Drills For Improvement

Ball Handling

Whenever a player improves his ability to handle the ball, he makes himself a better player. If you dedicate yourself to doing several of these drills each day, the ball will begin to feel like its part of your hand. This will not happen without intense work. Many of these drills are difficult and will present a tremendous challenge. Choose from the list and make a routine lasting for 10 to 15 minutes. To make yourself a better player all you need is a ball and the willingness to work hard.

1. Wake-up Drill
   Hold the ball in the right hand and slap it into the left hand as firmly as possible and continue from hand to hand. Ten each hand.

2. Circle ball around Ten circles each way
   a. Waist  
   b. Right leg  
   c. Left leg  
   d. Figure 8

3. Dribble ball around Ten each way
   a. Waist  
   b. Right leg  
   c. Left leg  
   d. Figure 8

4. Reach behind 10 total
   Dribble ball between legs, when reaching behind each outside legs (pattern- right, left, behind, left, right, behind, right, left, behind, right, behind)

5. Horse: 10 each way
   Slap ball in front of right leg, slap behind right leg, pretzel (drop), bring ball around left leg, slap in front.

6. Front & Back: 10 tosses both ways
   Hold ball between legs, drop ball, catch ball behind legs

7. Pretzel: 10 each way
   Hold ball between legs (one arm in front, one behind), drop ball, alternating hands and catch ball

8. Ricochet: Ten front to back and reverse
   Bounce ball between legs and catch ball behind back, waist high

9. Straddle walk (dribble): Two lengths of the court
   Walk down court dribbling the ball between legs each step

10. Straddle run (dribble): Two lengths of the court
    Run down the court dribbling ball between legs each step

11. Straddle (10 no misses)
    Right foot forward, left foot back, bounce ball between legs, jump up, alternate feet and bounce ball between legs again

12. Lay down
    Laying down on the floor, learn to dribble ball every way possible

    Dribble ball as fast as you can, 3 inches off the floor (right, left, and both hands)

14. Catch ball behind back: Do 5 tosses
    Throw ball up 4 feet overhead and catch it behind your back

15. Catch ball between legs: Do 5 tosses
    Throw up and catch while reaching between legs

16. Behind knees, clap hands: Do 5 catches
    Hold ball behind knees, drop ball, clap hands, reach behind and catch
Drills For Improvement
Dribble Moves and Lay-ups

X-out Lay-ups
1. Begin at the right elbow facing the basket
2. Speed dribble with the right hand and shoot right hand lay-up
3. Grab the ball out of the net and speed dribble to the left elbow
4. Speed dribble with the left hand and shoot left hand lay-up
5. Grab the ball and speed dribble to the right elbow and repeat
6. Make 10 in a row and shoot 2 foul shots

Half-court Dribble Series
1. Begin at mid-court on the right sideline
2. Speed dribble to the three point line and make a dribble move and finish with a lay-up
3. Grab the ball out of the net and move outside the lane
4. Dribble hard back toward mid-court and make a move at the foul line extended
5. At mid-court, crossover and finish at the left sideline
6. Repeat using left hand
Drills For Improvement
Dribble Moves and Lay-ups

Full-court dribble series

1. Dribble moves are made at the foul line extended, half-court and the other foul line extended
2. On each trip do one of the dribble moves
3. On the last trip do a different move at each stop
4. Finish each trip down the floor with a lay-up
5. Going down the court use your strong hand and coming back use your weak hand
6. One set includes all five dribbles both left and right, plus the combination moves for 12 lay-ups
7. The goal is to build up to 5 sets without missing a shot
8. Shot five foul shots between each set

NOTE: Both dribble series drills are great for developing your skills. They are challenging and great for conditioning.
Drills For Improvement
Rebounding

Individual Technique: Defensive Rebound
1. Stand two steps back and throw the ball against the backboard
2. Jump and grab the ball at the top of your jump
3. Pull the ball down to just below your chin with elbows out
4. Land on balance and turn to the outside and find the outlet

Note: More advanced players should turn in the air and land facing to the outside for the outlet pass

Individual Technique: Rebound vs. Pressure
1. Drill begins as the one above
2. As the rebounder turns to the outside and the opposing team is pressuring the outlet pass
3. Fake the outlet pass and take one or two hard dribbles to the corner to defeat the pressure

