



YOUTH BASKETBALL LEAGUES Ages 11-12 Skills, Drills & Practice Plans

I. Fundamentals to focus on:

- a. Shooting form
- b. Lay-ups
- c. Triple Threat
- d. Dribbling with both hands
- e. Passing (chest/bounce)
- f. On the ball defense
- g. Help side defense
- h. Rebounding
- i. Loose ball
- j. Jump Stops/Pivoting
- k. Moving to get open
- l. Post positioning/moves

II. Basic Drills

a. Shooting form

- i. Shooting form is extremely important to teach from the beginning. It is ideal to spend at least 5 minutes every practice on this.

1. Form shooting consists of balancing the ball on the player's shooting hand, standing within three (3) feet of the basket and shooting.
2. Emphasize picking a spot on the basket (front of the rim, middle of the basket or back of the rim).
3. The process should be:
 - a. Square to the basket
 - b. Ball in shooting hand
 - c. Shooting arm in an "L" shape
 - d. Bend knees
 - e. Shoot – last two fingers to touch the ball are the index and middle finger

b. Lay-ups

- i. Practice lay-ups on both sides of the basket

1. Focus on shooting the ball off the backboard

- a. Player should aim for the top corner of the box on the backboard.

- i. i.e. Right-handed lay-ups should be aimed at the top right corner of the box

- b. On the right side, the player should jump off their left foot, extending their right hand up to shoot with their right knee coming up at the same time. (Left side is opposite foot/arm)

- i. It helps to tell the players to pretend there is a string attaching their right hand to their left knee (like Pinocchio)
 2. Start the drill with the players standing at the free throw line extended on one side of the basket.
 - ii. Mikán Drill
 1. Stand to one side of the basket slightly inside of the block facing the baseline. Jump and power the ball up for a lay-up. Make sure to use the backboard.
 2. Soon as player lands, jump back up and rebound the ball out of the net. Try to rebound the ball as high as possible. Player should keep the ball above his or her head. The jump should transition player to the other side of the hoop. If player shoots on the right side, his or her jump should take him or her to the left side.
 3. Continue the process side to side working on your left and right hands.
 4. Continue this pattern back and forth for a set number of repetitions or time period (30 seconds)
 - iii. Lay-up drill with dribbling
 1. Players start in two lines, going opposite directions at half court. Each player has a ball.
 2. Place a cone or a coach at the hash mark on each side of the court and the elbow of the key on the side the players are dribbling on.
 3. First player in line takes one or two dribbles up the sideline, using the appropriate hand (right hand on right side, left hand on left side). At the cone or coach, the player crosses over (can vary the move based on skill level, i.e. behind the back, spin, etc.)
 4. Player then takes one or two dribbles to the elbow and crosses over at that cone or coach.
 5. Player takes one dribble to the basket for a lay-up.
 6. Player gets own rebound and gets in line to go the opposite direction
 7. This is a continuous drill. Players should go from one line to the other without stopping. Run the drill for about 3 minutes, then switch sides or moves.
- c. Triple threat
- i. Explain what triple threat is and use it as a way to get the players to pay attention
 1. Example: The team is shooting around after a water break and you are ready to start the next drill, blow the whistle or yell "Triple threat" and have the kids get in the right position.
 - ii. Triple threat position: Knees bent, back straight, ball on dominant hand side hip, squeezing the ball.
 1. Triple threat means the player is ready to shoot, dribble or pass.
- d. Dribbling with both hands
- i. Players should learn to dribble with the pads of their fingers and extended from the elbow to push the ball down.
 1. Players should NOT be slapping the ball
 - ii. If players are moving while dribbling they will need to push the ball out in front of them slightly to make sure they stay even with or behind the ball.
 - iii. Drill #1:
 1. Have all players stand on the sideline with a ball. From the stationary position:
 2. Pass the ball back and forth between hands (right to left) in front of their chest, their knees and their face.
 3. Around the world

