

5.3 SMALL SIDED GAMES - 3X3

BENEFIT OF "SMALL SIDED" GAMES

The modified rules discussed earlier can be applied in the traditional format of the game – using a full basketball court and with 5 players from each team on the court at a time.

Coaches should also consider using "small sided" games with young players as a way to increase their development. In either 3x3 (3 players on the court for each team) or 4x4 (4 players on court for each team) players get more opportunities to have the ball and accordingly there are more opportunities for them to practice the skills of the game.

Another advantage of "small sided" games is that there is more "space" on the court (as there are not as many players), which provides more opportunities for players to drive to the basket and to see open team mates if they are under defensive pressure.

3X3

3x3 is growing in popularity for players of all ages and there is now a World Tour and World Championships for 3x3 basketball². 3x3 is regarded as the number one urban sport in the world and provides an excellent opportunity to introduce new people to basketball. 3x3 has quickly become a recognized "discipline" of basketball, very similarly to Beach Volleyball and its relationship to Volleyball.

However, we are discussing here the benefits of using a 3x3 format to teach and develop young players not as part of an "elite pathway".

Benefits of using 3x3 for development are:

1. Emphasis on 1x1 skills
2. Develop understanding of "space" and "movement"
3. Develop understanding of man to man defensive positioning
4. "More touches" – more involvement in the play

² For more information on FIBA 3x3 events see www.fiba.com/3x3 or www.3x3planet.com

EMPHASIS ON 1X1 SKILLS

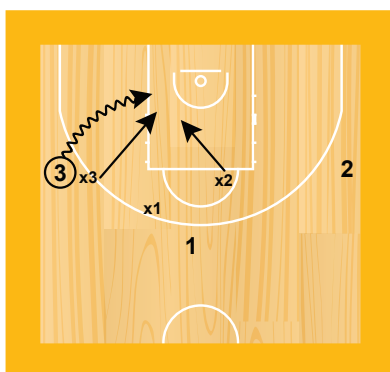
Earlier we indicated that Zone Defence (in the quarter court) should not be allowed until the U16 age group. The reason for this is that the zone defence (particularly with young players) tends to:

- limit opportunities to drive to the basket (as there are 2 or 3 defenders in position at the keyway);
- limit opportunities to pass to players cutting into the key (as there are 2 or 3 defenders in the keyway, young players often struggle to “see” the pass or to make the pass);

- force players to shoot from outside before they have developed the strength and technique to do so.

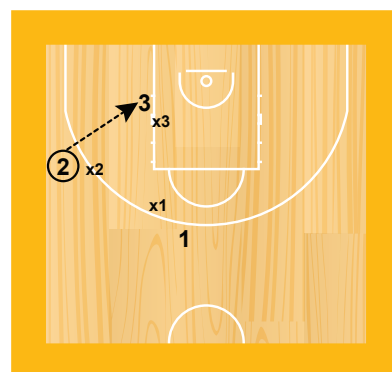
By having teams play “man to man” defence provides greater opportunity for offensive players as there will often be less defenders in position directly near the basket.

Similarly, the use of 3x3 provides more scope for players to develop their individual skills, both offensively and defensively. Some examples of this are:

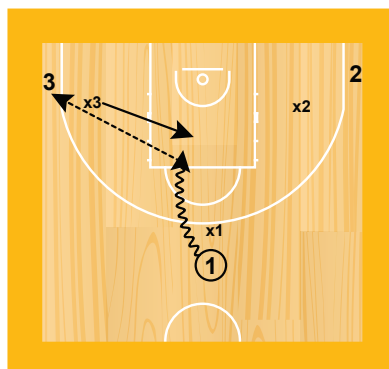


With players spaced widely, there is more opportunity for an offensive player to drive.

For example, if 3 is able to beat their opponent they can attack the basket. x2 may be in a position to help, but this would leave an open pass to 2.

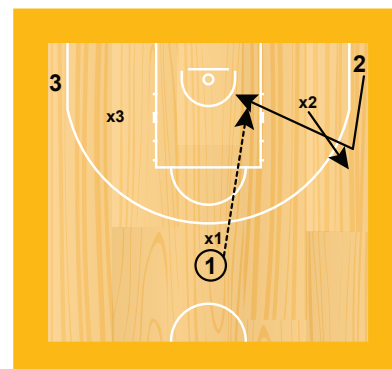


Similarly, as 3 receives the ball, neither x1 nor x2 is in a position to help so 3 has more opportunity to play.



