

## Basketball Passing Tips

Passing is an important skill and there are a variety of different types. The key to passing is finding the open player and choosing the appropriate type of pass.

The two most common passes in basketball are the chest and the bounce pass.

1. **Chest Pass.** Ball travels from your chest area directly to your teammate with little arc and no bounce. This is the most direct way to transfer the ball and is the easiest to catch.
2. **Bounce Pass.** Ball travels from your chest or waist area and takes one bounce up into your teammates hands. This is the most difficult pass to defend because the ball is bouncing near the defenders feet and they don't have time to get their hands on it. This is why the bounce pass is very effective and popular.

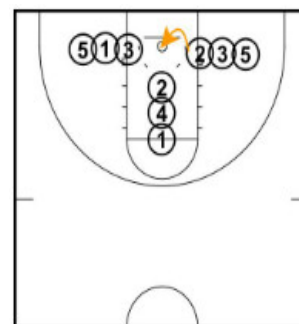
Below are some passing tips:

1. **Pass with two hands.** By putting both hands on the ball you have more control and can easily put backspin on the ball.
2. **Step into your pass.** Put your weight into your pass to ensure proper velocity and control.
3. **Always follow through.** Just like a good shooter, a good passer will follow through.
4. **End with your thumbs pointing down.** Your thumbs should point down at the end of your follow through. This ensures there is proper back spin on the ball which makes it easier to catch.
5. **Make the pass easy to catch.** Don't put a lot of speed on the pass if you don't need it, and always read the body language of your teammate, are they ready for a pass? Where are their hands?
6. **Pass away from the defender.** Aggressive defenders will play passing lanes and knock away passes. Passing to the side of your teammate that is away from the defender will reduce tipped passes.
7. **Make the easy pass.** Most turnovers that amateurs commit happen because they try to make a difficult or impossible pass. Just make the easy passes to wide open players, this will ensure your teammate can easily get it and your team retains possession.
8. **Pass to the hands of your teammate.** If your teammate is squaring up for a shot, they will have their hands by their shooting pocket, make sure thats where you aim. If they are battling in the post with their hands up in the air, make a lob pass to their finger tips. If they are in the post reaching out low, skip a bounce pass in so it hits their hands.
9. **Only lead your receiver if required.** Many passing turnovers are caused by over leading the receiver, often in times when there is no need to lead the receiver at all. If your teammate is wide open on a fast break don't try throw the ball far in front of them, instead make a pass they will be able to get even if they slow down.
10. **Use trick passes with caution.** Trick passes can look impressive when they work, but often result in turnovers. Using a trick pass just you had to try and fool the defense because you could not get them out of position.
11. **Do not jump.** Once you jump, you are not allowed to land with the ball, if the passing lane disappears as you jump, you have no choice but to throw a bad pass.
12. **Pick a target.** Don't throw in the general direction of your teammates voice.
13. **BONUS TIP: Play a practice game without dribbles.** Find a few friends and play a game with no dribbling allowed (almost like ultimate frisbee), it will force you to focus on passing.

Below for receiving a passes:

1. **Catch the ball with two hands and grab it with muscle.** By using both hands and your strength you are increasing your control of the ball incase it had more velocity than expected or a strange spin. It also lets you immediately get into your shooting motion or triple threat position.

2. **Come to the ball.** If you let the ball come to you, you are giving the defender a chance to make a play. Once the ball is in the air, it's **your job** as the receiver to get to it and make sure no one else can.



## Perfects – Shooting Drill

### Overview:

This is a great drill for players to practice shooting with perfect form and also a for coaches to teach and correct shooting form.

### Setup:

Players form three lines a couple of feet out from the basket. Use both ends of the court if possible so that kids get to take more shots. Every player has a basketball.

