

Shooting Drills

Shooting is a key basketball skill that is learned through repetition of proper techniques. Not all players become great shooters, but with good technique and plenty of practice, any player can develop into a good shooter. When teaching shooting, it is important to be aware of individual differences among players. Not all players have the strength or coordination necessary to use the same technique, but two players can use slightly different styles and still adhere to the basic principles of shooting. Habits form early in young players – it is essential that proper technique is ingrained in athletes at an early age. The concept here is for young shooters to learn the basic shooting principles and positive action necessary to allow them to develop their shooting ability and become better shooters as they mature.

Shooting is a fine motor skill and players must practice a great deal to become good shooters. Fortunately, most players enjoy shooting and gladly practice it on their own. However, practicing can be much more productive if players incorporate the following basic principles:

- Aim at the hoop – have a “quiet eye” on the target.
- Select an appropriate angle of release where the elbow finishes at forehead level.
- Use all joints that can be used – knees, elbows, and wrist.
- Incorporate hip extension to add power.
- Start from a balanced position – triple threat position.
- Practice. Practice. Practice.
- Take psychological factors into account – concentration, shot selection, and confidence.
- It is important for coaches to judge the following factors during the stages of an athlete’s shooting.

Shooting for K-2nd Grade

- Ready Position
- Hold ball with two hands—Make a “W” with hands
- Place ball at forehead with “Pizza Hand”
- Bend knees - “Sit in your invisible Chair”
- Shooting elbow connected to the knee
- “Push the ball up toward the sky and reach for the stars!”

Shooting for 3rd grade and older using the “B-E-E-F” acronym

Form shooting is done at a slow pace concentrating on achieving the perfect form. The movements are exaggerated for emphasis. You can also break it down further by concentrating on a specific body part i.e. wrist, foot, elbow. Following the “B-E-E-F” technique will help break down proper shooting form by emphasizing Balance, Eyes, Elbow, & Follow Through.

Introducing “B-E-E-F” techniques

- Balance - Player squares up to basket with toes pointed to hoop; feet shoulder width apart with knees flexed. (Note: When players are bending their knees, it is important to make sure their buttocks are down and back; bending knees with back straight and backside directly under torso is incorrect).
- Eyes – Eyes should be focused on target (basket); never leaving target during shot.

- Elbow/Hand placement – Extend shooting hand directly in front of you and then bend it 90 degrees (making an “L”) upward at the elbow; cup your shooting hand so that the ball fits in it with the guide hand guiding the ball in position. As the ball is raised up to the release point, guide hand fingers are pointed to the ceiling.
- Follow through – Release the ball off the fingers and push fingers through the ball while bringing the wrist through, to put some backspin on the ball. Follow through with the palm facing down; directing the ball into the basket. End with hand in the “cookie jar”.

Shooting Drills:

“Form Shooting” (All Grades) - Have players line up on a line on the court across from a partner. Each set of partners will have a ball. Using the BEEF concept, have players shoot the ball to each other focusing on balance, eyes on their target, elbow in and follow through. Have players focus on ending their shot with their elbow at eye level and extending their arm ending with a “floppy wrist” (hand in the cookie jar). This drill can be done individually on a wall or basket. Video available here.

“Bank Shot Shooting” (K - 2nd Grades) - Line kids up at the block of the lane line. Have each player shoot a shot from the block focusing on using the glass and the box on the shot. Have kids shoot for the upper corner of the box.

“Frog Shooting” (K - 2nd Grades) - In the early stages of teaching shooting progression, it is important to teach young players emphasis on the use of the legs. Perform a squat while picking up the ball from the ground. Place ten fingers on the ball gripping the ball only using the pads of the fingers. Raise the ball to the forehead at the same time pushing with your legs. The player should be able to look under the ball to see the target at release. This is to teach the proper activation of the shooting muscles. (Note: this should happen in a continuous motion. The children may sight the target by looking over the ball, but at the release you should encourage them to be looking under the ball. Power comes from the legs, finesse from the upper body.)

“Circuit Drill” (3rd-6th Grades) - Players must shoot 10 shots, one from each of the numbered areas, in sequence. The player with highest percentage wins. Shots 2 and 10 are lay ups. The player must rebound own shots.

“Tom’s Drill” (3rd-6th Grades) - The shooter starts out at either corner of the free throw lane, takes a shot and either slides from corner to corner, or from the corner to the outside. Rebounders can practice boxing out under the hoop. The rebounder who get the ball will pass the ball the next shooting spot.

“Competitive Shooting” (All Grades) - Split the players in half forming two teams. Choose a spot on the court to shoot from. Have shooters take a shot, get the rebound, then pass to the outlet. Shooters only get one shot. The first team to 10 wins.

“Jumpers” (3rd-6th Grades) - This drill is like the Competitive Shooting Drill, but a defender is added. The defender (X) waves a hand in the face of the shooters, but do not block the shot. The defender gets the rebound, passes to the outlet and goes to the back of the line. The shooter then goes on defense.

