

ZONE ATTACK

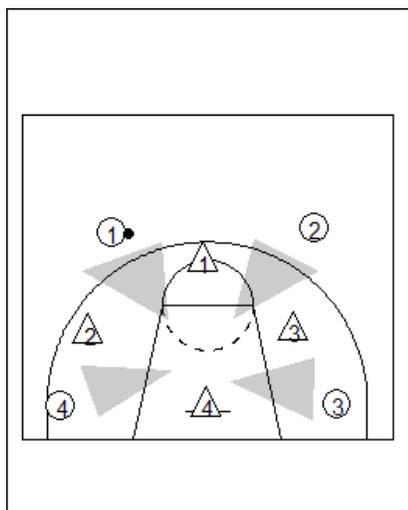
The following is a conceptual approach to teaching zone offence.

Objective

1. Increase the offensive player's ability to read the defence.
2. Improve the decision-making skills of the offence.
3. Increase and improve the skills needed for attacking a zone defence.

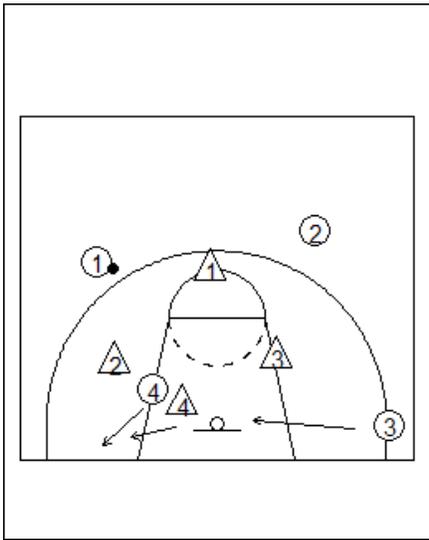
Key points:

- Teach the concepts using four-on-four initially – more space and more touches gives the offence an advantage
- Flow into the action
- One concept at a time
- Use drills and games approach
- Concepts versus strategy



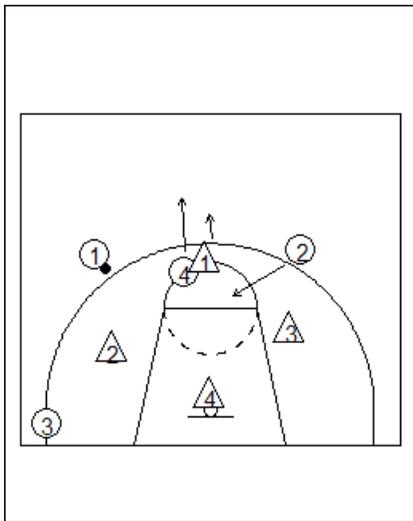
Concept 1 – Spacing

In this scenario, players are looking to get into the gaps and seams. The offensive players read to see if the zone is an odd or even front. The Perimeter players position themselves in the gaps and this will cause confusion as to who will guard the offensive player. In addition, inside players look to seal a defender to create a seam or to pop to space to aid in ball movement and create bigger gaps and seams.



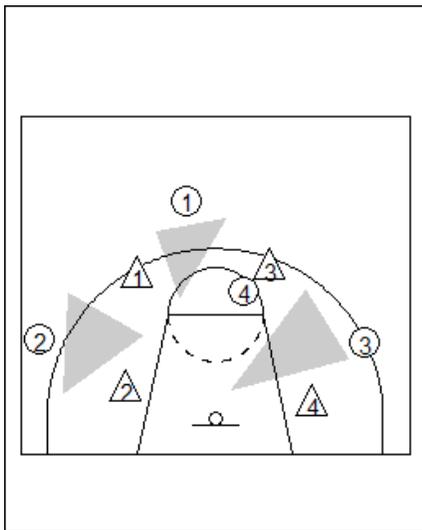
Odd Front Zone with a Low Post

Player Four looks to seal the bottom of the zone to create a gap and a seam. If *Player Four* is covered, they can pop to the short corner to drag the defender. This creates a seam or gap that another player can use for an advantage.