Individual Technique: Offensive Rebound
1. Stand halfway up the lane
2. Throw the ball hard off the backboard and rip the ball out of the air
3. Land on balance with the ball held firmly under the chin
4. Take the ball strong to the basket and finish with a power lay-up
Section Two

Perimeter Offense

To be a good perimeter player requires that you are solid in all the areas from the first section in your Drills for Skills book. Many players spend all their time working on shooting the outside shot and not on their dribbling, passing, and lay-up skills. This approach leaves weaknesses in their game that opposing coaches can use against them. Also, many players work on their shooting drills while moving at half-speed or slower. Please remember that these drills are to help you improve your game time skills, so it is very important that you practice at game speed.

As you improve your game, you will see improvement in the players being used on defense against you. If you become the best offensive player on your team, you can expect to be guarded by the best defender on the opposing team. Work hard at the drills in this section and you will be prepared for the challenge.
Drills For Improvement

Partner Shooting: Penetrate and Kick

Penetrate and Kick: From the top
1. Player has the ball and drives it into the gap to draw help defender and passes to the player on the wing
2. Receiver of pass must adjust position on the floor and have hands ready to receive the ball
3. Shooter should catch the ball with knees bent and step into the shot
4. The passer rebounds the shot and passes to the shooter
5. Now the person who shot first is penetrating and passing the ball to his partner
6. Players alternate positions for 10 shots

Penetrate and Kick: From the wing
Same concept as drill above

Penetrate and Kick: To the corner
Same concept as drill above
Drills For Improvement
Partner Shooting: Using Screens

Back screen – Flare
1. Player simulates coming off a back screen and flares to the corner
2. Overhand pass is thrown to the inside shoulder
3. Shooter catches with knees bent and steps into his shot
4. Shooter follows his shot, passes to partner, and returns to original spot
5. Make seven shots then rotate

Back screen – Pop-back
1. Shooter starts on the block and steps out to simulate a back screen
2. As the cutter comes off the screen, the screener steps into the ball with hands ready and fingers pointed up
3. Catch the ball with knees bent and immediately elevate and take the shot
4. Make seven shots then rotate
Drills For Improvement

Partner Shooting: Using Screens

Screen Away Flash

1. Shooter simulates using a screen away by taking man away and then coming hard to the ball
2. Hand should be ready to receive the ball with fingers pointing up
3. Catch the ball with knees bent and immediately elevate into the shot
4. Make seven shots then rotate

Screen and Step Back

1. Offensive player screens the ball
2. Ball handler comes off the screen aggressively
3. Instead of rolling to the basket, the screener steps back with hands ready to receive the pass
4. Catch the ball with knees bent and step into the shot
5. Make seven shots then rotate
Drills For Improvement

Individual Shooting

5 Spot Shot Fake (15 ft. or 3 pt)

1. Start at any spot
2. With knees bent and head up, shot fake, take one or two hard dribbles right, square up and shoot the jumper
3. Return to spot, shot fake, take one or two hard dribbles left, square up and shoot the jumper
4. Make five shots from each spot

Jumpers off the Dribble

1. Beginning at half-court, dribble toward the basket at game speed, lower your body, pull up and shoot the jump shot
2. Shots should be taken from 15 feet or behind the 3 point line. Work both sides and the middle of the court
3. Use all five dribble moves: Speed, inside out, hard stutter, change of pace, and inside out/crossover
4. Shoot five shots off of each move

NOTE: This is a challenging drill and a great conditioner. It may also be done full court.
Section Three
Post Play

Few things are important as to the outcome of a basketball game as a team’s ability to score in the paint and to rebound the ball. Having success in the post does not require great size or strength. Very often the best post players and rebounders are those who play aggressively and want the ball the most. Playing well in the post requires great heart, not great height.

Whether or not you are primarily a post player, it is important to work on improving your post play and rebounding. A versatile post player who handles the ball well is difficult for a defense to stop. Versatility is just as important for a guard. A guard who is effective in the post is that much more valuable to their team.
Section Three
Post Play

Fundamentals

Offensive Post Play

Post play is physically demanding and requires great stamina and toughness. Post play is not just for big men. Guards that can score in the post are that much more difficult to contain.