“Cone Drill” (All Grades) - Have players dribble up to the cone or spot on the court and shoot a jump shot. This forces them to go straight up. Make sure they are landing with feet shoulder width apart, providing a more solid base. This will also help when they start rebounding.

Teaching the Lay-Up

The lay-up is a shot that is taken close to the basket. Lay-ups should be worked on from both the right and left-hand sides. The lay-up is taken on the move, usually off the dribble or a pass. The name is derived from the action of shooting – that is, laying the ball off the backboard.

Power Lay-Up

The first specific layup that should be taught is the 2-foot lay-up. At the younger ages, teach players how to perform a “power lay-up” or a lay-up off a jump stop.

When teaching the power, emphasize the following:

- Dribble toward the hoop under control
- Take an angle to use the back board
- Come to a controlled jump stop
- Aim for the upper right corner of box
- Keep eye on the hoop

1 Foot Lay-Up

The 1-foot lay-up is a more complicated skill.

When teaching the one-foot lay-up, emphasize the following:

- By using the right hand on the right side and the left hand on the left side, players can use their body to protect the ball from the defender.
- To attain maximum height on the jump, players should jump off the foot on the side opposite the shooting hand.
- Players should convert forward movement into upward momentum by leaning back slightly
- dropping the hips and shortening the last two or three strides.
- To set up the takeoff foot, players usually take stutter steps during the last few dribbles or just before receiving a pass.
- Players should concentrate on learning to pick up the ball with both hands. dropping the hips, and shortening the last two or three strides.

It is recommended that you use the following teaching progression to teach the lay-up off the dribble:

- The One-Step Lay-up
- The Two-Step Lay-up
- The Three-Step Lay-up
- The One Dribble Lay-up
- The Complete Lay-up off the dribble

Wall Shooting

Players should have a basic level of proficiency with the one-handed set shot before starting to learn the one foot lay-up – especially when learning with their weak hand. Players can develop proficiency with

the weak hand by shooting one-handed set shots against a wall.

The One-Step Lay-Up Drill

- The player starts from just in front of the basket in the following stance:
- The feet are parallel and shoulder width apart.
- The knees are bent.
- The player is holding the ball; the shooting hand is behind the ball, and the offhand is on the side of the ball.
- The player concentrates on a point on the backboard.
- The player then takes a step with the inside foot (for example, the left foot on the right side) and shoots a lay-up.

Emphasize the following points:

- Step with the correct foot.
- Simultaneously jump and drive the opposite knee upward.
- Shoot with the correct hand using the correct arm motion.

The Two-Step Lay-Up Drill

To shoot a two-step lay-up, players back up one full step from the starting position for the one-step layup and assume the triple threat position. They then take two steps and jump off the correct foot for shooting a lay-up.

Emphasize the teaching points for the one-step lay-up and the following:

- To prepare for the jump, make the second step shorter than the first.
- Keep the ball in front – do not move it from side to side.

The Three-Step Lay-Up Drill

To shoot three-step lay-up, players position themselves three running steps from the basket (choosing a reference mark on the floor often ensures consistency). They then assume the starting position for the two-step lay-up and shoot a layup using three steps and no dribble. Shooting in this way is actually traveling, but it helps develop a running rhythm.

The One-Dribble Lay-Up Drill

This part of the teaching progression is identical to the three-step lay-up except that the player adds a dribble that coincides with the first step. The key points of this sequence are as follows:

- Dribble the ball with the outside hand (i.e. the left hand when doing a left-handed lay-up).
- The ball and the first step should hit the floor at the same time.
- Pick up the ball by letting it bounce up into the dribbling hand. Trap the ball with the off hand, thus forming a good shooting grip with the hands.

The Complete Lay-Up off the Dribble Drill

To perform the lay-up off the dribble, players need to be able to take stutter steps – to make it possible to arrive on the correct foot for shooting. Concentrate on jumping off the correct foot using the following progression:

- Dribble on the spot; then shoot a one-dribble lay-up.
- Start at about half-court, and dribble toward the basket at half to three-quarter speed to shoot a lay-up.

Lay-Up Drills:

“Two Line Lay-Ups” (All Grades) – Players form two lines, one on each side of the basket at about the 3pt line. Start with the balls on the right-hand side, have the players dribble in for lay-ups. As the layup is shot, a player from the other line rebounds and passes the ball to the next person in the lay-up line. Players then switch lines. Perform lay-ups from both sides.

“Ball Toss Lay-Ups” (All Grades) – Have players toss the balls to themselves, catch with a jump stop. The player then pivots, still in a triple-threat stance facing the basket and dribbles in for a lay-up.

“Moves on the Move” (All Grades) – Start players at half court with balls. A pylon or any object will be set up at the 3pt line of each side. Player dribbles towards pylon and executes the instructed cross over move and goes in for lay-up. Player then executes the same move on the other pylon going back the other way. As players improve, encourage them to go faster and harder.

“Under Pressure” (All Grades) - Place players in line at wing with ball. Coach will be near the low block as a mock defender with his or her hands up. On coach’s signal, the player will attack the basket off the dribble and attempt a lay-up under pressure.