- a. Player rolls/passes the ball around his/her knees, waist and head. Start with just one section (knees) of the body five times, then move on to the next section (waist).
 - b. Last step is to roll/pass the ball one time around knees, waist, head, waist, knees in that order. (Around the world)
4. Dribble with each hand
 5. Dribble back and forth between hands (right, left, right, left)
 6. Spread legs and try to dribble between legs (this one is more for fun, very few K/1st graders can accomplish this)
 7. Lastly, for fun and ball awareness:
 - a. Players throw the ball up as high as they can and catch it (5 times)
 - b. Players throw the ball up as high as they can and clap as many times as they can and catch the ball (5 times)

iv. Drill #2

1. Set up cones or trash cans in a line evenly spread.
2. Have players dribble around the cones, zigzagging. The ball should be in their right hand when the cone/trash can is on their left and vice versa on the other side.
3. As the players get better at this, have them do a different move at each cone:
 - a. Cross over: keep the ball low (at knees) and dribble from one hand to the other one time at defender (cone)
 - b. Spin move: plant foot opposite of the hand dribbling with and spin away from defender (cone)
 - c. Eventually you can add between the legs, behind the back and windshield wiper

v. Drill #3

1. Relay lines
 - a. Line the players up in even lines and have a relay for different types of dribbling. Give them at least one practice round before each relay
 - i. Right-handed dribble
 - ii. Left-handed dribble
 - iii. Back and forth dribble (right, left, right, left)
 - iv. Do a move at the end of the court, before you turn around
 1. Pivot
 2. Between the legs
 3. Behind the back

e. Passing

i. Drill #1

1. Two players, one ball
2. Players stand about 10 feet apart and pass back and forth
 - a. Player receiving the ball should have a hand target up and call for the ball (say "ball"). Player should jump towards the ball to catch it.
 - b. Player passing the ball should start with it at their chest and use both hands to pass to the other player's hand target. Player should step every time they pass. Hands should end up with palms facing out and thumbs pointing to ground after pass.
 - i. Passes should not be "rainbow" passes.
 - ii. Bounce passes should bounce about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to the target.

- ii. Drill #2 – Three-man weave
 1. Start with three lines on one baseline. Ball in the middle
 2. Player passes to either right or left and follows their pass
 - a. Player should run behind the players receiving the ball
 3. The next player passes to the third player and follows their pass
 4. Players continue this pattern down the court and shoot a lay-up at the opposite end from where they started.
- f. On-the-ball defense
 - i. Defensive slides
 1. Have players stand with room between them on the sideline.
 2. Coach calls out instructions for them to do: (you can play “Coach says” to make it more fun... like Simon Says)
 - a. Triple Threat: triple threat position
 - b. Foot fire: moving feet up and down rapidly
 - c. Slide Right: one defensive slide to the player’s right. First step should be a big step with right foot.
 - d. Slide Left: one defensive slide to the player’s left. First step should be a big step with left foot.
 - e. Dead: Ball is dead so players should put their hands up to block the offensive player from shooting or passing.
 - f. Take a charge: Players fall back on the ground like they are taking a charge a scream like they got hit hard (more for fun than anything)
 - ii. Drill #1
 1. Have players get a partner with one ball. One on defense and one on offense.
 2. Groups start in one corner of the court. Player with the ball dribbles to the middle of the court. Player on defense should slide in front of the ball without crossing their feet and hands wide.
 3. Groups zigzag down the court
 4. Second group can start once the first group is at the half court line
 - iii. Drill #2
 1. Put players into a line facing the coach.
 2. Say “stance” or “ready” – players get into defensive stance
 3. Coach blows whistle and players slide a designated direction
 4. Coach blows whistle again and players slide the other direction
 5. Do this for about 15-30 seconds, four times (like four quarters)
 - iv. Heel-Toe
 1. Players pick a partner and have one ball per pair.
 2. Line half the pairs up in one corner of the court and half in the corner on the opposite end of the court on the other side.
 3. One player from first group on each side starts with the ball in triple threat position with toes on the baseline. The other player starts with his or her heels on the baseline and back towards the court.
 4. When the coach says “GO” the player with the ball should dribble as fast as they can down the court (with appropriate hand) and the other player should turn towards the ball, try to get in front of the ball and start playing defense at the half court line.