Coaching points

1. Set your man up and cut hard to the ball. Position self above the block and below the first marker. This allows an offensive move both middle and baseline
2. Be a “wide body.” Keep your body low and pressured on your defender. Fend off the defender with one forearm and present the other hand as a target for a pass
3. On the catch “chin the ball” by pulling the ball to your chest with elbows pointing out
4. Locate the defender. Read the defense and execute the proper move
Low Post Moves

Drop Step Baseline – Power Lay-up
1. The defender is playing you on the topside
2. On the catch, step toward the basket with the baseline foot. Keep the defender on your back
3. On the step, take one power dribble and shoot the power lay-up
4. If defense recovers, ball fake and look to complete the three point play

Drop Step Middle – Up and Under
1. The defender is playing on the bottom side
2. Step into the lane as with the Drop Step Middle – Jump Hook
3. Fake the hook shot and step through with the ball side foot. Concentrate on keeping pivot foot planted to avoid traveling
4. Finish with a strong power lay-up

Drop Step Middle – Jump Hook
1. The defender is playing on the bottom side
2. On the catch, step into the lane with the top foot. Keep the defender on your back
3. Point the non-shooting shoulder at the rim and elevate off both feet and shoot the jump hook
4. Turn and face the basket and follow your shot

Turn and Face
1. If the defender is playing full behind, chin the all, turn and face the basket. Keep knees bent and protect the ball
2. If the defender has his hands down, shoot the ball
3. If the defender has his hands up, shoot fake and take the ball to either baseline for the power lay-up or to the middle for the hook shot
Drills For Improvement
Post Play: Individual

Two Ball Power Lay-up

1. Place two balls on the low post blocks
2. Stand facing the basket on the right side
3. Pick up the ball with chest parallel to the backboard
4. Point the inside shoulder to the rim and shoot the power lay-up with the right hand
5. Set the ball down and slide across the lane
6. Pick up the second ball and repeat using the left hand
7. Continue until you have made 10 lay-ups

Two Ball Drop Step

1. Place two balls on the blocks as above
2. Straddle the ball on the right block
3. Pick up the ball and drop step with the left foot to the baseline and shoot a power lay-up with the right hand
4. Set the ball down, sprint across the lane and pick up the second ball
5. Drop step to the baseline with the right foot and shoot the power lay-up with the left hand. Make a total of 10 shots
Two Ball Drop Step
1. Drill begins on the right side as the previous drill.
2. Drop step to the middle with right foot parallel to baseline.
3. Point the right shoulder at the basket and shoot the left handed baby hook.
4. Player should complete the shot facing the basket and ready to rebound the miss.
5. Set the ball down, sprint across the lane and repeat by stepping with left foot and shooting hook shot with right hand. Make 10.

Mikan Drill
1. Start on left side of the rim facing the backboard.
2. Step with left foot and shoot hook shot with right hand.
3. Grab the ball out of the net.
4. Step with right foot and shoot hook shot with left hand.
5. Work to make 25 in a row.
Reverse Mikan Drill

1. Start with heels on baseline facing the opposite basket
2. Step with left foot and shoot reverse lay-up with right hand
3. Grab the ball out of the net
4. Step with right foot and shoot reverse lay-up with left hand
5. Work to make 25 in a row

Backboard Taps

1. Begin on the right side of the backboard
2. Throw the ball off the backboard and tap with the right hand
3. Bounce off toes and tap ball ten times. On the final tap, put the ball in the basket
4. Repeat with the left hand

NOTE: Keep both hands above head. Tap ball at the top of the jump.
Section Four
Defense and Agility

Every team needs players who can defend. A defensive player who can go into a game and shut down the big scorer is very valuable to his team. Good defense will also create scoring opportunities. Both in the half court and when pressing full court, forced turnovers often become easy baskets for the defending team. Many of the most exciting basketball highlights start with a great defensive play.

