

7

Small-Sided Games You Must Use This Season



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Comeback Time

How the Drill Works:

The game starts with the coach choosing two teams and giving them a situation. For example, team A is down by 5 with two minutes in the game. The two teams then compete against each other from this situation and try to win the game.

Purpose:

This is a fun drill for working on situational awareness and to get players thinking towards the end of games. They must know the score and what to do in each situation to give their team the best chance of achieving success.

Setup:

- Two teams of 5 players.
- Decide on the situation and communicate it to your players.

Instructions:

1. The drill can start in a variety of ways depending on the situation. You can start the drill by giving the basketball to a specific team or with a jump ball.
2. The two teams then compete. The winning team attempts to hold the lead while the trailing team fights back to win the game.
3. After the game, talk to the players about the situation. Communicate to both teams what they did correctly, and what they could have done differently.
4. Then set up a new situation and play!

Variations:

Different Situations - Make sure that every time you run this drill, you're throwing a new situation at your players. Think about the foul count, time left on the clock, how many points, etc.

Real NBA Situations - To make things even more fun for your players, put them in real situations NBA or WNBA teams have been in. For example, Michael Jordan's Bulls down by 5 against the Detroit Pistons with 3 minutes on the clock.



Strength of Teams - You can create two even teams, have your starters compete against the players who start on the bench, or pick at random. There are lots of ways to set this up!

Coaching Points:

- To use this drill effectively, you may want to add a shot clock to the game so that teams don't simply hold the ball at the top of the key. You don't need a real shot clock - just count down from 5 if the offense is holding it up.
- You must have a conversation with your players after the game. This is a great teaching opportunity for when to foul, which shot they should be taking (2 or 3), etc, depending on the time and score in the game.
- Players love this drill. So let them have fun with it!



Core

How the Drill Works:

Two teams play a 4-on-4 or 5-on-5 game in the full court. Except each time down the floor, the offense must get the basketball inside to the low post before they're allowed to shoot the ball.

Purpose:

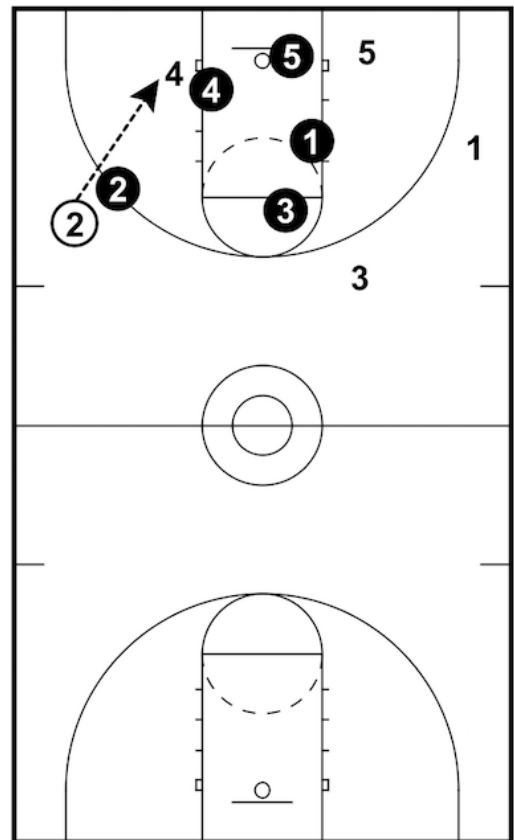
This drill allows your team to practice getting post position, passing the basketball into the low post, and either scoring or passing out of the post. These are all aspects of the game that most teams don't practice enough.

Setup:

- Two teams of 4 or 5 players.
- Decide on a set period of time to run the drill.

Instructions:

1. The teams start a regular full-court game.
2. Each time down the floor, the offense must pass the basketball to a player in the low post before they're allowed to score.
3. The low post player can either attempt to score themselves, or they can pass out to a teammate for a shot or to continue the offense.
4. The game continues under the same conditions for a set period of time, and the team with the most points in the end wins the game.



Variations:

Number of Players - This game can be run either 4-on-4 or 5-on-5. You could even use this drill 3-on-3 in the half court if you're lacking numbers at practice.

High Post - In the regular drill, only a low post catch is counted as getting the basketball inside. You can choose to allow a high post catch and then score.

Post Can't Score - To encourage off-ball movement when the ball goes into the low post, implement the rule that the post player must pass out.

