

Do not teach dribbling in isolation. Teach your players how to pass, shoot and do lay-ups all off a dribble. Not only are these important skills, it also emphasises the use of a dribble to create these!

Invariably keeping things fun is important at this age so these are just a few games you can use to enforce learning.

**Bullrush** (also known as British Bulldog, Red Rover Crossover). Kids line up on baseline with a ball each and have to get to the other end without getting tipped or losing the ball (start with a couple of good dribblers as “in/it”). You can play build-ups until there is only one person left.

**Finger-run.** Coach stays at other end and holds fingers up as players dribble down, calling out the number. Can build it up, adding a “stop sign” (players stop in a control dribble or triple threat position) and “retreat”. Coach is like a traffic conductor, can then make a game of this by playing “Red light-Green light” or “What’s the time Mr Wolf” using basketballs. Kids will show you how this works!

**Stuck in the Mud.** Play in a confined area. Designate who is in. If you get tagged you are “stuck in the mud”, hold the ball on your head, stand with legs apart. To be “unstuck” someone else has to dribble their ball through your legs, you can then rejoin the game,

**Odd Man Out.** Again played in a confined area, it is a bit like musical chairs except everyone stays involved. A few players start without a ball and have to steal one before the whistle goes. Those without a ball on the whistle might do a star jump or push up. Gradually remove more balls on each whistle to increase difficulty.

**Octopus.** Similar to bull rush, players have to try to reach the other end without being tipped. This time, the people that are “in” are the only ones who move around, those tipped sit down cross-legged, ball on their lap. They try and tip those left who have to avoid the people that are in and their “octopus” stuck on the ground.

**Relays** – anything competitive always goes over well!!  
Best of Luck

#### Summary

Do's	Don'ts
Keep the dribble “alive”	Don't automatically start dribbling after receiving a pass
Vary the speed and direction of the dribble	Don't pick up or stop dribbling with no other option
Protect the dribble from the defensive player	Don't dribble into a crowd
Cross over or switch dribbling hands to protect the ball	Don't try to get fancy
Stay in the middle of the court and away from the sidelines	Don't hesitate



## BUILDING BETTER BASKETBALL

### Coaches No.6

**Dribbling should have a purpose!!  
Dribbling is the most misused skill of basketball!!  
Dribbling is a pass to yourself!!**



Welcome back to the Building Better Basketball Coaching Series. This issue focuses on an area of the game that youngsters are more than happy to produce; dribbling. As coaches, we ask that our players learn the value of transference taking what they learn from their practice and playing experiences and apply them. Take heed to do the same and apply the lessons learned in the previous issues!

The specific purpose of dribbling is to

- Advance the ball into the offensive and when a pass is not possible
- Improve the opportunity for passing or shooting
- Relieve pressure
- Make an offensive move

Some key aspects of dribbling that should be taught to beginner players:

**Ball Height** - If the player is in the clear then bouncing the ball at waist height is comfortable. As defence gets closer, bounce the ball lower. It is easier to move the ball around, there is less air time for the defence to steal it.

**Ball Position** - Bounce the ball next to the body so you can move normally. As your speed increases, push the ball out in front, reduce the number of dribbles so you can run faster – beginners tend to bounce more frequently which actually slows them down and makes it more difficult to control the ball!

**A Dribble Is A Pass To Yourself** - Use the dribble to put the ball in a better position. Dribble to create a better pass or a better shot.

**Learn To Dribble With Both Hands.** Against poor defence you may be able to get away with using your dominant hand only – but you are only half as good as you could be! In speed dribble situations, it is advantageous if you can alternate hands to allow a more balanced (and therefore quicker) run.

**Dribble The Ball Hard** - This will cause the ball to “stick” better when it comes back to the hand and reduces the time the ball is away from your hand – leaving the defence less time to get the ball. This is a wrist movement pounding the ball with your arm!

**Keep Your Head Up.** As mentioned last issue, “good vision = good decision”. The ball is round, it bounces and the floor is flat. It will do what and go where your body action tells it to. You don’t need to watch the ball. Keep your head up to watch the things that do change; your position, the defenders positions and your teammates.

**Use Changes Of Pace And Direction-** Playing at one pace and on the same line is easily guarded, incorporate changes of pace and direction to beat your opponent.

**Play From Your Stance** - The same advantages given to starting in a stance apply when dribbling, quicker, longer steps, lower body stance to improve changes of pace and direction, improved vision, ready to pass or shoot if necessary.

**Control Is Better Than Speed** - With the importance of possession, it is important that we maintain control, not only to protect the ball whilst dribbling but also so we can execute a better shot or pass then Keep It Simple (KIS) principle can definitely be applied here. Whilst it is good if players learn how to execute the various dribble moves, their ability to know **when** is more important!

Once you beat a man, keep them beat. Young players tend to try and go **around** rather than **by** their man. Different coaches again teach different attacking points. Different cues include “shoulder to shoulder”, “your shoulder to their hip”, “knock the shoulder” down but again the key is to get your head and shoulders by the defence and then turn the corner.

The defender gets stuck behind the dribbler and other defenders are forced to come to you because now you are threatening to score. This makes your read easier if no-one guards the dribbling lane-you get a lay-up. If they do, you then have more time and space to pass on a better angle!

There are various dribble moves that can be taught, and kids are naturally tempted to use flashy moves. We need to teach them all correctly, doing a good job of explaining the “why” and “how” of each move. Encourage the use of creative thought in practice and use the games as a learning environment for not only the execution of moves but also the decision of which move to use!

At the beginner level, the crucial 2 dribble moves are

1. The control / protection dribble
2. The Retract dribble
3. The crossover dribble
4. The hesitation (change of pace) moves
5. The speed dribble

Again we could devote an issue to these alone so consult your level Level 0/1 resources and / or your development officer. Other moves include:

- Behind back
- Spin
- Between legs
- In and away (also known as wave and fake crossover)
- Combinations (moves executed back to back to counter the defenders adjustment)

You may see teenagers doing “trick” moves picked up from shoe company, AND1, mix tapes or the Nike Ad. Hopefully you can stress the importance of learning to crawl, walk and then run in relation to dribbling with your youngsters! But again anything that encourages kids to be better at handling is not all bad!