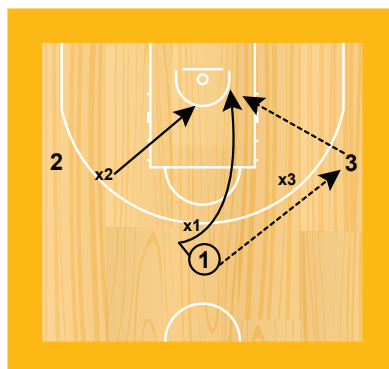
Again, with good spacing between the offensive players, 1 has a good opportunity to drive to the basket.

If x3 moves to help, it creates an easy pass to 3.

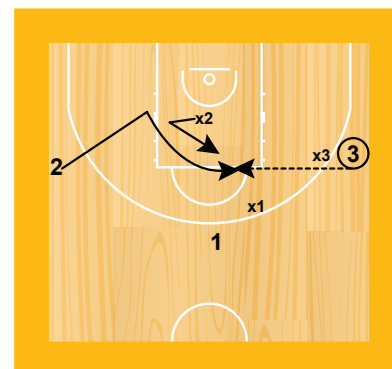


The good offensive spacing on the perimeter also provides opportunities for players to cut.

Here O2 cuts toward the ball and then "back door" cuts to the basket.



3x3 spacing gives greater opportunity for a "pass and cut", because x2 is unlikely to have moved into a position to guard 1 as they cut to the basket.



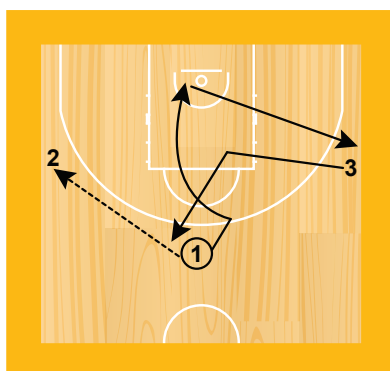
Spacing on the perimeter provides an opportunity for the defence to practice a "split line" position (x2). This provides more room for 2 to cut into the keyway.

DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING OF "SPACE" AND "MOVEMENT"

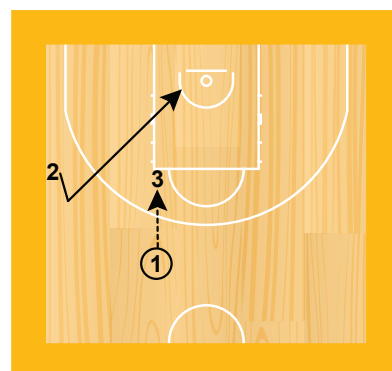
As shown in the examples earlier, 3x3 provides an excellent opportunity for players to learn, and practice, basic principles of motion offence such as:

- pass and cut;
- pass, cut and replace;
- "flash cut" to the ball;
- "back cuts" when overplayed by the defence.

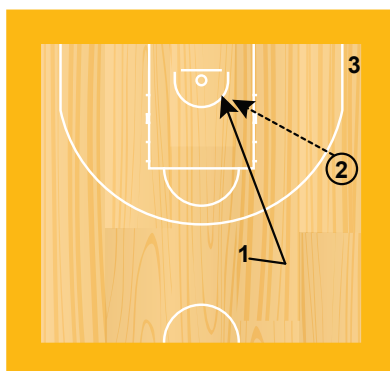
PASS, CUT & REPLACE



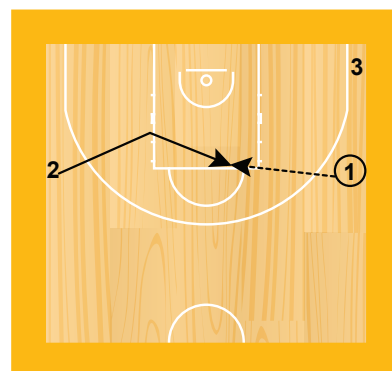
BACK DOOR CUT



BACK DOOR CUT

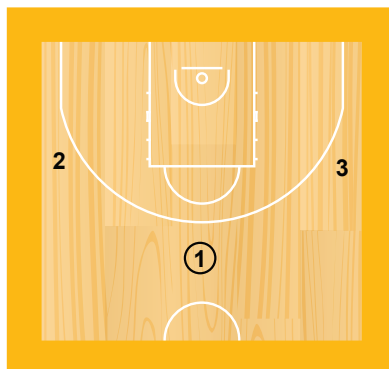


FLASH CUT



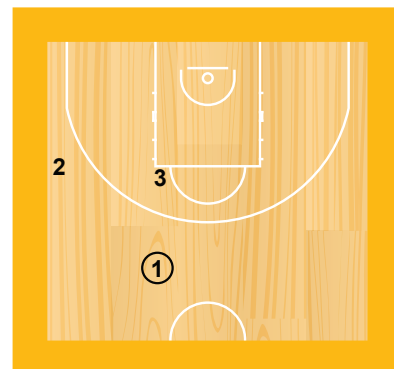
Young players in particular will commonly move closer to the ball instead of “spacing” themselves around the court.