Coaching Points:

- Put a big emphasis on players getting early position in the low post to make it easy for the perimeter players to pass the basketball inside.
- When passing to the post, remind you players - "fake a pass to make a pass."
- Encourage guards to post up as well.
- As it can be subjective whether the low post pass should count, if the players aren't sure, the decision is always up to the coach. No arguments.



Defense Switch

How the Drill Works:

Two teams compete in a game where teams play zone defense after scoring, and man-to-man defense after a missed shot or turnover.

Purpose:

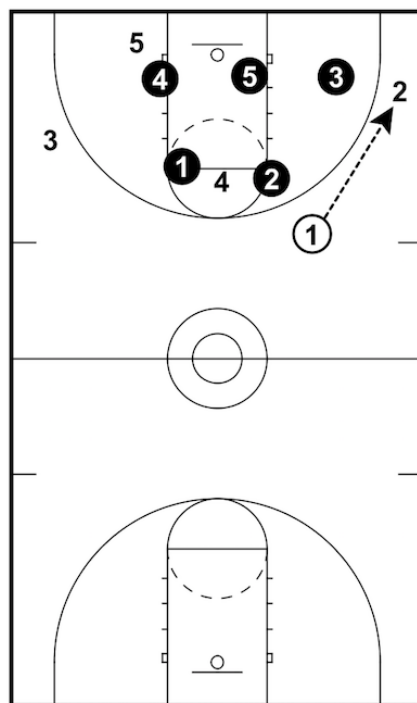
This is a great drill for teams who most learn how to score against both defenses. It forces both the offensive team and defensive team to think on every possession and communicate with each other to set up and execute effectively.

Setup:

- Two teams of 5 players.
- Decide on a set period of time to run the drill.

Instructions:

1. The teams start playing a regular full-court game.
2. The first team on defense plays man-to-man.
3. When a team scores, they run back to their own half of the court and set up a zone defense (2-3 zone preferably, since that's the most common zone you'll see).
4. When either of the teams fails to score, missing a shot or committing a turnover, they play man-to-man defense.
5. Other than for that, the game is scored as usual.
6. The game continues for a set period of time, and the team with the most points in the end wins the game.



Variations:

Different Number of Players - Instead of playing 5-on-5 game, form two teams of 4 players and instruct the teams to set up in a box (2-2) when defending after a score, maintaining zone defense principles.



Different Zone Defense - If you're soon facing a team who plays a different type of zone defense, get your players to set that up so you can practice against it.

Switch the Defenses - Instead of man-to-man after a miss and zone after a score, switch things up. Have your players run a zone after a miss and play man-to-man after a score.

Completely Different Defense - You can use this same drill to switch up full-court defenses as well. The point is to simply force players to think and change on defense.

Coaching Points:

- Remind players to communicate with each other on every possession so that everyone understands which defense they're going to set up.
- Encourage the offensive team to attack quickly to take advantage of the defense working out what they should be doing.
- Talk about the importance of turning and sprinting back to at least the halfway line. This ensures players will be back to compete even if they set up the wrong defense.
- While all of this is a lot to take in, make sure both teams are executing correctly! Hold them to a high standard.



Five-Pointers

How the Drill Works:

Two teams play a regular game to 21 points except three-pointers are worth 5 points. Everything else about the basketball game stays the same.

Purpose:

This drill encourages players to seek out the three-point shot. This adds some extra elements of strategy to the game and will teach you a lot about each player's decision making.

Setup:

- Two teams of 4 or 5 players.
- Decide on a set amount of points to win the game.

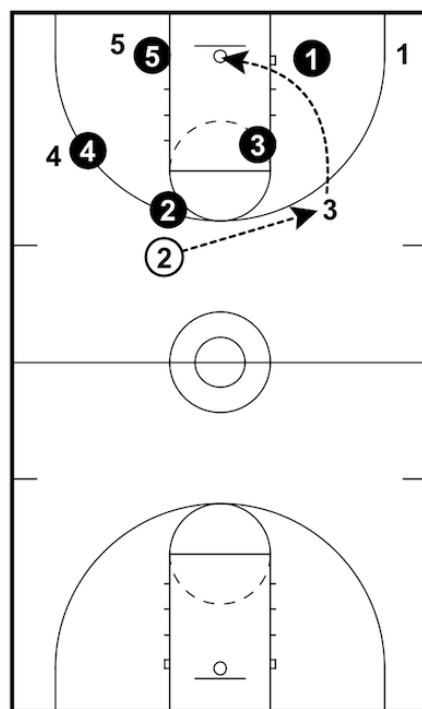
Instructions:

1. The two teams start playing a regular game as usual to 21 points.
2. Each time a player makes a three-point shot, five points is added to their team's total instead of three points.
3. The first team to reach 21 points is the winner.

