their pistols' meaning to point both to the player with the ball and the player they are defending.



### Flat Triangle:

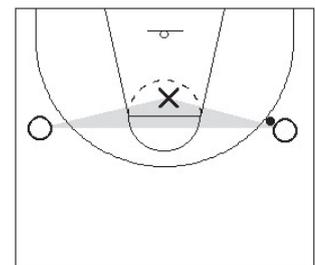
This is a description of what it looks like when a defender off the ball has established ball -you - man position. Once good vision is established it is important to flatten out their defensive triangle, as diagrammed. This triangle should be maintained, so it is important for all defenders to move as the ball moves.

Note:

1. The defender is positioned basket side of a line between the ball and their opponent.
2. Defender's increase the distance from their opponent's as the ball moves further away.
3. The 'passing lane' between the two offensive players forms the base of the triangle. Generally, the defender should be as close to the 'passing lane' as possible.

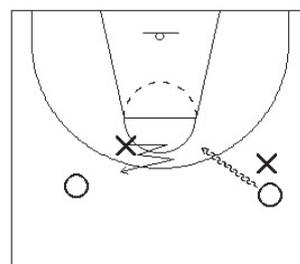
Both "flat triangle" and "ball you man" principles help a defender gain correct floor position.

It is important for defenders to remain active off the ball. The following principles help achieve this:



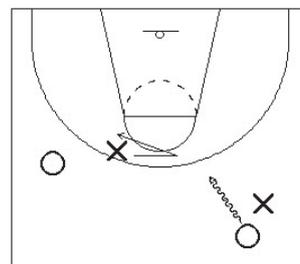
### Hedging

This is a term used by a defender, defending off the ball, where they attempt to put indecision in the mind of the player with the ball. The defender hedging is attempting to fake that they are about to go and trap the basketball. They should ensure that they are making this as realistic as possible by taking short, sharp steps at the player with the ball while maintaining a pass denial position on the person they are defending.



### Help and Recover

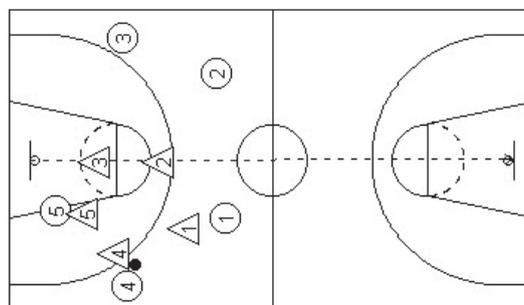
When defending off the ball a player should be ready to help their team mate. Again emphasis should be given to correct floor position. Here the player in help position should help to stop the player driving and then once this achieved recover to their opponent.



### Split Line

Most coaches use the principle of "help" side and "ball" side in teaching defensive principles. The court can be dissected by an imaginary line known as the "split line". This line runs basket to basket.

When the ball is on one side of the split line, all defenders in this area are known as "ball side defenders". Those on the side opposite the basketball are referred to as "help side defenders"



## Jump to the Ball

Coaches will usually insist that players “jump to the ball” when the ball is passed. The defender does not literally jump, but moves in the direction that the ball was passed.

“Jumping” 1, 2 or 3 steps to the ball helps ensure correct defensive position.

(See “Pass and Cut” – Chapter 15)

## Team Defence – Away from the Basketball

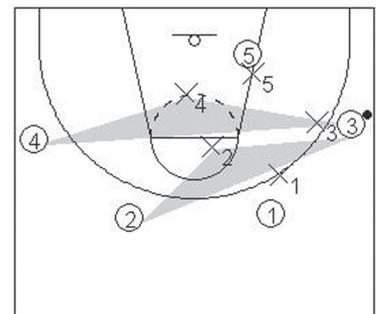
Coaches will adopt different principles and rules to suit their philosophy. The coach will adopt rules that relate to their emphasis of team defence – adding more perimeter pressure, or adding greater help or help on the post players.

Each coach will determine their preference on the basis of their personal philosophy, taking into account the players at their disposal and the abilities and strengths of opposing teams.

A common set of off-the-ball rules are based on how far away the player you are defending is from the ball:

- Pressure (or deny) – one pass away (use a closed stance)
- Help – two or more passes away (use an open stance)

In the diagram, players 1 & 5 are one pass away and X1 and X5 are denying the pass to their opponents. Players 2 & 4 are two or more passes away and X2 and X4 are therefore in a “help” position, positioned towards the basketball in a flat triangle position. X2 and X4 would be in an open stance (back to basket) and X1 and X5



### Defending A Flash Cut

The flash cut is one of the more difficult aspects to defend in the game of basketball. Initially it is crucial the defender has good position in relation to the ball and their opponent.