Various alignments can be used in 3x3, which will help to emphasise good spacing, in line with “motion offence” principles that are fundamental to good team play.



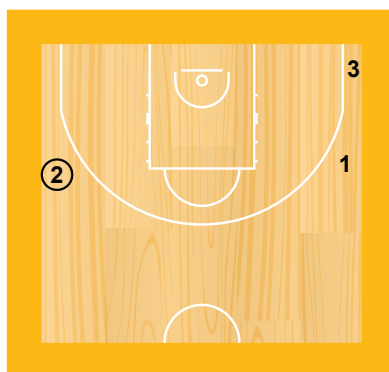
This alignment works well:

- Pass and cut;
- Back door cuts;
- Driving from the wing.



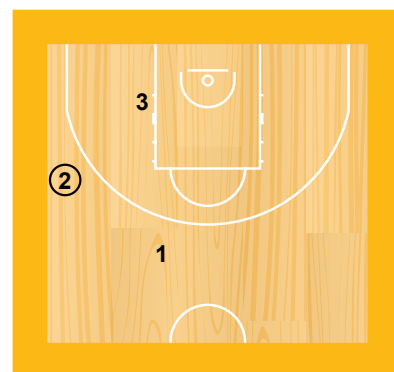
This alignment works well:

- Back door cuts;
- High Post practice;



This alignment works well:

- Flash Cuts;
- Back door Cuts;
- Driving from the wing;
- “Drive and dish”;



This alignment works well:

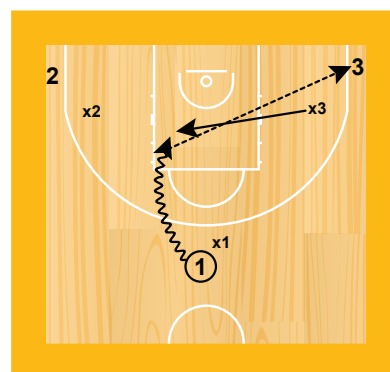
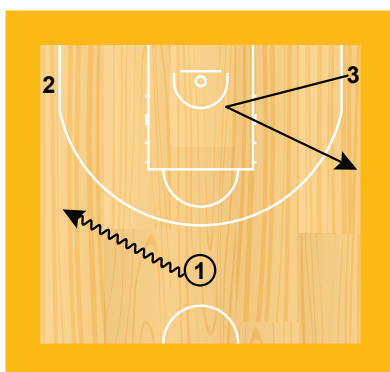
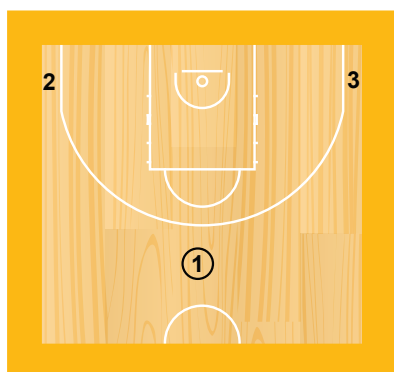
- Low Post practice;
- Back door cut

One of the reasons that young players will often “crowd” the ball (or move toward it) is that they can only confidently throw the ball a short distance so that they get closer and closer to the ball in the hope of being passed the ball.

The initial alignment shown below (player with the ball at the top of the key and the other two players in the “deep corners”) provides great opportunity for players to beat their opponent and drive to the basket as there may be little help defence.

The drawback of this alignment is that the distance between players is too great for them to be able to pass – however it does provide an opportunity to either cut or to remain in position to receive a pass from a player driving to the basket.

In whatever alignments that are used, coaches should emphasise to players the need to move with “purpose”. Rarely, should a player cut and then stand still. The principles of “motion offence” should be applied in 3x3.



This spacing is challenging for young players as the distance to pass is large. 2 and 3 are also not in a good position for a lay-up as it is hard to use the basket.