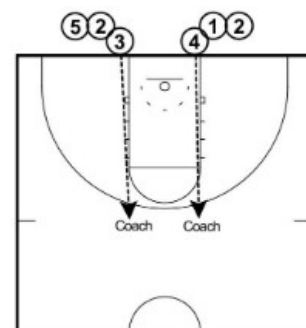
### How it Works:

Players then take it in turns shooting with the aim to swish each shot through the net. The swish is important because we're trying to teach the kids how to shoot with enough arc on the shot.

After a player has taken a shot, they can either return to the end of the same line or rotate lines either clockwise or anticlockwise.

### Coaching Points:

- Players must hold their shooting form until the shot has been made or missed.
- Coaches must view each player's shot at different angles. Different angles will show different technique points.
- You can extend the distance of the shot, but make sure it's not too far. The purpose of this drill is shooting with perfect form around the basket.



## Pivot Shooting – Shooting Drill

### Overview:

This is a great drill for incorporating footwork into a shooting drill that players will enjoy.

Players perform a jump stop on receiving the pass from the coach, pivot around to square up to the basket, and then make a variety of scoring moves.

### Setup:

Players all start on the baseline in two lines. There are two coaches/parents at the top of the key. One in front of each line.

Every player has a basketball.

### How it Works:

Players will begin the drill by making a chest pass out to the coach in front of them. Immediately after making the chest pass, the player will explode to the free-throw line where the coach will pass the ball back to them.

After catching the basketball in a jump stop, the player must pivot around using good technique and square up to the basket before shooting or attacking the ring.

The coach decides which scoring move they want the players to make.

### Coaching Points:

- Make sure every player is jump stopping correctly. You might need to run through this with the players before running the drill.

- Players should not raise up out of their low stance when pivoting.
- Change up whether your team attacks the rim or takes a jump stop. Keep it interesting.

## Dribbling Lines – Dribbling Drill

### Overview:

This is a simple drill to teach the basics of dribbling to new players.

It's a good way to introduce new moves without overwhelming them and will also help to improve the technique of the movements players already know.

### Setup:

Every player has a basketball and lines up on the baseline.

If you have more than 8 players, create two lines on the baseline instead of one.

### How it Works:

The coach will instruct the players to use different dribbling movements to dribble up to either the half-court line or full court.

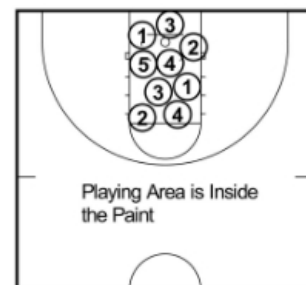
Tell them the dribble movement you want to be performed first, and then say 'go'.

Here are a few that I like to use:

- Right hand up, left hand back
- Crossovers
- Behind-the-back
- Through-the-legs
- Dribble low
- Dribbling backwards

### Coaching Points:

- Players must keep their heads up at all times.
- Once they develop good technique, focus on the players pushing off with their outside foot when making a move.
- Write down the dribbling moves so that you don't forget them. I always do!



## Dribble Knockout – Dribbling Drill

### Overview:

This drill works on ball-handling and protecting the dribble.

All players dribble around in a small area and the goal is to knock other players' basketball out of the area while keeping your own basketball alive.

### Setup:

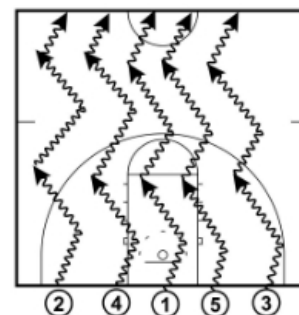
The first thing the coach must do is determine the area the players will be dribbling in. This will depend on the amount of players you have but will usually be the three-point line or the 1/3 court line.

All players must have a basketball.

### How it Works:

On the coach's call, all players begin dribbling and attempt to knock each other's basketball out of the playing area.

As more and more players get out, the coach must pause the game and make the playing area smaller. This continues until you have a winner.



**Coaching Points:**

- If a player fouls someone else, travels, or double dribbles, they're out. It's the coach's job to keep an eye out for these things.
- Constantly remind players to keep their head up.
- Have a designated area for players that get out or you'll end up with kids everywhere!