The defender should be in an open stance, maintaining vision of both the player they are guarding and the ball.

They should be as close to the ball as they can be, provided that they can recover back to their player if the ball is passed to them.

Many coaches adopt a rule of being 1/3 of the distance toward the ball, and being on the split line if both the ball and the player you are guarding is below the foul line.

As the cutter begins to walk and set up their flash cut it is important for the defender to close their stance. Upon the cutter approaching the key the defender should make contact with the cutter. It is important for the defender to maintain a strong defensive stance throughout. As the cutter begins to change direction and flash to the ball the defender should bump the cutter. This will force the cutter away from the position they wish to cut to.

Where possible the defender should deny their opponent the ball. If the cutter receives the ball the defender denies the initial shot, and assumes a strong athletic defensive stance so they can contain their player.

It is critical when defending a flash cut for players to remain in a position between the cutter and the ball. This can only be achieved by the defending moving their feet.



When 'bumping the cutter' it is important that the defender get to the position first by moving their feet. They must not hold the cutter.

#### Key Teaching Points

- Correct floor position in relation to the ball and opponent is essential
- Open stance, maintaining vision ball and man
- Close stance as opponent commences to cut
- Make contact as opponent reaches keyway
- Bump cutter as they flash toward the ball
- Stay ball side of cut
- Maintain strong defensive stance throughout

## Defensive Rotations

Once each player on the team has an understanding of correct floor position in relation to the ball and their opponent, it is important to teach how the team will defend against both dribble and pass penetration.

At some point, a defender will be beaten by an offensive opponent. When this occurs help must be provided. When help is provided it often allows other offensive players to become open. This is where defensive rotation becomes essential as it provides coverage of highest percentage scoring areas.

Defensive rotation is vitally important in defending both dribble and pass penetration. At all times it should be clearly understood that all defenders are primarily responsible for defending the ball, and then their immediate offensive opponent.

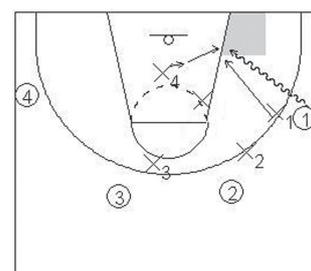
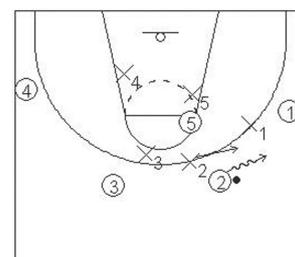
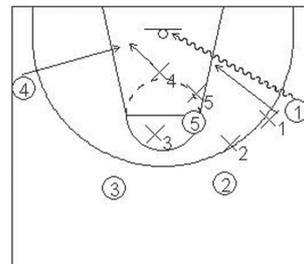
If defenders only guard their own player then the opposition will score easy lay-ups on almost every penetration.

Most teams have a rule to force or channel the ball towards either to the side line and base line or to the middle of the floor. Which ever way it is usual for help to come from the split line and from below (closer to the baseline) the ball.

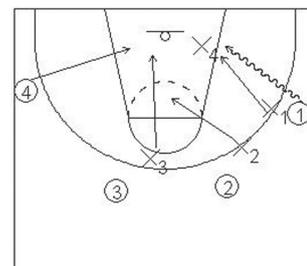
If the ball is penetrated baseline as in the diagram opposite, help will come from the split line. The goal of the help coming to the ball in this instance is to trap it in what is called the short corner. This is the position on the floor from around the edge of the key towards the baseline.

It is important that the defender rotating across (X4) does not allow the dribbler to get into the key.

X4 should be taught to anticipate the drive by O1 and to hedge (move early) one step toward the key when they think that O1 may drive.



The most likely pass will be for a (high percentage) lay-up to O4. This is where rotation must occur. X3 must leave their player and rotate down to defend O4. X2 must also rotate and defend the two offensive players O2 and O3. This is done by moving to the top of the key, closer to the ball then either O2 or O3, and keeping vision of them and the ball..



The aim of team help defensive is to prevent the opposition getting high percentage shots.

If the ball is passed out, in this instance to O2, the nearest defender X2 must defend the ball. X3 would rotate back to the original opponent and X4, who has the vision of where the ball has gone, would rotate back to O4.

A potential problem with this rotation is that O4 may be left temporarily unguarded for a lay-up.