5. The pair will then play one-on-one. This is a drill to simulate the fast break and getting to the basket quickly. Encourage kids to shoot lay-ups.
 6. This is a continuous drill. Once the pair has either scored or the ball has been turned over, the pair should get in the next line.
- g. Off the ball defense
- i. Drill #1 – Shell drill modified
 1. Split team into two groups.
 2. On one end of the court put to players on offense and three players on defense.
 3. Have offensive players pass the ball back and forth
 - a. Do not let the defense steal the passes. The focus is defensive positioning. Once the defense understands the positions, then allow them to steal passes.
 4. Defensive players need to move from on the ball (when their man has the ball) to “help” defense (halfway between their man and the ball)
 - a. Help defense can be in pistols (one hand pointing at the ball, one hand pointing at the player’s man)
- h. Rebounding
- i. Drill #1
 1. Put players in teams and have them “match-up”. Have them stand in various places around the key. Coach will shoot and purposely miss a shot. Defense needs to stay between their man and the ball (or box out) to go get the rebound, offense needs to try to get around their man to get the rebound. Keep score to give the kids incentive to go get the ball.
 - ii. Drill #2
 1. Players partner up. In the center circle of the court have two or three pairs stand around the outside of the circle. One of the pair is on offense, one of the pair is on defense. The defender starts between their player and the ball, facing their player. The ball is put in the middle of the circle on the ground. When the coach yells go, the defense has to box out their player for three seconds. The offense has to move around to try to get the ball.
 - a. Defensive players cannot use their hands to hold the offense; they must box out with their behinds.
- i. Loose Ball
- i. Drill #1
 1. Players partner up.
 2. Partners stand in one corner of the court facing the basket on the opposite side of the court.
 3. Coach throws or rolls the ball in front of the pair. Once the ball is thrown by the coach the kids race to the ball and pick it up with BOTH hands. Once a player has picked it up they can dribble down the court for a lay-up and the second player gets the rebound.
 - ii. Loose Ball Scramble
 1. The groups will line up with the adult in the middle with the ball. The coach or helper will toss the ball, and the kids race to get it. The adult should use different tosses each time – up in the air, straight ahead, to one side or the other, even rolling on the ground – to prepare players for real game-like situations.

2. Once a player is able to secure the ball, he dribbles to the closest basket and attempts to score. The other players get the rebound so they can score on their own. The drill is finished when one of the players scores.
 - a. If the players get the hang of this, try to add that the person who gets the ball tries to score and the other two have to play defense and then try to score themselves if they get the ball.
 3. Coaches and helpers should remind players that the goal is to go for the ball, not each other. Players should be aggressive, but they need to be careful not to hurt each other.
- j. Jump Stops/Pivoting
- i. Have the players stand on one baseline in even lines. Say "Go" and have the first group run to the free throw line and jump stop. When you say "go" again the first group runs to the half court line and jump stops and the second group runs to the free throw line and jump stops. Continue at next free throw line and baseline.
 1. Add pivoting at each line as the players understand jump stops.
 - a. Right front: Plant right foot and move left foot forward to pivot in a circle
 - b. Left front: Plant left foot and move right foot forward to pivot in a circle
 - c. Right reverse: Plant right foot and move left foot backwards to pivot in a circle
 - d. Left reverse: Plant left foot and move right foot backwards to pivot in a circle
 2. Add a pump fake at each line as the players understand pivoting.
- k. Moving without the ball
- i. Drill #1
 1. Players are in groups of two or three. Start with the ball at the top of the three-point arc.
 2. Players without the ball, the wings, should be at the free throw line extended.
 3. The wings should v-cut down to the block and cut back up to the free throw line extended to receive the ball.
 4. Player that started with the ball should cut to the basket, looking for the pass, and then go opposite from the side he or she passed to. The wing that did not receive the ball should go to the top of the arc to receive the pass.
 5. Continue the drill for approx. 5 rotations and have someone score or shoot.
 6. Add defense once the players have gotten the hang out the drill.
- l. Post Positioning/Moves
- i. Depending on the team's personnel and skill level posts can be put at three different locations
 1. The Block
 - a. Usually for the posts that have the ability to play with his or her back to the basket. The ability to rebound well consistently.
 2. The Elbow
 - a. Usually for the posts that have the ability to face the basket and make a move, as well as play with his or her back to the basket. The ability to rebound well consistently.
 3. Short Corner
 - a. Usually for the posts that have the ability to face the basket and make a move, as well as play with his or her back to the basket. The ability to rebound well consistently.
 - ii. Posting up at the block