Defensive skills must be practiced like all other fundamentals. You must concentrate on proper defensive positioning and work to improve your foot speed. The agility drills will help a great deal in this area. As you make yourself quicker, you will become a better defender.
Section Four
Individual Defense Fundamentals

Coaching Points: Man to Man Defense

Guarding the ball – “Ball”
1. Good defense starts with the proper defensive stance and pressure on the ball
2. Knees should be bent, body should be low, and feet should be ready to move
3. Feet should be shoulder width apart, with weight on the balls of your feet. The foot closest to the middle of the floor should be slightly ahead to force the ball out of the middle of the floor
4. Head should be up, with one hand pressuring the ball and one hand in the passing lane

One pass away – “Deny”
1. Ball side hand in the passing lane with thumb down
2. Position “up the line, off the line,” seeing the ball and your man
3. You must be ready to react to the offensive player’s movement

Two passes away – “Help”
1. Get off your man with at least one foot in the lane
2. Talk and let your teammate know that you are ready to help
3. When you help, you must be ready to quickly recover to your man

Close Outs
1. Close outs occur when you move from a help position back to guarding the man with the ball
2. The player must recover in a defensive position that will allow the defender to contain the dribbler and contest the shot

Close out fundamentals
1. As the defensive player runs toward the man with the ball, he must lower his body
2. When the defensive player gets to his man he should be in a good defensive stance with hands thrown back
3. Stay low and do not go for the shot fake
The following drills are designed to make you a better defensive player. Great defenders play with great intensity and desire and that is how these drills must be done. Improving foot speed and lateral movement is very difficult. It can only be accomplished with hard work and determination.

### Agility Drills
1. Jump Rope
2. Dot Drills
3. Line Drills
4. Complete the Square
5. Star Run
6. Ricochet Pickups
7. Rim Jumps
8. Barrier Jumps

### Stance Drill
1. Start by slapping the floor and assuming a good defensive stance. Knees should be bent, hands active, back straight, with heels off the ground.
2. Begin by holding this position for 30 seconds. Gradually increase the time until you hold your stance for two minutes.

### Foot Fire Drill
1. Begin by slapping the floor and assuming a good defensive stance.
2. Quickly move feet up and down while staying in your stance.
3. Begin by continuing the drill for 30 seconds. Slowly build up until you can go for two minutes.

**Note:** Break up the drill by adding quarter turns left and right. These turns should be done as quickly as possible.
Drills For Improvement

Agilities

Basketball is a game of quick movements. Summer workouts offer a tremendous opportunity to improve foot speed. To maximize potential, requires a player to be as quick as they can possibly be. Gains in quickness are only seen if these drills are done with great intensity. Agilities should be part of each individual workout. They can be done as a warm-up before shooting or may be extended to improve conditioning. The following list offers several drills which may be combined to construct an individual workout. It should consist of 10 to 15 minutes of intense work.

Jump Rope
1. Begin with 30 seconds of slow warm-up
2. Skip on both feet for 30 seconds with increasing intensity
3. Recover for 30 seconds
4. Skip on left foot for 30 seconds with increasing intensity
5. Recover for 30 seconds
6. Skip on right foot for 30 seconds with increasing intensity
7. Recover for 30 seconds
8. Alternate feet for 30 seconds with increasing intensity
9. Recover for 30 seconds

Note: This represents one set. Build up until you can complete three sets at high intensity

Dot Drills
Draw a 3ft by 3ft square with x's or dots on each corner and at the center. The spots are numbered as shown. Complete sets involve use of right, left, and both legs. Build up to three sets.

1. Figure 8
   a. Begin at spot 1
   b. Hop 1,2,4,3,5,6 then 6,5,3,4,2,1 (one rep)
   c. One set is 3 reps right, 3 reps left, and 3 reps with both feet

2. In & Out
   a. Begin at spot 1
   b. Hop 1,2,3,4,5,6 then 6,5,4,3,2,1 (one rep)
   c. One set is 3 reps right, 3 reps left, and 3 reps with both feet
Section Six
Individual Workouts

One of the great things about basketball is that it is a team game that can be worked on individually. If a player has the ability to push himself and practice with a purpose, they can improve as a player. Although it is important to play games when you have the opportunity, it is hard to work on your weaknesses in a scrimmage situation. To improve your shooting, you must spend time practicing your shot. With all the fundamental skills, improvement only comes through hard work. It is time to decide just how good you want to be.

Take time to record your workouts in a notebook. List the number of shots taken and the dribble moves and ball handling drills you are working on. Check your notebook occasionally for improvement and to be sure that you are not neglecting any important areas. In a few months, you will be able to look back and know how much time and effort you have invested in your dreams.