Variations:

Amount of Points - Instead of awarding three-pointers with 5 points, you can award a three-pointer with 4 points. Or any other number.

Type of Shot to Award - This drill encourages more three-point attempts by raising the points awarded. The same concept can be used to encourage layups, post ups, or any other type of shot.



Coaching Points:

- Your players should still be attacking the rim and taking open layup opportunities when they're open. Players have to be smart with their shot selection in this drill.
- More three-point shots = more long rebound opportunities. Make sure your players understand that and know how to take advantage of it.
- Talk to your players about which three-point shots are the best attempts. For example, players will usually make more three-point shots off a drive and kick than your point guard firing off an attempt after several dribble moves.



Ladder

How the Drill Works:

The drill starts with two teams competing 5-on-5 full-court. Every time a player scores, they're removed from the game. This continues until one team has scored 5 times.

Purpose:

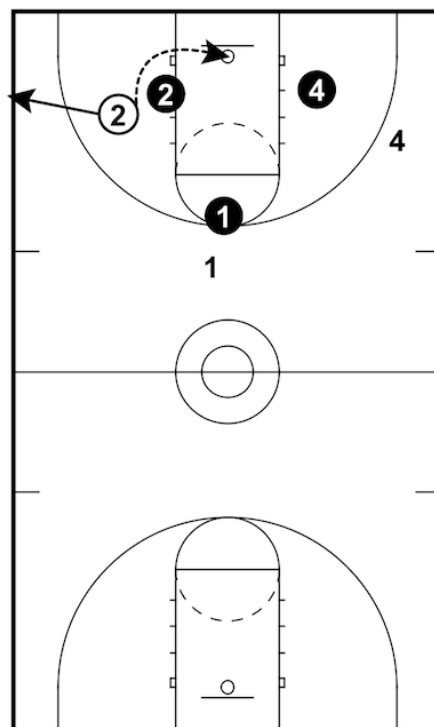
This is a fun small-sided game that puts players in advantage and disadvantage positions they'll experience throughout live games. Players must work together, communicate, and strategise to give their team the best chance of winning.

Setup:

- Two teams of 5 players.

Instructions:

1. The teams start playing a regular full-court game.
2. When the first player scores, they immediately walk off the court and remove themselves from the game without disrupting the flow. This leaves the teams playing 5-on-4.
3. After the next score, another player will be removed from the game. This means the game will be either 4-on-4 or 5-on-3.
4. This continues until all 5 players have scored from one team. They're declared the winner.



Variations:

Number of Players - This drill can be run with any number of players as long as the two teams start with an even number of players.



Coaching Points:

- Smart teams will look to give scoring opportunities to the weaker scorers on the team so that the better scorers are still in the game at the end.
- Make sure players are communicating loudly with each other. This is especially important for the defensive team when they're at a disadvantage.
- Spacing is crucial for teams to make the most of an advantage on offense.



Lightning

How the Drill Works:

Two teams play a full-court game of either 4-on-4 or 5-on-5. But the difference from a regular game is that teams aren't required to take the basketball out of bounds after a score. Instead, the opposition can grab the basketball after a made shot and attack immediately.

Purpose:

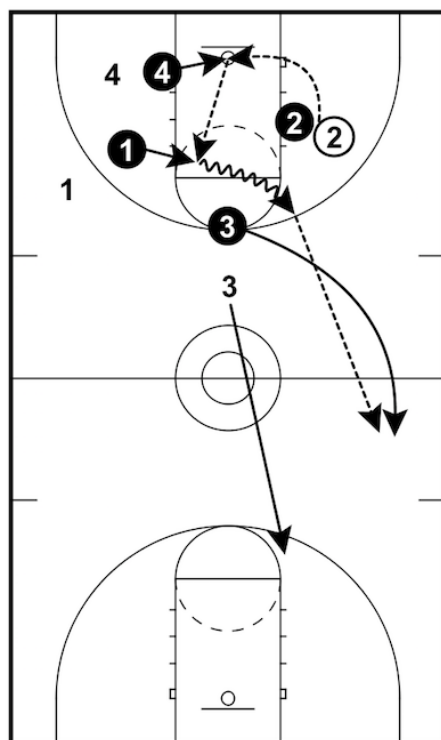
This drills encourages quick transition for both the offense and defense. This is a great drill to improve quick decision-making and to work on conditioning.