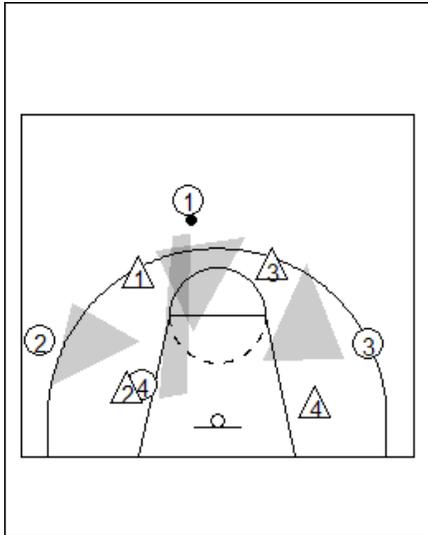
Odd Front Zone with a High Post

The concept is the same as previous but the post seals one of the defenders to create a seam for them or to make a bigger gap for the perimeter. *Player Four* can also pop to pull a defender or to aid in ball reversals.



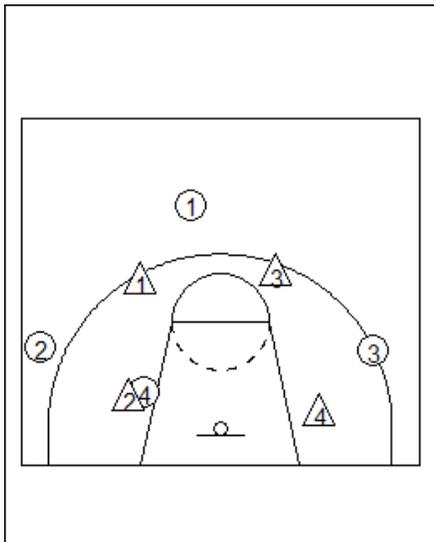
Even Front Zone

The perimeter players position themselves in the gaps. *Player Four* (the high post player) looks to seal one of the top defensive players creating a seam. The high post player should not start in the middle of the floor as it takes away the drive line for the guard.



Low Post Sealing Against an Even Zone

Player Four seals the bottom player of the zone to create a seam in which to receive a pass. In addition, *Player Four* can step to the short corner to enlarge the gaps and seams.



Concept 1 – Games Approach

The first scenario is to play four-on-four against odd and even front zones. The score is multiplied by the amount of ball movement away from or to the ball. The players are not allowed to cut or dribble (lots of fake passes) and the posts are working on the seal and pop. The idea is to create confusion in the defenders.

Players should learn to position themselves where they can receive passes by moving in and out and up and down in the gaps and seam. They always need to be ready to shoot, should they find an open opportunity.

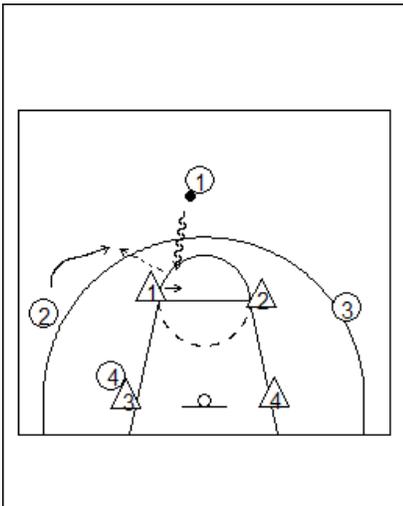
Concept 2 –Penetration

Penetrating is important to collapse and distort the shape of the zone. There are three types of penetration dribbles:

1. Freeze dribble - used to force a defender to stay in one area
2. Lateral dribble - use to pull a defender out of the area being defended
3. Attack dribble – where the basket is attacked.

In addition, penetration can be made with passing. A good zone offence should have a mixture of perimeter passes and penetrating passes into the zone.

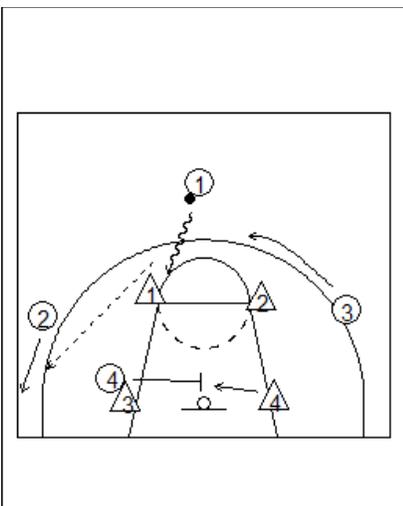
Lastly, penetration also occurs with cutting – especially vertical cuts that attack the basket. An important concept for players is to attack an open basket; if there is an open line between the player and the basket they should take it.