## Collision Dribbling – Dribbling Drill

**Overview:**

Similar to dribble knockout except players aren't allowed to hit the basketball of the other players away.

Instead, the aim of the drills is to navigate through and dodge all the other players using dribbling moves and by being creative with the dribble.

**Setup:**

All players have a basketball and are in a small space determined by the coach.

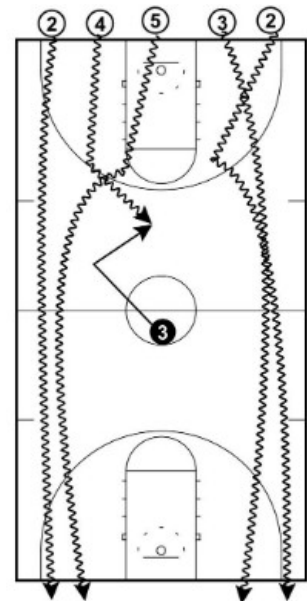
**How it Works:**

On the coach's call, all players will start dribbling around each other in the small space aiming to keep their dribble under control.

This drill will improve ball-handling because players must react to other players and can't predetermine their actions. It also forces all players to keep their heads up or they'll run into someone!

**Coaching Points:**

- Don't allow players to all dribble in the same direction or it will be too easy.
- Keep reminding the players to keep their heads up!
- Encourage players to use both hands. Not just their strong hand.



## Sharks and Minnows – Dribbling Drill

**Overview:**

Sharks and Minnows is one of my favorite games for youth practices.

The aim of the game is for the minnows (dribblers) dribble from baseline to baseline without getting tagged by the sharks (taggers).

**Setup:**

The drill starts with you selecting one or two 'sharks' who will be the taggers.

Everyone else will start on the baseline and have a basketball. These are the 'minnows'.

**How it Works:**

On the coach's call, the minnows must attempt to dribble to the other baseline without getting tagged by a shark.

If a shark does tag them, they must stand in the spot they were tagged, place the basketball between their feet, and now are scarecrows. If a minnow comes within reach of them, they can tag them to get them out.

The last player alive that hasn't been tagged is the winner.

**Coaching Points:**

- As always, if there's a dribbling violation by a minnow they are immediately out.



- Scarecrows must hold the ball between their feet at all times and stay on balance. This stops them moving too far and cheating.
- Implement a time limit if players are taking too long to get from one side to the other.

## Four Corners – Footwork Drill

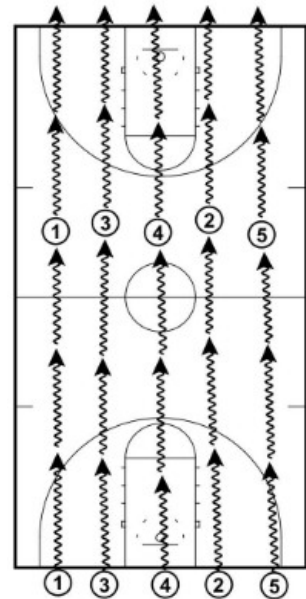
### **Overview:**

This is a great drill for working on jump stops, pivoting, and passing.

It will allow the coach to teach the different kinds of pivots and is a drill the players enjoy doing.

### **Setup:**

The coach must first create a large square in the half-court by placing four cones an even distance apart. There must also be another cone or D-man in the exact middle of the square. You can see where I recommend placing these cones in the diagram.



Split your team up into four groups and send each group to a cone. The cones will be the starting position for each line.

The person at the front of each line has a basketball.

### **How it Works:**

The first thing the coach must do is tell the players which way they'll be passing (either right or left) and which kind of pivot they should use.

When the coach calls out 'go', each player with a basketball dribbles in towards the middle cone, performs a jump stop a couple of feet away, pivots, and then passes to the next line before joining the end of it.

