

A misconception has developed in the minds of basketball fans, coaches, and especially players that “Ball Handling” simply equates with fancy dribbling. The idea of “crossing” your defender or “breaking ankles” has been given an unworthy status of glory on the basketball court. The idea of making a defender look bad has trumped the outcome of making a play for many basketball enthusiasts and particularly young players. In this curriculum we seek to reverse the thinking that “Ball Handling” is having an arsenal of dribbling moves, and replace it with taking care of the basketball, reading the defense, and using good ball skills and footwork to create plays.

Taking Care of the Basketball

Simply put...taking care of the basketball means not turning the ball over. For youth players this can be attributed to travelling because of poor footwork, not protecting the ball while guarded, holding the ball incorrectly, and poor hand-eye coordination for catching, dribbling, or passing. Many of these skills are the foundation in which all offensive play is built upon. Once a player has a good understanding of these skills/concepts and can create good habits with them they are put on course to become a productive offensive player.

Triple Threat- This term has been used for ages in basketball circles to describe the offensive options one has from this position. Players should be able to quickly drive, shoot, or pass from this position. The key component to this position is hand placement on the ball. Many young players make the mistake of putting both hands on the side of the ball as shown below. Coaches be sure to take the time and ensure all player are placing their shooting hand behind the ball and their guide hand on the side. After hands are in the correct position, the rest of the body will follow more easily.

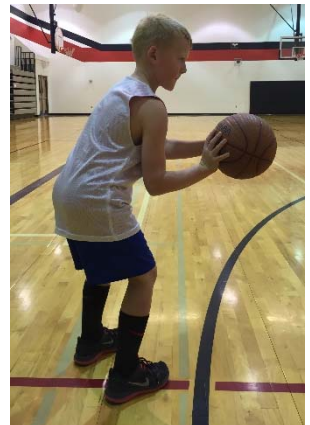


HAND PLACEMENT



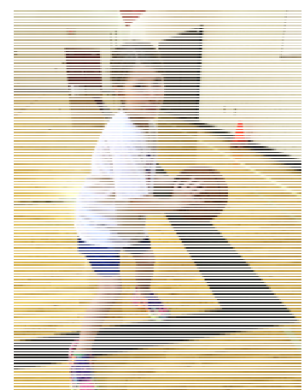
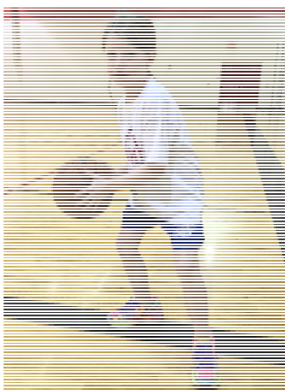
FRONT VIEW

- Feet slightly wider than shoulders
- Athletic stance: knees bent, hips down, chest up
- Ball is just above the thigh and in tight to the body
- Shooting hand is behind the ball like in the “U” position.



SIDE VIEW

Offensive Square- This term describes the movement of the ball of the offensive player when they are guarded. There are four main areas he/she will hold and protect the ball to keep it away from the defensive player, instead of turning his/her back to the defender and the court. The ball should be moved from point to point quickly and not taken through the center area (Bubble) where the defender has a chance to take the ball. The offensive player will also use his/her pivot foot to gain an advantage of position over the defender in order to make a ball fake, opportunity to drive, or pass.



Reading the Defender

Basketball is a game where opportunities and choices come up and disappear quickly. Young players often miss chances to make a play because they are so focused on running a designed play, passing to the assigned team mate, or dribbling to an area they are comfortable. This program is designed to help players read a defender and take advantage of a scoring opportunity. How many times have you watch youth basketball and seen a player being closely guarded, but holding the ball and waiting for another team mate to move to get open, all while never using his/her dribble. We want kids to learn early on that if a defender is guarding too closely he/she will take advantage and go past the defender. This is done by teaching players that plays are designed to create scoring opportunities. If an unexpected play that he/she is comfortable making arises, he/she can go for it.



Green Light- The offensive player has caught the ball with no defender, or the defender is far enough away that he/she has the opportunity to shoot or drive. If the offensive player has caught the pass in a good position, and is within an appropriate scoring range the player should take the shot. If the offensive player is not within a shooting range they should advance the ball to his/her shooting range, or until a defender does engage him/her. Of course if the player catches and there is another team mate with a greater scoring opportunity, the player should make the pass.



Yellow Light- The offensive player has caught the ball with a defender at an appropriate distance to where the offensive player does not have a shot opportunity or an advantage of position. In this situation, the offensive player should look to create an advantage of position by using ball fakes, and moving the ball around the offensive square. As the offensive player does this they must keep his/her eyes on the court looking for open team mates. If by using ball fakes and moving the ball around the offensive square, the defender moves to a Green light or Red light position the offensive player has gained an advantage and can make a play.



SHOT FAKE

DRIVE

JAB STEP

SHOOT





Red Light- The offensive player has caught the ball and is closely guarded by the defender. The offensive player has the advantage if they can stay in a strong offensive position. The tendency for young players is to shy away from the pressure, and turn his/her back to the defender and the court. Players should be instructed to use his/her pivot foot and step past the defender while ripping the ball high or low to gain an advantage in position. The offensive player will continue to attack until stopped by another defender or a pass and scoring opportunity arises.



Dribbling

This skill has become increasingly important in basketball as more and more players are required to handle the ball. It is encouraged that all players learn how to and improve on his/her dribbling skills regardless of what position they may play on the team. The emphasis with teaching dribbling is not the different dribbling patterns or moves that a player can perform (between the legs, behind the back), but the overall control the player has with the ball. Are they able to advance the ball up the floor quickly when unguarded? Are they able to change directions quickly? Are they able to get past a defender when closely guarded (red light)? Are they able to protect and take care of the ball while dribbling with a defender guarding them? These are the attributes that make up an effective dribbler and productive offensive player.

The points of emphasis when teaching dribbling begin also with starting in a good position, so always stress the triple threat position and the offensive square. Next players need to maintain good ball and body position while dribbling. Ball and body positions will change with what the offensive player is trying to do with the dribble. If they are advancing the ball up the floor quickly on a fast break, his/her body position will be higher and the ball will bounce higher and out in front of the body. If the offensive player is guarded by the defender, his/her body position will need to be lower and the ball will stay close to his/her body and away from the defender. Below are illustrations of the ball and body positions to look for depending on the purpose of the dribble. Be sure to only encourage dribbling when it serves a purpose.



Advancing the ball up the floor- Push the ball out in front of the body and keep the hand on top of the ball. The dribbler should keep the ball around the hip level, and be in a position that he/she is able to run, but also prepared to change directions.

Attacking the basket (w/ defenders around)- Keep the ball low and away from defenders by using good body position and the opposite arm up. The body should be in an athletic and balanced stance prepared to change directions and/or jump stop quickly, but also slightly leaned forward to promote acceleration.



Adjusting for a passing angle or shooting position- Similar to attacking the basket the ball needs to stay low and away from defenders. The body will still be in an athletic stance but not leaned forward as the player is preparing to make an accurate pass, shot, or ball fake.