



Teaching Progression for Team Defense

Teach defensive positioning on the athlete with the ball.

- An athlete, coach or volunteer demonstrates proper stance, arm position and body position (arm's length away from athlete with the ball, between opponent and basket, and with back to basket).
- While the team is spread around the court, each volunteer works with three to four athletes, verbally prompting proper body position.
- Then the group is divided so that there are four athletes and one coach/volunteer at each basket to individually practice positioning and movement one-on-one at the five zone positions. One offensive athlete has a ball and tries to drive past or shoot over one defensive athlete.

Key Words

- Belly to the Ball (explain)
- Step to the Ball

Teach zone areas for which each athlete is responsible

- Optional: Tape X's on the floor, and gradually remove them over the course of the season. Make sure this is approved by the facility manager before putting tape on the floor.
- Use existing lines or marks on the court for cues, i.e., the junction of the foul line and lane line for the top spots on each side of the lane (#2, #3); the middle of the lane for the middle defender (#1); the low post blocks on the lane for the two bottom spots on each side of the lane (#4, #5).
- At the top spots, each athlete places his/her outside foot on the spots. At the bottom spots, each athlete places his/her inside foot on the spots. #1 is responsible for the lane.
- Place athletes in their areas; have them individually recognize their positions and court markings. Each area is two sliding steps out in radius from the athlete's originating position.
- Cue Belly to the Ball and Step to the Ball (explain) and reinforce them throughout the progression.
- Direct athletes to move within their areas while the team on offense passes the ball around the perimeter. Each athlete adjusts to defending the opponent who has and does not have the ball in his or her area. Emphasize that:
 - It takes all five athletes moving together to stop the ball and,
 - When one defender moves, all must move, otherwise openings occur for scoring. (#3 moves to fill ball side block area.)

Teach offense-to-defense conversion

- Athletes line up in positions at their own offensive end of the court. Athlete shoots ball and coach retrieves. Coach cues "Defense" and "Go to Your X." Assistants physically prompt athletes to run to the other end and set up their defensive positions on their respective X's.
- Athletes sprint to opposite end and set up defense on their spots.
- Athletes move on defense as ball is passed by offense.
- Keep reinforcing "Belly to the Ball" and "Step to the Ball."
- Gradually remove the X's on the court.

Practice offense-to-defense-to-offense conversion

- Repeat above drill, beginning with ball shot at offensive end and athletes sprinting to defensive end to set up 2-1-2 zone.
- On a defensive steal and rebound, team breaks down court to offensive spots.
- Get offensive center out of lane; use strong physical prompt plus verbal cues (Hot, Get Out of the Fire). The coach must do this from day one, or athletes will have problems discriminating between defensive and offensive ends as well as getting out of the lane.

Special Olympics Basketball Coaching Guide

Teaching Basketball Skills



Coaching Tips

- Athletes with lower ability can play team sports. The key is making the concepts, athletes' roles and responsibilities as simple and as concrete as possible. Through the development of skills and the repetition of their use in the game, the concepts become understandable.
- When teaching player-to-player or man-to-man defense, a player is responsible for defending a player, not an area. The above progression is extended as follows.

Teach off-the-ball defense (helping)

- Review proper defensive stance and movement.
- Teach a point-the-gun (open up) position on defending an opponent without the ball.
 1. One hand points to player defending; other hand points to player with the ball.
 2. Defender must always know where the ball is.
 3. Each defender must be able to see it without turning his/her head.

Key Words

- Step to the Ball
- Belly to the Ball
- Ball
- Help
- Deny

Mini-Basketball: Help and Recover positioning with passing

- Tape a dotted line down the middle of the court, lengthwise. This line is basket to basket.
- Movement and positioning should be demonstrated by the coaches, then practiced by the athletes.
- Two players play stationary offense at each side, with one coach being the point guard.
- Defenders take defensive positions on the offenders.
- Point guard is on one side of the basket-to-basket line.
- Athletes are positioned, taught that they play arm's length away from the offender on the ball side and on the basket-to-basket line on the help side (non-ball side).
- Ball is passed slowly from the point guard to one offender.
- Cue "Step to the Ball" and "Belly to the Ball."
- Defender on the ball plays between the offender and basket.
- Defender off the ball has one foot on the basket-to-basket line, other foot on the help side of the court, and back to the basket.
- As the ball moves, the two defenders move and call their positions.
 1. When on the player with the ball, an athlete yells Ball.
 2. When one pass away from the ball, the athlete yells Deny.
 3. When two passes away from the ball, the athlete yells Help.
- They pivot and slide to position while facing the ball.

The defense's goal is a deflection, steal or rebound. Play in 1-minute intervals against a set offense. Keep score; the defense gets one point each for a deflection, steal or rebound. Each team has two to three times on defense. The team with the most points wins.



Mini-Basketball: Help and Recover positioning with passing and limited dribbling

- One element is added. When the offender receives the ball, he or she can drive.
- The ball side defender must try to stay with the driver and stop the dribbler (Stop The Ball) before he/she gets to the basket.
- The help side defender should be in position to help stop the dribbler (Stop The Ball) from shooting a lay-up.
- On the pass back to the point guard, all defenders recover to positions (Step To The Ball) and play Belly To The Ball.
- When the point drives, the defenders take a step to pinch (explain) the middle.
- When the point guard passes, the defenders recover to ball side defense or help side defense according to where the ball is.
- Play continues, and athletes yell their positions in relation to the ball as they move (Ball, Deny and Help).

The defense's goal is a deflection, steal or rebound. Play in 1-minute intervals against a set offense. Keep score; the defense gets one point each for a deflection, steal or rebound. Each team has two to three times on defense. The winning team totals the most points.

Mini-Basketball: Shell positioning with passing

- Four offensive players line up in a box outside the lane. There is no one in the lane.
- The offense passes the ball around the perimeter.
- The defenders Step To The Ball, play Belly To The Ball, position properly if ball side or help side (on basket-to-basket line) and yell their position (Ball, Deny, and Help).

The defense's goal is a deflection, steal or rebound. Play in 1-minute intervals. Keep score; the defense gets one point each for a deflection, steal or rebound. Each team has two to three times on defense. The winning team totals the most points.

Mini-Basketball: Shell positioning with passing and limited dribbling

- As above; however, now an offender can dribble after receiving the ball.
- The defenders Step To The Ball, play Belly To The Ball, position properly if ball side or help side (on basket-to-basket line) and yell their positions (Ball, Deny, and Help).

The defense's goal is a deflection, steal or rebound. Play in 1-minute intervals. Keep score. The defense gets one point each for a deflection, steal or rebound. Each team has two to three times on defense. The winning team totals the most points.

Coaching Tips

- A combination defense can be quite effective, especially for a lower ability team. One or two players defend player-to-player defense, and the rest defend in a zone. This provides the coach with the best of two systems: pressure on the ball that is distracting, and stability on the court that protects the basket.
- In addition, there are some athletes who can focus on a player but not on an area. They contribute to the team by defending the player with the ball as a chaser while the rest of the team plays a zone behind them.