

# TEACHING A CONCEPTUAL OFFENCE TECHNICAL CONCEPTS OF PLAY

---

Presented in this section is a step-by-step sequence for teaching players how to play the game. It is the foundation of all basketball played at the higher levels. Skipping these important skills and concepts to teach strategies and tactics can seriously harm the player's long-term development. Tactics work for a single game where fundamentals last for the player's entire career. It is not possible to teach the concepts of the offence in a single practice; it must be part of long-term program. An athlete's development will best improve through constant repetition and error detection and correction by the coach.

## Points to consider

### Learn how to Play with Fun

Players today have different experiences than when many coaches were growing up. In this generation, they have cell phones, computers, social media etc. If the practice does not have an element of fun, players will often not come back. Play and fun are important elements and crucial if the players are going to stay with it for a long time.

### Teach how to Play the Game (Fun and Evaluation of the Game)

Make use of fun competitive games that challenge the players to think and be active early in practice. These games do not have anything to do with basketball (i.e. tag-type games). By their very nature they force the players to learn how to compete and conjure up a strategy on how to win the game. It also sets a positive tone for the practice that can last the rest of the session.

### Realistic Analysis and Technical Expectation

The coach must be realistic in their expectations for the team. The coach must know the ability level of the team. If the ability is not strong, there is no sense forcing the players into a higher level of complexity. For example, if players cannot dribble, pass and shoot layups using both hands, it is pointless to introduce complex strategies such as ball screens to the players. The coach can be realistic by **choosing a technical program that fits the team**. Too often coaches choose a system of play based on:

- What they did as a player
- A coaching resource from a high-level coach (book, website, DVD, etc.)
- Watching high level competition on TV (NCAA, NBA, etc.)

Coaches need to understand the stage of development that their players are participating. The system of play needs to be based on **simple concepts that can be adapted to the level of the team**. Fundamental skills and principles of play will be instilled in the player for their career. Teaching tactics last only for one game. For example, when a coach of younger players teaches the defence to sag off in a zone, because the players on the other team cannot shoot, the coach is teaching a tactic that works only for the short term. The coach

is not preparing the players for the future when players will be able to shoot an outside shot with efficiency. This may be the very next game.

### **Fundamental Teaching with Global Method (Analysis Later)**

Start with the important general concepts when teaching young players. Over-analysis and concentrating on too many details harms the young player's development. The K.I.S.S. (Keep It Short and Simple) principle is still an effective teaching methodology. In addition, young players require a good model of what the skill should look-like so they can slowly work to perfect the skill on their own. They also need to understand why they are doing the skill in a certain way. This all helps in the learning process. Here, the first focus is to concentrate on the use of the player's feet. When learning any fundamental skill for the first time, players need to concentrate on what the feet should do first.

### **Exercise Decision Making Without Analysis**

Young players need to make decisions as to when to use the skill or concept. This should be done in a positive learning environment. They require multiple repetitions in drills so that the proper cues for making the decision can be developed. At first the coach will act as a guide to assist in the decision-making process. If using players at first to guide, they may not have the understanding and competency to give a good read for their teammate. Again, over-analysis during the decision-making process can confuse and frustrate the learner.

### **Exercise and Drills of Game Situation**

Players learn to play the game by playing the game. To develop a deeper understanding of the concepts and skills players need to apply these in game situations. These situations need to be **easy to understand and execute**.

The coach of young players needs to teach skills and concepts in a way that enables the players to:

- Understand why they are doing the skill
- How and what to do
- When to do the skill

This is best conveyed through simple rules of play. Progressively, over time, the coach will load and refine the rules of play to guide the player's development. For example, instead of giving the players a set play to run, the coach should use simple offensive rules:

- If someone is open pass the ball
- Two dribble maximum on offence in the half-court
- Think shot, then pass, then drive when receiving the ball
- Catch the ball where it can be an offensive threat

### **70% Full-court and 30% Half-court**

Players at this stage of development need to learn to play through the transition from offence to defence and defence to offence. The majority of the scoring will occur out of advantage situations created through transition. For this reason:

- Players on offence need to learn how to maintain and make use of these one-second advantages created through transition.
- Players on defence need to learn how to prevent these advantages from occurring in transition and recover.

Asking players to run elaborate half-court offences with multiple passes and actions is futile and will only lead to frustration for the coach and players. The game is played in a very up and down manner with one or two passes before a shot is attempted.

### **Progressive Teaching Method (Coach Guide the Defence)**

The coach must progressively teach skill development through various phases— starting with an introductory phase, where the general model is developed by practicing on air. In the second phase, the coach guides the decision making and execution of the skill by acting as a guided defender. In the third phase, the skill is applied in a one-on-one situation versus live defence. In the final phase, the skill is applied to game-like situations. By teaching skills and concepts in this systematic progressive approach, the coach can ensure that the players develop a deeper understanding of the skill or concept.

### **Mentality Drills to Stimulate Pride and Competition**

By starting drills in situations that require the players to think, anticipate and react quickly, the coach increases the player's deeper understand of the concepts of the game and how to apply them. This is also a way that the coach can add an element of fun to practice. For example, instead of starting a drill where the players play three-on-three, from a static start, the coach starts the drill by having one player try to save the ball from going out of bounds.

### **Ball-handling (Individually and with Partner)**

All players need to learn to handle the ball. Being able to handle the ball, with the eyes up, versus pressure and equally with both hands, is one of the most important skills a coach needs to impart to young players. This can be accomplished by **using the left hand (or left side of the court) on every experience**. By starting drills on the left side it places players in situations where they must use their left hand. The right hand will also develop in these situations. The opposite is not also true.