



Defensive Skill Progression

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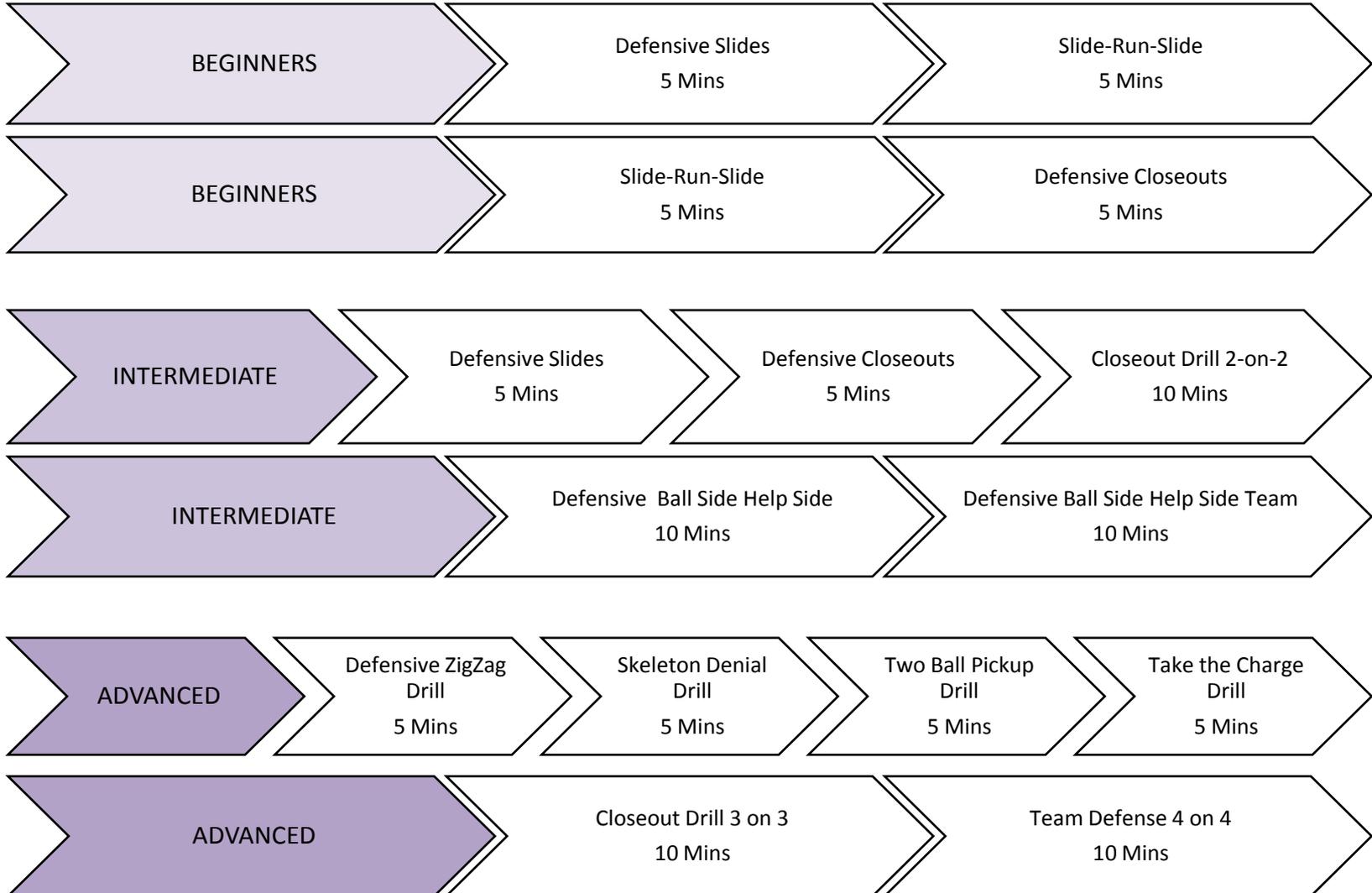
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Defensive Skill Progressions

Match the following skill progressions to the experience level of your team. If you are working with multiple skill levels, separate the kids into groups and run stations. Each station uses the skill progression that best matches their ability. All drills are explained inside this document, and demonstrated on video inside Module 12 and Module 13 of Total Basketball Skill Development.



DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS

KEYS TO GOOD DEFENSIVE PLAY (ATTACK):

- **Attitude:** Play hard every possession.
- **Teamwork:** Players must work together and be committed to using good technique.
- **Tools:** Players must have proper mindset, must be willing to use their body positioning, their eyes to see the ball, their feet to move to get into position.
- **Anticipation:** Players need to learn to anticipate what the other team is going to do and be ready to prevent it.
- **Concentration:** Players must focus on what their opponents are trying to do and be ready to take away their best moves.
- **Keep in Stance:** Staying in the defensive ready position will enable a player to adapt to whatever is happening on the court.

DEFENSIVE SLIDES

Purpose:

Players get in defensive position and slide to half court.

Setup:

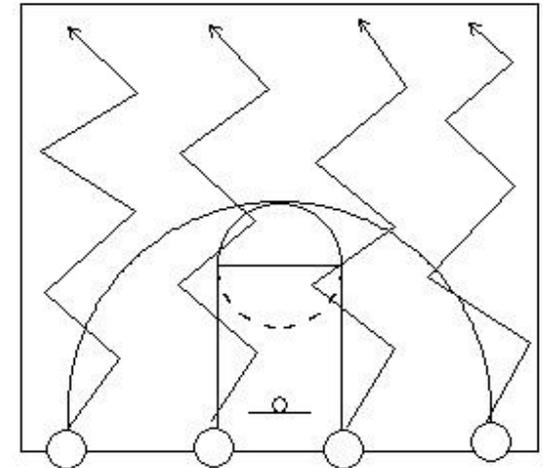
Four lines of players spaced about 12 to 15 feet apart along the baseline (first at 3-point line left corner, second at lane's edge, third at other lane's edge, fourth at three point line right corner).

Execution:

1. Coach says "ready."
2. Players get in defensive stance with knees bent and arms up.
3. Coach says "go."
4. Players slide in a zigzag pattern to half court.
5. When first group reaches free throw line extended, next group goes.
6. When all groups reach half court, players then do the same thing back to the baseline.

Coaching Tips:

- Watch for good form with front foot pointed in the direction of the slide and hands up.
- Players should keep head level and lead with their elbow.



Players slide side to side while in defensive stance.

SLIDE, RUN, SLIDE

Purpose:

Players learn to slide on defense and also to recover when beaten by an offensive player.

Setup:

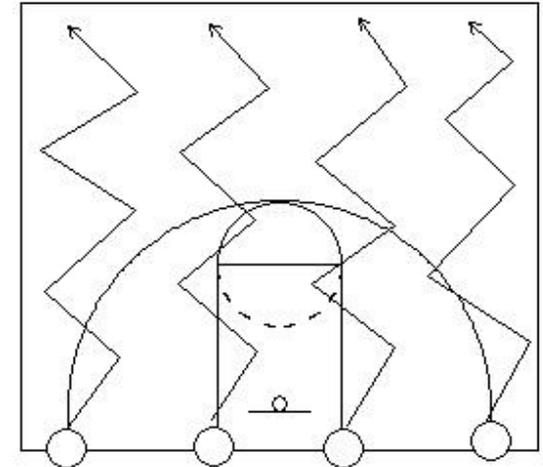
Four lines of players spaced about 12 to 15 feet apart along the baseline (first at 3-point line left corner, second at lane's edge, third at other lane's edge, fourth at three point line right corner).