The next player in the that catches the basketball does not start until the coach has called out 'go' again.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Each player must be pivoting the same direction so that two balls don't end up being passed to one line. Do make sure to reverse the direction half way through the drill.
- Use front and reverse pivots and make sure players aren't traveling.
- Explain to the players it's better to jump stop with a small hop. The higher they jump, the more off-balance they'll be when they land.



## Red Light, Green Light – Footwork Drill

### **Overview:**

This is a simple but effective drill that will improve and allow you to teach jump stops and pivoting.

I have used this drill with every single youth team I've coached.

### **Setup:**

The drill starts with every player line up along the baseline holding a basketball.

If you have more than 10 players, I recommend creating two lines.

### How it Works:

Everyone starts on the baseline in triple threat position.

The coach will then lead the players up the court by calling out 'go' and 'stop'. On go, the players begin dribbling at a comfortable pace towards the opposite end of the court. When the coach says stop, the players must immediately perform a jump stop.

This continues until the players reach the other end of the court.

Once your players are comfortable with the jump stops and are performing them correctly, you can make the drill more advanced by adding pivots.

You can either say 'pivot' and allow them to pivot either way. Or you can be specific and say 'right foot pivot' or 'left foot pivot'.

### Coaching Points:

- Players must not jump too high on the jump stops.
- Make sure players in good stance when they land after the jump stop. Knees bent and head up.
- If adding pivots, make sure players don't raise out of their stance when pivoting.

## Explode, Pivot, Pass – Footwork Drill

### Overview:

This drill focuses on basic footwork fundamentals. It's a really quick and simple drill to run. Your team can get a lot of benefit out of it even if it's only run for 5 minutes.

### Setup:

Players get into groups of 2 or more. I prefer 3 players in each group if possible.

Each group has one basketball and should start in a straight line behind either the sideline or the baseline.

### How it Works:

The player starting with the basketball must begin the drill behind the line in triple threat stance.

Their first action is to take two explosive dribbles out from the line and then perform a controlled jump stop.

After the jump stop, the player pivots 180 degrees until they're facing their group and makes a strong chest pass to the next person in line. They then jog to the end of the line.

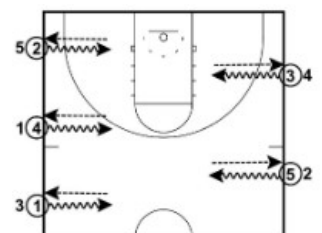
The three main things coaches are looking at are:

1. No traveling when exploding off the dribble.
2. A controlled jump stop.
3. A controlled pivot.

This process continues for a set amount of time.

### Coaching Points:

- The player receiving the basketball should be starting in a low stance and showing target hands.
- Players must explode out with the dribble. Don't allow them to go half-speed.
- Switch up which kind of pivot the players use. It can be forward or reverse, and with their left or right foot.



## Zig-Zag Slides – Defensive Drill

### **Overview:**

Zig-zag slides are a great drill for a beginning team.

The two most important things this drill teaches is how to defensive slide properly and also how to drop step when playing defense.

### **Setup:**

The drill begins with all players on the baseline lining up on one of the corners. No player should have a basketball.

No player should have a basketball.

### **How it Works:**

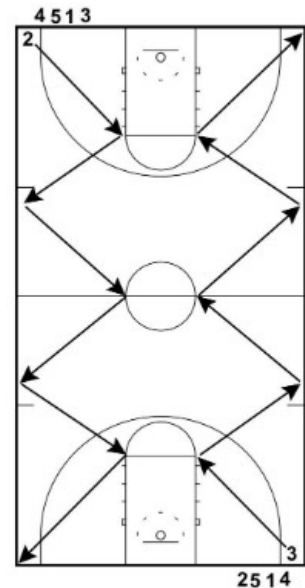
The first player will defensive slide from the corner to the high post and perform a 90-degree drop step so that they are now sliding back to the opposite sideline.

This process of sliding from one side to the other and drop stepping continues until the player reaches the opposite baseline.