Setup:

- Two teams of 4 or 5 players.
- Decide on a set period of time for the drill.

Instructions:

1. The teams start a regular full-court game.
2. When either of the teams score on offense, the defensive team isn't required to take the ball out behind the baseline. They can grab the basketball and move the basketball up court immediately.
3. The game continues in this manner for a set period of time or until one of the teams reaches a certain amount of points.



Variations:

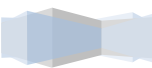
Number of Players - I recommend this drill to be run 4-on-4 or 5-on-5. It could be played 3-on-3, but the drill needs to be full-court.

Coaching Points:

- You must emphasize the importance of quick transition for both teams. The offensive team which can move the ball quickest up court will get an advantage.



- Someone should always be in the safety position when a shot goes up.
- Since it's such an up-tempo drill, be prepared for your players to make mistakes.



Squad

How the Drill Works:

Two teams play full-court with one condition: When a team is on offense, all of the players from that team must touch the basketball before they're allowed to attempt to score.

Purpose:

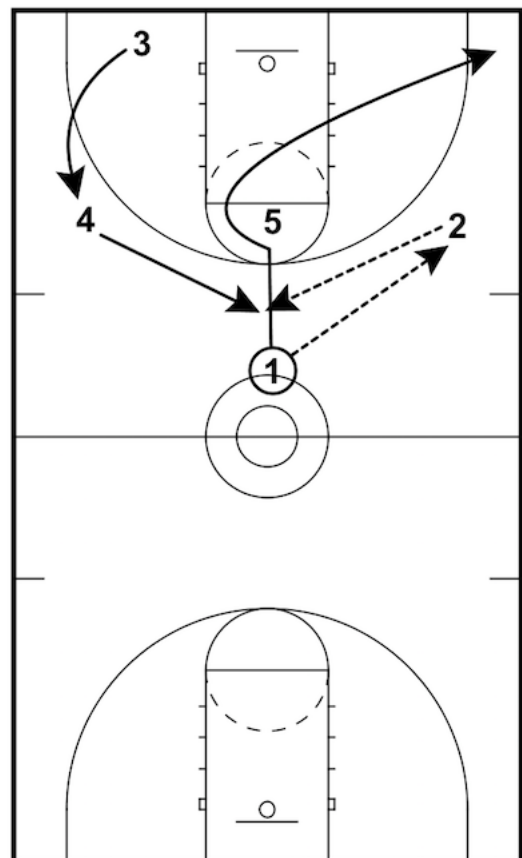
This is a great drill for developing teamwork, improving spacing and ball movement, as well as encouraging all players to get involved in the game.

Setup:

- Two teams of 4 or 5 players.
- Decide on a set period of time to run the drill.

Instructions:

1. The teams start a regular full-court game.
2. Every time a team is on offense, the basketball must be moved around until all 5 players on the team have touched it.
3. As soon as the 5th player has made contact with the ball, the team is allowed to attack at the next opportunity and look to score.
4. After a score or miss, the defensive teams gathers the basketball, transitions down the court, and then must also work the basketball around until all 5 players have touched it.
5. The game continues in the same manner for a set period of time, and the team with the most points in the end wins the game.



Variations:

Number of Players - I recommend this drill to be run 4-on-4 or 5-on-5. It could be played 3-on-3, but the drill needs to be full-court.

Time Limit - You can either limit how long each player can hold the basketball, or give the team a shot clock to work the ball around and then find a good shot.

Coaching Points:

- You need buy-in from the players for this drill to be successful. It's easy for defenders to stand off knowing their opponent isn't going to attack if they're not interested in improving their defense.
- Because this drill forces the offense to slow down and move the basketball, it's a great drill for working on defensive positioning.
- Make sure your team isn't just standing around the perimeter and passing without moving. Encourage them to run your team's regular offense while moving the ball.