Execution:

1. Coach says "ready."
2. Players get in defensive position with knees bent and arms up.
3. Coach says "go."
4. Players slide in a zigzag pattern, then sprint, then start sliding again. They go to half court.
5. When first group reaches free throw line extended, next group goes.
6. When all groups reach half court, players then do the same thing back to the baseline.

Coaching Tips:

- Players should stay in stance as much as possible. When beaten, they sprint to catch up and then immediately get back in their defensive stance.



In this drill, players slide, sprint to catch up and then slide again.

DEFENSIVE CLOSEOUTS

Purpose:

Players work on accomplishing one of the most challenging defensive tasks – going from an off-the-ball situation to an on-the-ball situation.

Setup:

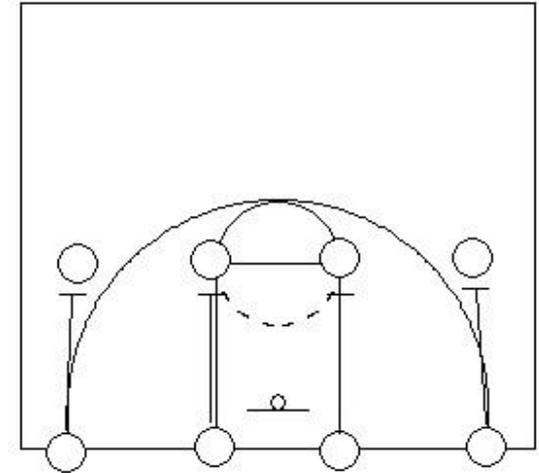
Four lines of players spaced about 12 to 15 feet apart along the baseline (first at 3-point line left corner, second at lane's edge, third at other lane's edge, fourth at three point line right corner).

Execution:

1. Coach says "ready."
2. Players get in defensive position with knees bent and arms up.
3. Coach says "go."
4. Players closeout on offensive players standing at free throw line extended.
5. Closeout players become the offensive players at free throw line and offensive players go to back of closeout line.

Coaching Tips:

- Objective here is to prevent the drive while still putting defensive pressure on the offensive player.
- Players sprint to half way, then slide with active feet. Hands are up.



Players work on their closeout skills in this line drill.

CLOSEOUT DRILL 2-ON-2

Purpose:

Players work on closing out in a 2-on-2 situation.

Setup:

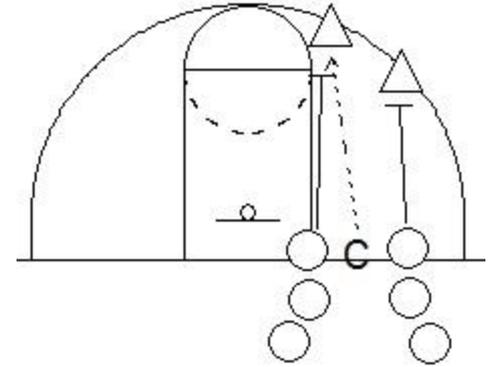
Two offensive players, two lines of defensive players at baseline. Coach stands at baseline with ball.

Execution:

1. Coach says “go” and throws the ball to one of the offensive players.
2. First player from two lines of defensive players on the baseline close out on the offensive players – one doing a ball closeout and one closing out to off-the-ball, help defense.
3. Offense tries to score a basket. Defense tries to prevent them from scoring.
4. Defense becomes offense and offense goes to back of defensive closeout lines.

Coaching Tips:

- Look for defenders to close out quickly but stay in good defensive position so that they can respond to the offensive players’ moves.



Players must closeout and prevent a score in a live ball situation.

CLOSEOUT DRILL 3-ON-3

Purpose:

Players work on closing out in a 3-on-3 situation.