Whilst this alignment is common with more senior players it should be used sparingly with younger players.

1 does have a good opportunity to drive or to adjust their position using a dribble entry.

3 cuts and then moves back to a perimeter position if they do not initially get the ball.

If 1 drives to the basket, it provides an opportunity for 3 to receive a pass if their defender goes to help.

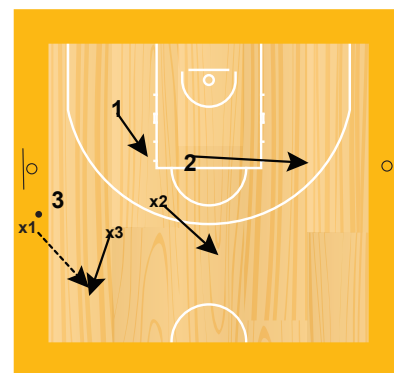
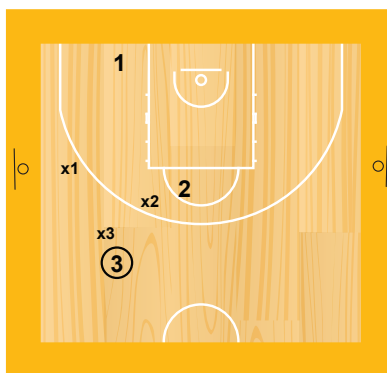
USING 3X3 WITH TRANSITION

In international 3x3, the game is played on a half court with one basket only, however with young players it is important that they also experience the transition from "offence to defence" in a full court context.

This can obviously be done on a full sized court, although with very young players that can be a significant distance, particularly with only 3 players on a side.

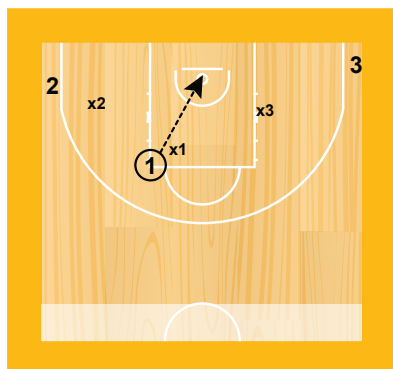
However, if a court has "side baskets", then 3x3 can be used very successfully playing across a half court, with baskets at each end. In this format, basic principles that apply in full court basketball can be applied, such as:

- Defending "Basket" and then "Ball" in transition;
- Turning or Channelling the dribbler;
- Trapping the ball as it crosses enters the front court
- Passing the ball ahead (rather than dribbling full court)
- Running wide "lanes"
- "Driving Lane" and "Passing Lane" principles of 2x1

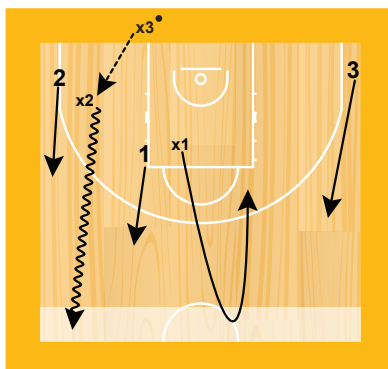


If there is only a half court available, then coaches can simulate "transition" by including a rule that on any change in position (whether a score, defensive rebound or a steal) that all players must touch the half way line (or some other marker) before being able to play.

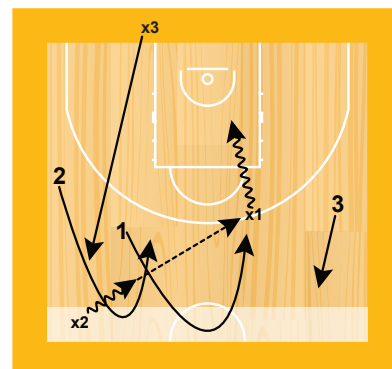
Importantly when using this rule, players don't have to wait for all their teammates or opponents to touch half way.



On any change of possession, each player must get both feet into the shaded area before they can participate in the next play.



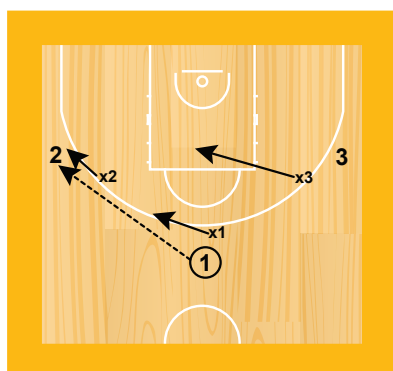
After 1 scores, x3 inbounds to x2 who dribbles towards half way. All other players start to move to half way.



x1 gets to the shaded area first. Once x2 has got to the shaded area they can pass to X1 who will get an open shot. As 1, 2, 3 and x3 have not got to the shaded area they are not in the play.

DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING OF MAN TO MAN DEFENSIVE POSITIONING

Just as 3x3 is a great mechanism for offensive players to develop their skills, it is equally a great teaching tool for defensive skills. The ability to defend the player that has the ball and contain their penetration is very important in 3x3 as there is less "help" by virtue of their being more space and less players.



Off ball positioning ("one pass away", "two passes away" etc.) equally applies in 3x3, as do concepts such as "jumping to the ball" (i.e. adjusting defensive position every time the ball moves).

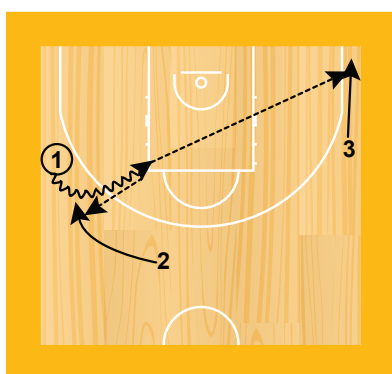
MORE "TOUCHES" – MORE INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLAY

With less players on the team there are more opportunities for each player to get the ball (or to be defending the player who has the ball). This is very much where the "fun factor" is!

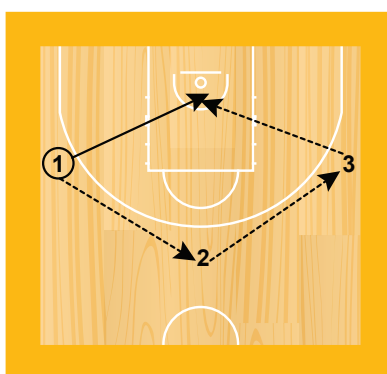
The principles of "motion offence"³ can be applied in a 3x3 context.

Coaches need to make sure that the spacing and skills is appropriate to the level of athletes. For example, "skip passes" (from one side of the court to the other) may not be suitable at this age group, but "reversing the ball" (passing it from one side of the court to the other through a number of players) achieves the same result.

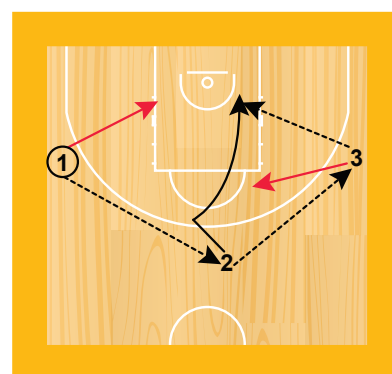
SOME EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES IN A 3X3 CONTEXT ARE:



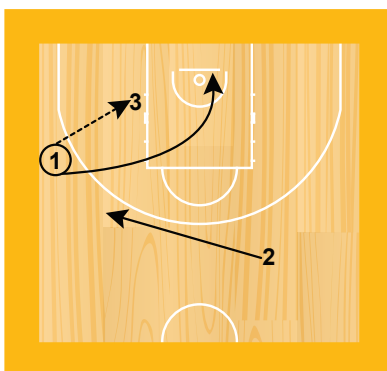
1 penetrates into the key.
2 and 3 move to a position to receive a pass.



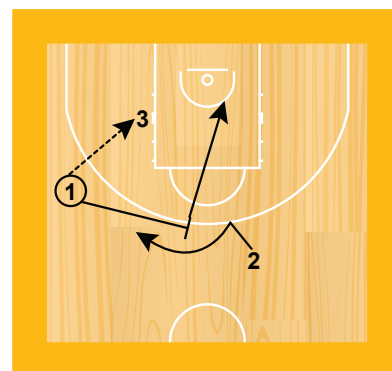
The ball is passed from one side of the court to the other. Once 3 has the ball, 1 cuts into the keyway. This is excellent to teach patience and waiting until the appropriate time to cut - 1 should wait until 3 has the ball before cutting to



Here, 2 cuts once 3 has the ball. 1 holds their position until 2 receives the ball, and then moves to a position to receive a pass.



When the ball is passed into the low post (3), 1 cuts to the basket and 2 relocates.



An alternative movement is that 1 screens for 2 after passing to the post, and then dives to the basket.