They come back down the opposite side of the court using the same principles.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Teach all players how to defensive slide and drop step at the beginning of the drill.
- Make sure players are in a low stance and don't have their legs straight.
- Players should never cross their feet!



## Shooting games and offensive concepts

### Stationary Shooting

- feet as wide as shoulders; shoulders squared to the basket; knees bent; eyes on rim; shooting elbow tucked in; lead foot slightly ahead of weak-side foot; follow through with fingers pointing into the rim
- no dribble to start; coach rebounds and passes to next shooter in line so players stay squared to the rim/backboard
- players should shoot through their body bending knees for power and to keep elbow in; no twisting or turning of shoulders that would result in player “throwing” rather than shooting the ball at the basket
- players can also start with lead (strong) foot back and step into shot with strong foot
- shoot from short distances on lower hoops so players can master fundamentals

### Shooting From Dribble

- players line up 10-12 feet in front of hoop and take one dribble with strong hand toward basket, perform a jump stop, and take a balanced shot at the basket

- players perform same drill while dribbling with opposite hand
- begin with players dribbling on angle to basket from wing area and shooting into the “box” on the backboard after performing a jump-stop.

### Shooting games

1) First Team to 5 - Form 2 teams at 2 separate baskets. Pick a spot to shoot from that is a similar distance for both teams. Say “Go!” and call out the score. First team to 5 wins!

2) 1 v. 1 v. 1 (make it, take it) – Form a straight line of players under the basket and out of bounds. Offensive Player (O) starts at the Free Throw line. Defensive Player (D) starts under the basket. D player tosses ball to O. They play one on one with these rules: O has maximum 3 dribbles to score. If O scores, they keep the ball, and next player in line is on D. If O misses OR D steals OR D steals & scores then D moves to O and the next player in line is on D. Maximum 3 turns in a row on O.

### **Dribbling and Ball Handling**

Dribble with both hands – stationary and up and down the court

Crossover dribble

Hesitation dribble

Pivot – L, R, forward, reverse

All stationary ball handling – with and without dribble: Figure-8, around waist, around 1 leg, etc.

Change speeds

### **Jump Stops**

- Half court drill designed to teach players the proper balanced position prior to passing and shooting
- Player dribbles ball three times with right hand and performs “jump stop” into a balanced basketball position. After third dribble, player should literally jump slightly into the air landing on the toes/balls of the feet with ball in triple threat position.

### Jump Stop Drill #1

Here is a drill for teaching the jump stop. First demonstrate the jump stop to your players. Have all the players lineup on the end-line, with adequate spacing. Start this drill at slow speed initially. Have the players jog down the



floor slowly. When you blow your whistle, they come to a jump stop. Yell "go" and they start again.

Every-time you blow the whistle, they jump stop. Do this back and forth, up and down the court. When they look like they are getting the hang of it, have them sprint and do the drill. Then give everyone a ball, and dribble slowly down the floor, doing jump stops. Eventually work up to the speed dribble and jump stop.

### Pivoting drills

1. Start with the left foot as pivot foot. Pivot forward 15 times.
2. Now backward pivot (reverse pivot) 15 times.
3. Switch pivot foot. Forward pivot 15 times.
4. Backward pivot (reverse pivot) 15 times.

### Pivoting Pointers

1. You must keep your head up with eyes forward.
2. Have your knees bent a little.
3. Your pivot point must not change.
4. Your pivot foot does not slide.

### Simple drill for teaching the footwork for Lay-ups

Have the players get into a line near the right side of the basket (to shoot the right-handed lay-up). Each player takes a turn. You can use more than one basket if you have enough assistants to watch each player's technique. This drill works on correct footwork.

Have the player (with a ball) face the right side of the backboard with both feet together. Then have her take one step forward with the inside (left) foot, plant that foot and jump off of it and shoot the right-handed lay-up. When jumping, the right thigh comes up with the knee bent. Have each player work on this technique.

Then try it on the run (without dribbling), and then with dribbling. Do the left side also... on this side you step forward and plant the right (inside) foot, and raise the left thigh and leg.