Setup:

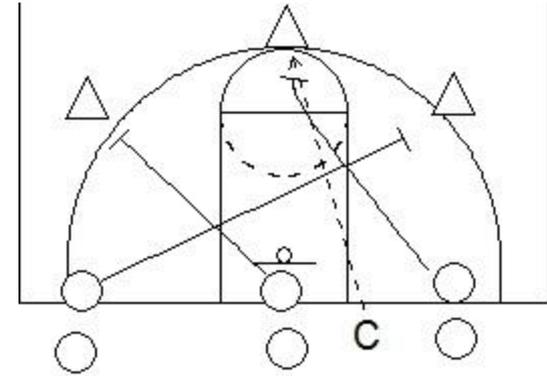
Three offensive players, three lines of defensive players at baseline. Coach stands at baseline with ball.

Execution:

1. Coach says “go” and throws the ball to one of the offensive players.
2. First player from three lines of defensive players on the baseline close out on the offensive players – one doing a ball closeout and the other two closing out to off-the-ball, help defense.
3. Offense tries to score a basket. Defense tries to prevent them from scoring.
4. Defense becomes offense and offense goes to back of defensive closeout lines.

Coaching Tips:

- The rule in this drill is that the defensive player cannot guard the offensive player in front of them, which requires them to communicate and recover.



Players close out to prevent a basket.

DEFENSIVE BALL SIDE – HELP SIDE

Purpose:

Players learn the fundamentals of playing ball side and help side defense.

Setup:

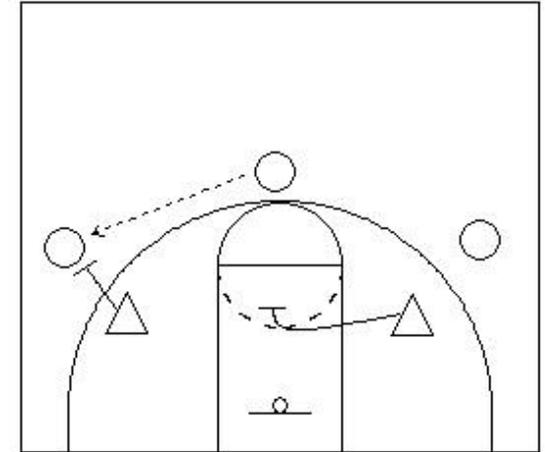
Two defensive players, three offensive players – a point and two wings. Defensive players guard the wings.

Execution:

1. Coach says “go.”
2. Point player passes to a wing and the defenders get in appropriate ball side and help side defensive position.
3. Ball side defender is up tight on the ball, help side defender dives down into the lane to protect against penetration and cutters.
4. Ball is worked to different areas of the court and players must respond accordingly using good defensive technique and positioning.

Coaching Tips:

- If ball is in center of court outside defenders should be in denial stance with a hand in the passing lane.



This drill forces players to work on their ball side and help side defensive positioning and techniques.

DEFENSIVE BALL SIDE – HELP SIDE TEAM

Purpose:

Players transition back and forth between playing ball side and help side defense.

Setup:

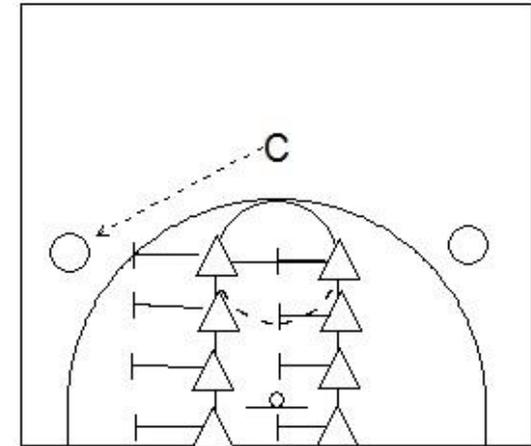
Team forms two lines in lane. Two players (or two coaches) join head coach on offense.

Execution:

1. Coach passes ball to wing.
2. Players on that side of lane play ball side defense.
3. Other line of players plays help side defense.
4. Offensive players move ball back and forth from wing to wing and defensive players adjust accordingly

Coaching Tips:

- Players should communicate as they move on defense.
- Offensive players should drive and shoot, forcing defenders to move to stop the drive and to block out.