Freeze Dribble

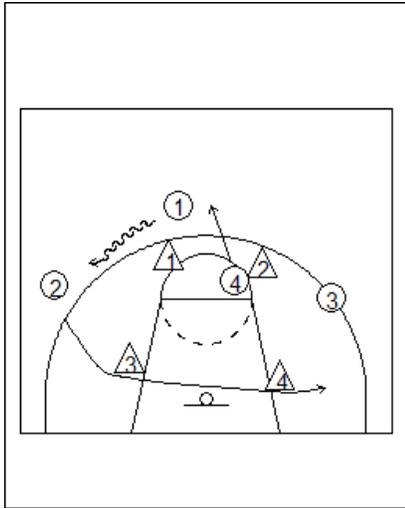
Perimeter players should penetrate at the inside foot of the next defender to freeze them and create a shot for the next player.

In this scenario, the post attempts to seal in the next defender which allows the perimeter to slide or rotate and provide an open shot. If *Player Two* rotates behind, it forces a long recovery for the next player in the zone.



Perimeter Player Slides

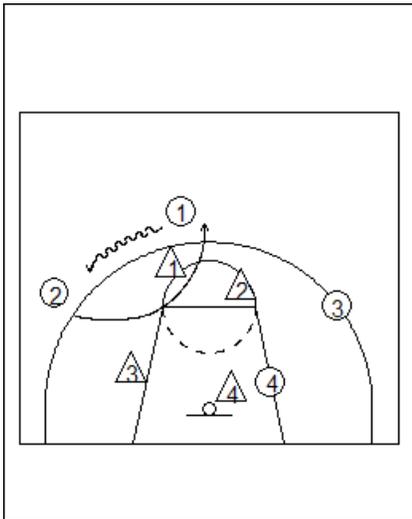
Using a freeze dribble is often effective to isolate a defender in the zone. In this scenario *Defender One* is vulnerable if *Player Two* slides and *Player Four* screens the next defender and then releases to seal the next defender. This is an effective way to get a post-up against the zone.



Dribble Pushes and Pulls

A dribble push is when a perimeter player dribbles at the next offensive player. The purpose is to pull a zone defender out of position. The player dribbled at may run through the zone or shallow-cut to replace the dribbler. The player who is being dribbled away from is pulled.

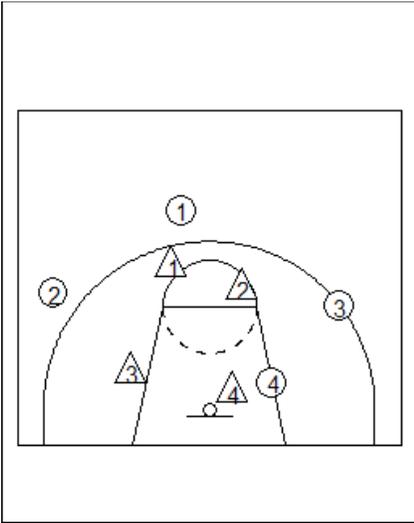
In this scenario, *Player One* dribbles at *Player Two*, pulling *Defender One* out of position. *Player Four* then pops out behind to fill the space vacated by *Player One* and *Player Two* runs through to create an overload. It is important to read how the zone defends. If the defender stays with the dribble, the player being pulled should be opened and if the defence bumps the player being pushed on the reversal should be found.



In this scenario, *Player One* dribbles at *Player Two* who uses a shallow cut to fill the spot vacated by *Player One*. Meanwhile, *Player Four* seals in the zone.

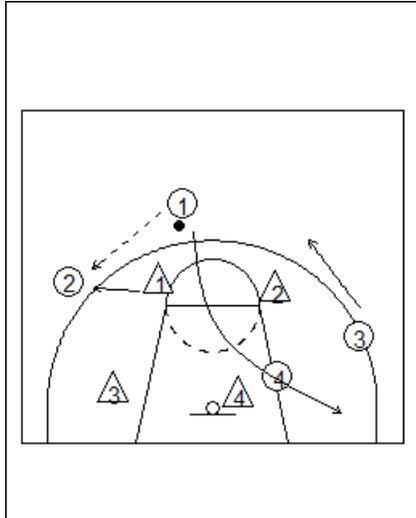
Concept 2 – Games Approach

This scenario is the same as previous but the players go four-on-four and dribbling is added so players can freeze or push-pull. The drill can also be loaded with penetrating and rotating.