An alternate method of rotation when the ball is passed is a switching rotation.



#### Switching Rotations

In this rotation, the defender who rotated to guard the penetration have switched. So X3 is now guarding O4 and X4 is now guarding O1.

On the initial rotation X2 was guarding both O2 and O3. Who they will ultimately guard will depend on where the ball is passed. If the ball is passed to O4, X2 guards O3 (who is closest to the ball) and X1 guards O2 (the player that is left).



If the ball is passed to O3, X2 guards them and X1 guards O2. If the ball is passed to O2, X2 guards them and X1 guards O3.



A disadvantage of a switching rotation is that it can lead to defensive mismatches, with "bigs" defending perimeter players.

If a fifth player is added, for example a post player, the same rules would apply

#### Help would come from split line

#### Rotation would be the same.

The only difference would be that the post player's defender, X5, would not generally get involved, staying with O5. The post defender therefore has a no help rule and must defend their player.



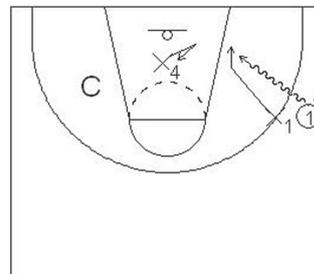
## Drills to Practice Rotation

### 1v2

One offensive player plays against two defenders. A coach or other player should stand in the position where X4's player would be and makes sure that X4 keeps vision of them.

X4 should anticipate the drive and step across to stop penetration to the key, if X1 is beaten. If X1 is not beaten, then X4 should remain in the key, with vision of their player.

If they see that X4 has lost vision of them, they should call X4's name to make them get vision. You can tell that X4 has lost vision if you can see the back of their head.



### 2v3

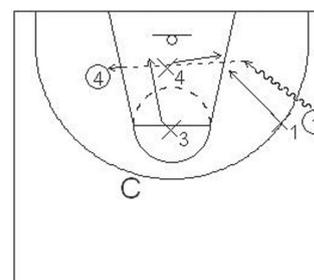
This adds an additional offensive player and defensive player to the 1v2 drill.

Again, O1 looks to drive and if they beat X1, X4 should rotate to stop penetration into the key.

O1 can now look to pass to O4 and X3 rotates to stop that pass.

Again, a coach (or other player) should stand where X3's player would be to make sure that X3 keeps vision of them before rotating.

Defensive players should be encouraged to anticipate the drive and hedge (take an early) step. If O1 does not beat X1, they should recover back to their player.



### 3v4

This adds an additional offensive player and defensive player to the 2v3 drill.

If O1 beats X1, X4 rotates to stop penetration into the key. X3 rotates to stop a pass to O4. X2 rotates to the top of the key to be in a position to guard O3 if the ball is passed to them.



## Reacting Quickly

For man to man to be truly effective it must be played as a team. Five defensive players should be focused upon stopping the ball going through the basket.

When playing defence each player must adjust quickly to ensure help is provided. Two rules can assist when teaching this to young athletes.

### **Move as the ball moves:**

Defenders must be moving to their next position as the ball is in the air. This quick reaction is also known as "flying with the ball".

### **Beat the ball to the spot:**

The defender reaches help, or denial, position. (split line or jump to the ball) before it reaches the hands of the receiver. Defenders must sprint to get to the next spot.

If these two rules are adhered to the offensive team will be under far greater pressure. Help side defenders, will be in position to help or to rotate to protect the basket earlier

Great team defence starts with confidence. In this case confidence of the defender on the ball that teammates will react with quickness and consistency.

Coaches should also encourage defensive players to anticipate what is about to happen and hedge (take one or two steps) toward their next position.

Some tips for reading what an offensive player is going to do are:

- height of the ball: the higher they are holding it the more likely they are looking to pass.
- where they are looking
- where their body is facing: if their body is facing toward the top of the key, even if they turn their head to look at the basket, they are unlikely to drive until they are facing it.
- defensive pressure: what is your team mate stopping them from doing.

## Defensive Communication

Defensive communication plays an important part in any defence as it tells defenders what is happening around them. It also helps generate intensity and enthusiasm into a team's play. Below is a list of terms to assist in the communication process.

### Rotate -

This term is used by a defender who is rotating across to help a team mate who has been beaten. Some coaches have players call help. It triggers other defenders to also rotate.

### Ball -

This is a term used by a player defending the ball, to alert team mates that the ball is live in their opponent's hands and that help defence should actively focus towards this player.

It should be made when you have made the decision to guard the person with the ball.