Defenders go from ball side to help side defense as ball is moved around the perimeter.

TEAM DEFENSE 4-ON-4

Purpose:

Players work on defensive technique and concepts in a 4-on-4 situation.

Setup:

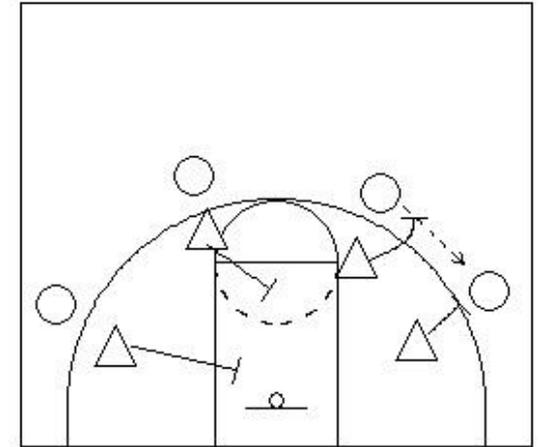
Four defenders, four offensive players.

Execution:

1. Offense passes ball around perimeter and also drives to put pressure on the defense.
2. No shooting to start.
3. Defense must react as the ball changes location.

Coaching Tips:

- Emphasize stance and positioning, particularly help side defenders sagging down to prevent penetration and close to the rim shots.
- This drill is run 4 on 4 so you can better see what all your defenders are doing – 5 on 5 adds more clutter and can make it more difficult. Focus on fundamentals and adherence to your team's defensive concepts.



Players practice their team's man to man defensive concepts in this 4-on-4 drill.

SKELETON DENIAL DRILL

Purpose:

Stresses essential defensive techniques.

Setup:

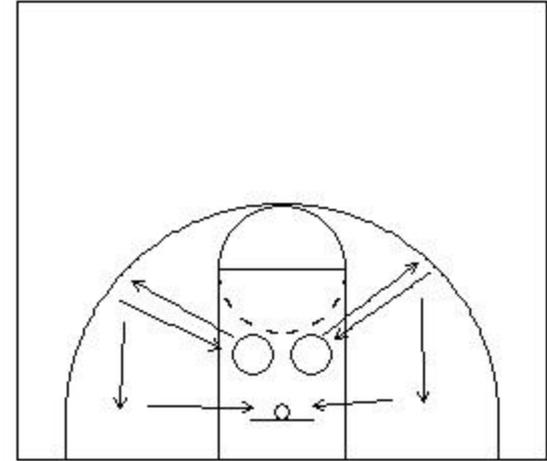
This drill can be run with one player, two players or the entire team.

Execution:

1. Two players get into help side defensive stance in the lane.
2. Coach says "go."
3. Players crossover into a denial stance and slide out to the 3-point line.
4. Players slide back to the lane and open.
5. Then they repeat the previous, crossing over and sliding to 3-point line, then sliding back and opening.
6. Now they close out to the 3-point line. Then play the driver to the baseline. Jump up and contest the shot and get the imaginary rebound.

Coaching Tips:

- Players should be denying the ball with short, choppy steps.
- On closeout, players should have hands high, hips low, weight back.



Players focus on a number of defensive skills in this drill, including: denial, closing out and contesting the shot.

DEFENSIVE ZIGZAG DRILL

Purpose:

Teaches players to closeout and then slide in proper defensive stance.

Setup:

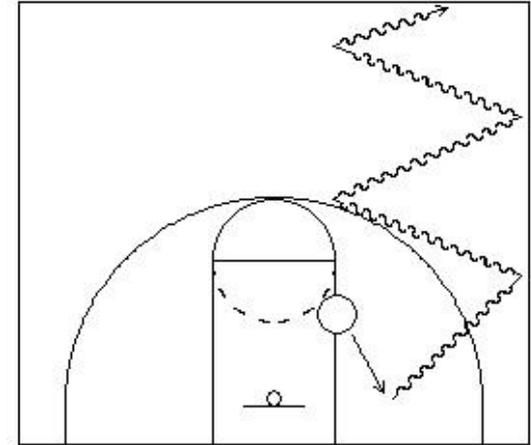
Can be run with one player or the full team.