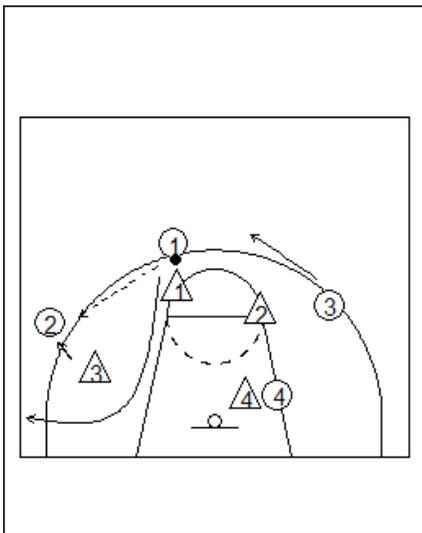


Concept 3 – Cutting

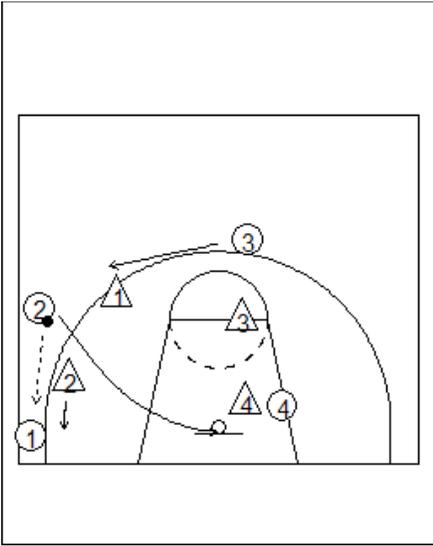
Cutting can be used to confuse the zone or overload one side. The key is to be aware of which defender is guarding the players in the zone – at the top, the first wing pass, the post, the skip, etc. It is important to know this information as it will influence the type of cuts players make.



If the top defender guards the wing player the ball should be reversed. The top player then cuts away.

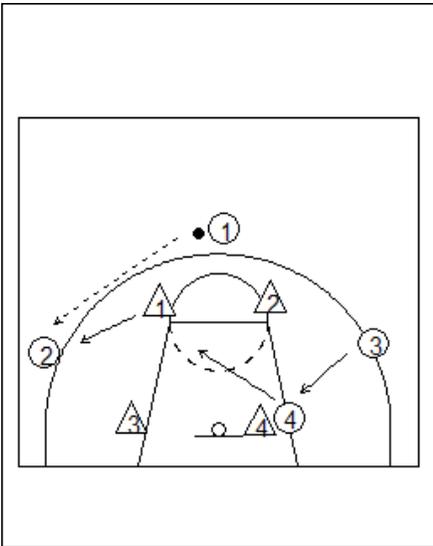


If the bottom player guards the ball, the top player looks to cut to the ball-side corner. These cuts work very well with the penetration principles.



Pass to the Corner

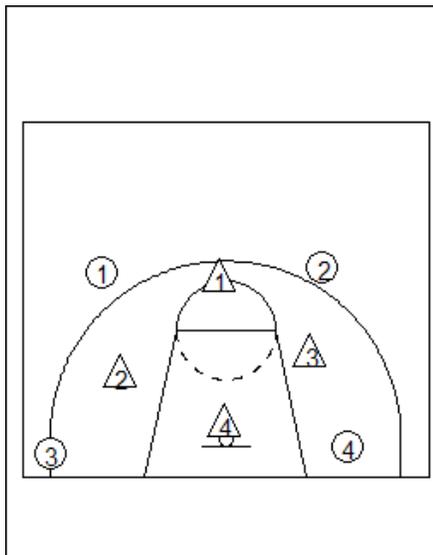
If the defence attempts to bump, it is ideal to cut after passing to the corner.



Fill a Spot Someone Just Left

An additional cutting concept is to do so behind the defence into a space vacated by a defender. A second offensive player fills the spot vacated by the first offensive player. This type of action can cause confusion for the defence.

In this scenario, *Player Four* cuts to the high post when *Defender One* moves to defend the ball. This provides the opportunity for *Player Three* to cut behind *Player Four's* cut; looking for the diagonal when *Defender Four* moves with the cut.