### Dead -

This term is used by a player defending the ball to alert teammates that the ball is dead in their opponent's hands, following the conclusion of a dribble. It alerts other defenders to deny their opponent's the basketball because their opponent is about to pass.

### Shot -

This term is used by a player defending the ball to alert their team mates that their opponent has just shot the ball. "Shot" alerts each defender to block out their opponent and rebound.

### Help left or help right -

These terms are used by defenders off the ball to let the defender on the ball know that they have help either to their left or right.

### Split line -

This term is used by a defender away from the ball to alert team mates they are on the split line ready to provide help.

There are two positions on the split line where defenders are likely to be – near the basket and near the foul line.

There are many different terms that coaches use for these positions. Whatever terms you use, have your players call it when they are in those positions.

Some common terms are:

Near the basket – "Basket", "Low", "Home", "Low-I"

Near the foul line – "High", "Gate", "High-I"

### Trap -

A term used by a defensive player who has double-teamed the ball.

## Zone Defence

Zone Defence is team defence where each player becomes responsible for defending both an area of the court, and any opponent who may be in that area. When five players work together in a zone it can become a very formidable defence. Zone defences are primarily designed to protect the area near the basket. This essentially means that the offensive team will be forced to take lower percentage, perimeter shots. Therefore a poor perimeter shooting team may struggle against a zone. Other uses for a zone are to provide strong rebounding position or to hide a player who may be in foul trouble.

For a zone defence to be effective players must position themselves in relation to the position of the ball and the players in their area. As the ball moves players must shift to cover the areas that are most vulnerable. Each player must clearly understand the man to man principles of ball-you-man and flat triangle. Every player must be able to defend a player with the ball, deny a pass, and make appropriate adjustments. Effective zones require hard work, communication, intensity and team work

### Why use a zone defence?

The following advantages are inherent in zone defences:

#### Advantages

- Primarily zone defences are used to protect the keyway and basket area and can be used to force opponents into taking lower percentage shots. Therefore a poor perimeter shooting team with a lack of movement in their offence may struggle against a good zone defence.
- Zones can be used effectively to change the tempo of a game. This can be very effective if a team is beginning to get on a roll and becomes difficult to contain using a man to man defence.
- Zones help to provide good rebounding position, as your taller players are necessarily closer to the basket.
- Zones can be used to protect players who may be in foul trouble.
- Zones may help to assist to negotiate difficulties that may arise from teams with a certain physical disadvantage eg. Lack of height, speed.

The following are the principal disadvantages of zone defences

- Zones are poor against good outside shooting teams
- Playing zone all the time, especially at junior level, may limit the personal development of young players.
- Zones can develop the habit of simply standing around, especially if not taught correctly
- Teams with quick offensive transition may score prior to the zone being established.
- Blocking out for rebounds can be difficult as a player may have more than one offensive player in their area.

## Different Types of Zone Defensive Alignments

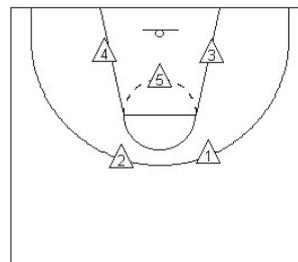
### 2-1-2 or 2-3

#### Strengths

This zone is good for defending the middle of the floor and maintaining strong rebounding position.

#### Weaknesses

It is weak against good perimeter shooting teams and against teams with good ball and player movement.



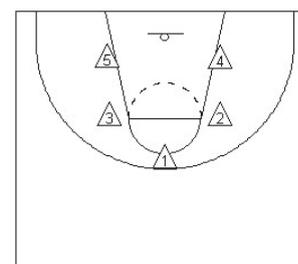
### 3-2 or 1-2-2

#### Strengths

This zone is good at defending the perimeter shot and applying pressure on perimeter players

#### Weaknesses

Is relatively weak in the middle of the keyway and against teams with good ball and player movement.



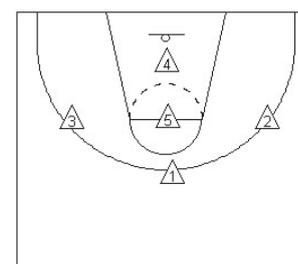
### 1-3-1

#### Strengths

This zone is useful for defending the perimeter shot and applying pressure to your opponent's perimeter players

#### Weaknesses

Is relatively weak in the middle of the keyway and against teams with good ball and player movement. It is also weak in the corners and low posts when the ball is above the foul line



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 Book 3: Individual Offensive and Defensive Skills  
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