Execution:

1. Coach says "go."
2. Player closes out on an imaginary shooter on the baseline, then slides back and forth from out-of-bounds line to edge of lane all the way to half court.

Coaching Tips:

- When players swing and change direction at out-of-bounds line and edge of lane, they should swing their elbow and leg back and really push off their plant foot.
- Player should have front foot pointed in the direction they are sliding.
- You can add variety to this drill by including an offensive player.



Player first closes out then slides from side to side in this defensive fundamental drill.

TWO-BALL PICKUP DEFENSIVE DRILL

Purpose:

Players work on sliding from side to side in a good defensive stance.

Setup:

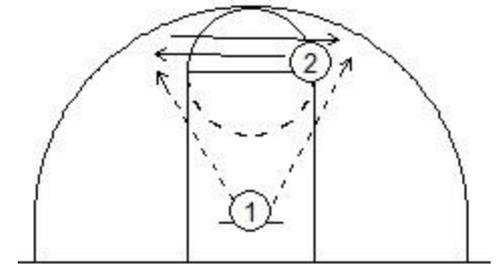
One player stands under the basket with two basketballs. Second player gets in defensive stance at the elbow.

Execution:

1. Player 1 under the basket rolls the ball to the side opposite to Player 2 on the elbow.
2. Player 2 slides over and picks up the ball and throws it back to Player 1.
3. When Player 2 picks up the ball, Player 1 rolls his second ball to the other side.
4. Player 2 slides over and picks up that ball.
5. Drill continues in this pattern.

Coaching Tips:

- To increase difficulty, have Player 1 roll the ball faster.



Player slides side to side to pick up the rolling basketball.

TAKE THE CHARGE DRILL

Purpose:

Defensive player learns how to take the charge.

Setup:

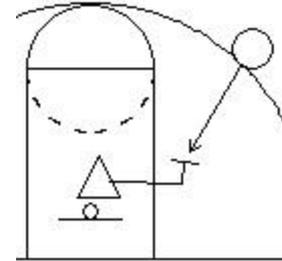
Player with ball on wing. Defensive player in the lane.

Execution:

1. Coach says "go."
2. Offensive player drives in at walking or one-quarter speed.
3. Defensive player moves outside of lane and gets in position to take charge.

Coaching Tips:

- Defensive player should fall on his butt first, tuck his chin into his chest and roll back onto the ground.



Defensive player learns to get into good position and fall properly when taking a charge.

GUARDING BALL SCREENS

Purpose:

Defensive players work on trapping and recovering when faced with a ball screen.

Setup:

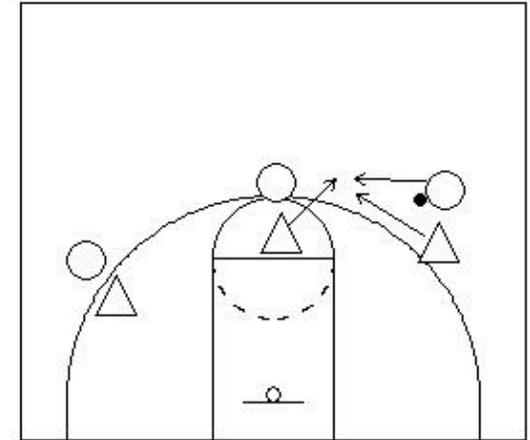
Three offensive players, three defensive players.

Execution:

1. The man guarding the screener must pop out and trap the ball with the on-ball defender, preventing the screen.
2. Players then recover to their original men.

Coaching Tips:

- Trappers can't let the offensive player split the double team.



In this scenario, the defender guarding the screener's number one job is to prevent the screen from ever happening.

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