1. Have post players straddle the first marker above the block on the lane. This allows them the freedom to turn both ways, without going behind the backboard or getting a lane violation call.
- iii. Posting up at the elbow
 1. Have post players straddle the first marker above the free throw line. This allows them the freedom to turn both ways, without getting a lane violation call.
 - 2.
- iv. Drill #1
 1. Have the posts post up from a designated position and give them a good entry pass. Have them do one move 10 times and then move on to the other side.
 2. Post moves
 - a. Front Pivot
 - b. Inside Pivot
 - c. Drop step: With back to the basket, post catches the ball and takes one big step toward the basket. Post shoots before bringing second foot down.
 - d. Drop step with dribble: Same as a drop step, but add a power dribble (strong dribble below the knees, pushed hard into the ground).
 - e. Baby Hook: Drop step to one side or the other, without turning shoulder shoot a hook shot (no more than 5' from the basket)

III. Other fun drills:

a. Offense

i. Detroit Basketball

1. Goal: To get all the players on the opposite team out
2. Two teams
3. Teams start at the free line extended about three feet
4. Each team has one ball
5. Players in the front of the line have to dribble to the basket and make a basket before the player from the other team does.
 - a. Players keep shooting until one makes a basket
 - b. The player that makes the basket first gets their rebound, passes the ball to the next player on their team and goes to the end of the line.
 - c. The player that does NOT make the basket first, gets their rebound, passes the ball to the next player in line and goes the "jail"
 - i. Each team has their own jail on their side of the court.
 - ii. The player can get out of jail if one of their teammates makes their basket before the player on the opposite team.
 - iii. Each time players are shooting one should go to jail and one should go to the back of their line. After the first player goes to jail, one player will get out of jail and one player will go to jail each time a person makes a basket.
 - d. Players receiving the ball should dribble to the basket and shoot as soon as they receive the ball. They do not have to wait for the player from the other team to get the ball.

ii. Triangle Passing

1. Divide the players into groups of three.
2. Place three markers on the basketball court in a triangle formation.

3. Allow one triangle for each group of three players. Each player stands on one of the markers in the formation.
 4. Give two of the players in each triangle a basketball. The first player passes his ball to the player without a ball while the remaining player passes his ball to the first player.
 5. Players must keep both balls in play throughout the duration of the drill. Encourage players to keep their eye on the ball so they are better able to catch the pass and then pass it on.
- iii. Spot shooting
1. Split the teams into two groups. Pick three spots they have to shoot from. (i.e. right short corner, in front of the basket, left short corner)
 2. Teams can have two balls per team and start at opposite baskets. They shoot one person at a time.
 3. Team must make 10 baskets at one spot before moving to the next spot.
 4. First team to make 10 baskets at each spot wins.
- iv. Dribble tag
1. Every player has a ball. Coach designates an area that the players must stay in (i.e. half court or below the three-point arc)
 2. Players must continuously dribble the basketball and knock other players balls away from them
 3. Player is out if he/she picks up the ball or the ball bounces out of bounds
- v. 3 on 2 on 1 (run for a maximum of 7 minutes)
1. Three lines on one baseline. Balls in the middle line.
 2. Start with two players on the opposite end of the court. One under the basket and one at the free throw line.
 3. Three players in the front of the lines run down the court
 - a. Player in the middle dribbles the ball
 - b. Players on either side run slightly in front of player in the middle. Make sure they are spread out.
 4. When they get to the defense they play 3 on 2
 - a. The defensive player at the free throw line should stop the ball
 - b. The defensive player under the basket should defend the first pass
 - c. When the first pass goes the defensive player that was at the free throw line should drop back to guard the basket and wait for the next pass. The pattern continues like this until the ball is thrown away or shot.
 - d. There should be only one shot (doesn't matter if it is missed or made)
 5. Once there is a shot or a turnover the players on defense are now on offense going the other direction, playing 2 on 1.
 - a. The player that either shot or turned it over will be the defensive player on the other end.
 - b. The remaining two players stay on that end to play defense on the next group
- vi. King/Queen of the court
1. Can be played as a one-on-one or two-on-two.
 2. Start all players under one basket. Have two "teams" or individuals compete to score.
 3. The player that scores moves to the next basket and the player that doesn't score goes to the end of the line.

4. Depending on how many baskets there are, this game can be played at the same time on different baskets. The King or Queen is designated by the “team” or individual that has beat everyone else.
- vii. X-out lay-up drill
1. Player starts at the elbow and makes a left hand lay-up at pace, then rebounds their own shot and dribbles out to the right elbow and returns for a right hand lay-up. Drill is repeated.
 2. Drill should last for 1 minute (target score of 15 makes).