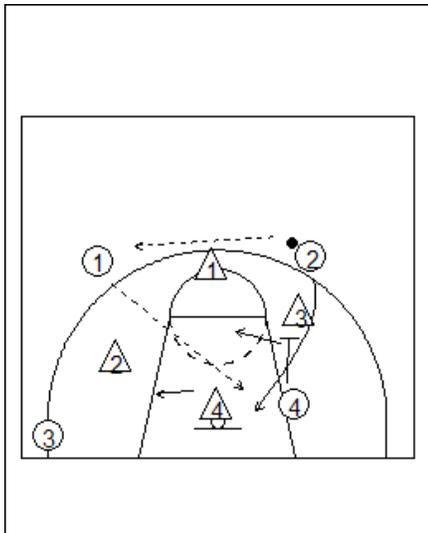


Concept 3 – Games Approach

This scenario has the same rules as previously with the addition of cutting. The key is to read the defence to see who is guarding the first pass. Pulls, freezes and pushes are used in combination with the cuts.

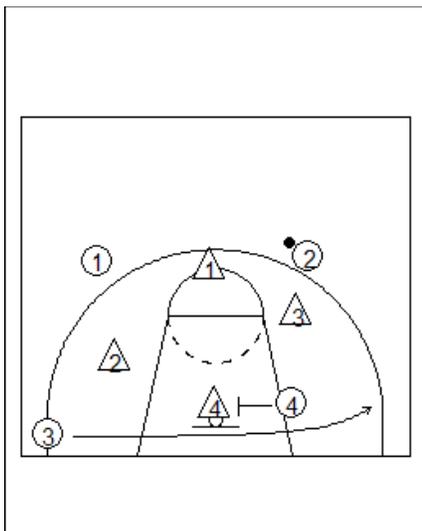
Concept 4 – Screening/Picking

With this concept, screens and picks are used to create holes in the zone as it is difficult for the defence to use hedging and switching to defend.



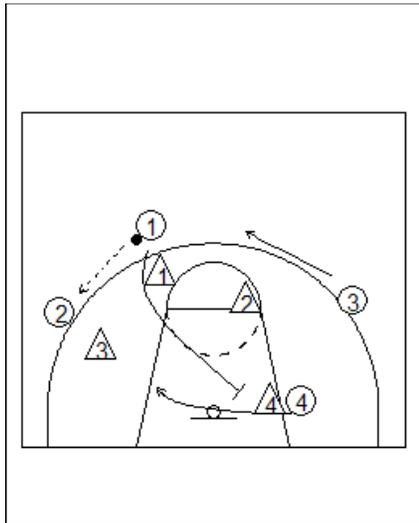
Back Screen (One)

In this scenario, *Player Four* sets a back screen on *Defender Three* to allow for *Player Two* to cut to the basket.



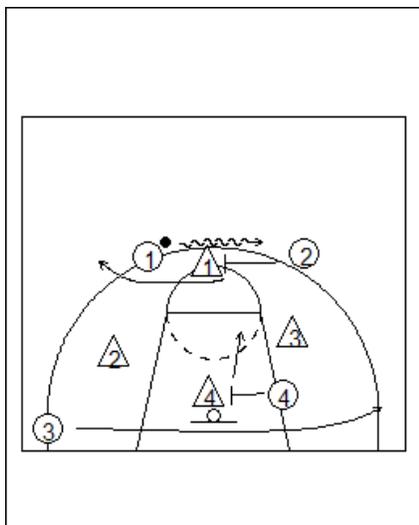
Back Screen (Two)

Player Four screens for *Player Three* to run the baseline.



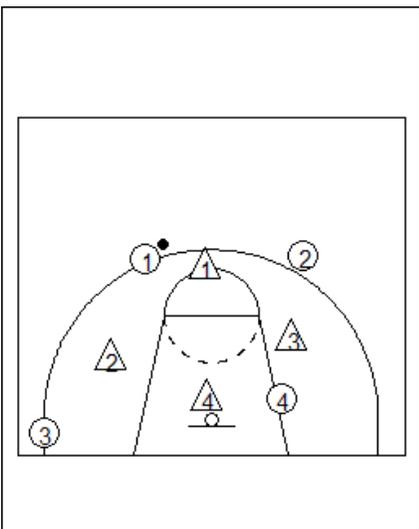
Back Screen (Three)

After passing to *Player Two*, *Player One* flows through the key and centre-screens for *Player Four*.



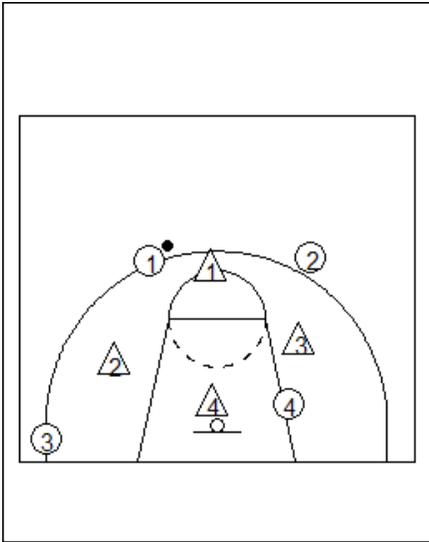
Back Screen (Four)

Player Two sets a pick for *Player One* at the same time *Player Four* screens for *Player Three* along the baseline.



Concept 4 – Games Approach

The same rules as previously apply but screens and picks are added. This drill should see players go through a perimeter screen for the interior on cuts, interior screens for the perimeter to cut, perimeter picking the ball (run to spot) and interior picks on the ball (roll).

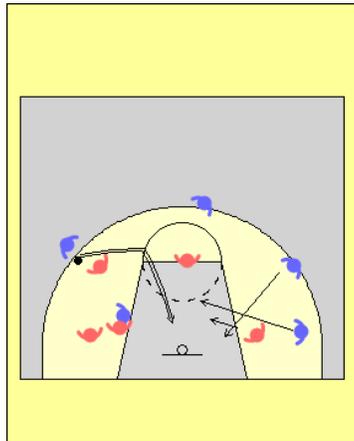


Basic Rules

This drill sets a standard for basic rules – interior player spends two seconds in, two seconds out and perimeter players penetrate, rotate and pass.

Zone offence – other points to points to consider

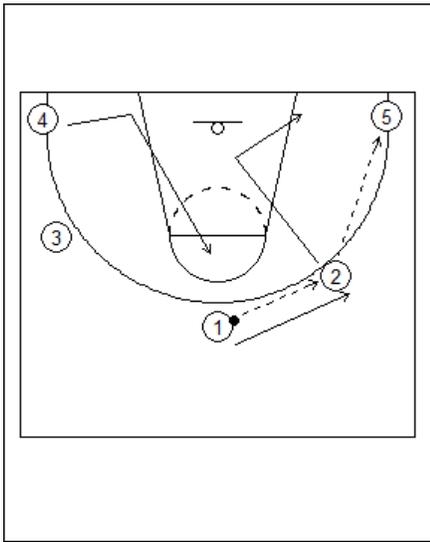
- The coach should control who defends their players. The offence gets to position themselves against the defender of their choice.
- What is the shape of the zone, what are the slides, who covers where, odd or even front, what is the spacing, where are the gaps and seams, where is an opportunity to seal?
- Pass fakes, shot fakes
- Rebounding. Make use of a duck and dive to create a weak-side rebound.



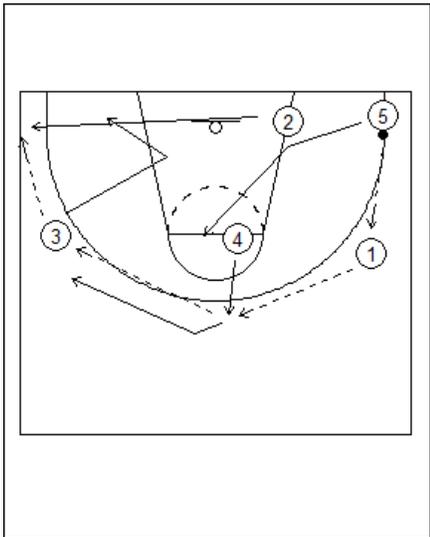
- Screen or seal the zone—centre screen, seal, release
- Dribble penetration – freeze, force a defender to move, pull a defender, make a defender guard the ball
- Overload – away, pop, stacks
- Player movement – fill the spot someone just left
- Attack behind – cut the back of the head – Russian spot
- Passing—penetrating passes, reversal passes – be in position to make the next pass – skip (flare screen)

Simple Zone Attack

When coaches see a zone for the first time they often fall into the trap of assigning players permanent positions. Here is a simple zone offence that allows for players to play multiple positions. As stated before it is important that players learn the skills and concepts behind the system and not just the system.



The offence starts with five perimeter players. The ball is moved around the outside to the corner. The wing player cuts to the ball-side of the basket and out to the short corner. The opposite corner cuts to the high post. The player on the top slides to fill the wing. The offence has now overloaded the zone.



The ball is reversed. The player in the short corner follows the ball and becomes the corner on the reversal. The high post steps out to become the new top player. Once the ball is passed to the corner the same cutting action occurs.