IV. Resources

- a. <http://www.jes-basketball.com/animated/drills.html>
- b. <http://www.breakthroughbasketball.com/>

Sample 60-Minute Practice Plan #1

5:00 – 6:00 pm Practice

5:00 – 5:05	Stretching
5:05 – 5:08	Explain form shooting drill
5:08 – 5:15	Form shooting drill
5:15 – 5:25	Spot Shooting Competition
5:25 – 5:26	Water Break
5:26 – 5:28	Explain Stationary Dribbling Drill
5:28 – 5:35	Stationary Dribbling
5:35 – 5:45	Dribbling Relays <u>OR</u> Work on plays (out of bounds, offense)
5:45 – 5:47	Water Break + Explain Defensive Slides <u>OR</u> Shell drill
5:47 – 5:57	Practice defensive slides and play “Coach says” <u>OR</u> Shell Drill
5:57 – 6:00	Cool down with shooting some free throws (or shots in front of the basket)

Sample 60-Minute Practice Plan #2

5:00 – 6:00 pm Practice

- 5:00 – 5:05 Stretching/Form Shooting
- 5:05 – 5:11 Explain and run Jump Stop/Pivot Drill
- 5:11 – 5:18 Dribbling Relays
- 5:18 – 5:19 Water Break
- 5:19 – 5:29 Explain and run Zig-Zag defense drill
- 5:29 – 5:30 Water Break
- 5:28 – 5:35 Explain and run partner passing **OR**
Work on plays (out of bounds, offense)
- 5:35 – 5:45 Break into two groups: Posts and guards (work on position specific skills)
- 5:45 – 5:47 Water break
- 5:47 – 5:57 Explain and play 3 on 2 on 1 Basketball **OR**
Scrimmage 5-on-5 (substitute players after 5 minutes)
- 5:57 – 6:00 Cool down with shooting some free throws (or shots in front of the basket)

Sample 60-Minute Practice Plan #3

5:00 – 6:00 pm Practice

- 5:00 – 5:05 Stretching/Form Shooting
- 5:05 – 5:11 Explain and run Jump Stop/Pivot Drill
- 5:11 – 5:16 Stationary Dribbling
- 5:16 – 5:21 Dribble tag
- 5:21 – 5:22 Water Break
- 5:22 – 5:29 Explain and run Off-the-Ball Defense drill
- 5:29 – 5:35 Work on plays (out of bounds, offense)
- 5:36 – 5:37 Water Break
- 5:37 – 5:47 Explain and run Rebounding Drill #1
- 5:47 – 5:57 Explain and play Detroit Basketball **OR**
Scrimmage 5-on-5 (substitute players after 5 minutes)
- 5:57 – 6:00 Cool down with shooting some free throws (or shots in front of the basket)

Sample 60-Minute Practice Plan #4

5:00 – 6:00 pm Practice

- 5:00 – 5:05 Stretching/Form Shooting
- 5:05 – 5:11 Stationary Dribbling
- 5:11 – 5:16 Dribbling relays (make it harder than the last time)
- 5:21 – 5:22 Water Break
- 5:22 – 5:27 Zig-Zag dribbling drill
- 5:27 – 5:28 Water Break
- 5:29 – 5:36 Explain and run weave passing drill
- 5:36 – 5:37 Water Break
- 5:37 – 5:47 Explain and run one offensive set (remember repetition is key)
- 5:47 – 5:57 Shell Drill **OR**
 Scrimmage 5-on-5 (substitute players after 5 minutes)
- 5:57 – 6:00 Cool down with shooting some free throws (or shots in front of the basket)

Sample 60-Minute Practice Plan #5

5:00 – 6:00 pm Practice

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| 5:00 – 5:05 | Stretching/Form Shooting |
| 5:05 – 5:11 | Stationary Dribbling |
| 5:11 – 5:16 | Dribbling relays (make it harder than the last time) |
| 5:21 – 5:22 | Water Break |
| 5:22 – 5:27 | Triangle passing drill |
| 5:27 – 5:28 | Water Break + explain 3 on 2 on 1 Basketball |
| 5:29 – 5:36 | 3 on 2 on 1 Basketball |
| 5:36 – 5:37 | Water Break |
| 5:37 – 5:47 | Work on plays (out of bounds, offense) |
| 5:47 – 5:57 | Scrimmage 5-on-5 (substitute players after 5 minutes) |
| 5:57 – 6:00 | Cool down with shooting some free throws (or shots in front of the basket) |