

Use Jordan scoring (as in Michael Jordan). When he shot by himself he kept score by adding 1 for a make and subtracting 2 for a miss. The goal to get to +11 before you get to -11. For the littlies +1 /-1 or +2/-1 may suffice!

Again there are a number of fun games you can play including 'Sink the Titanic' and Knockout. Coaching resources can also provide various drills.

### **LAY-UPS**

Scoring is such a poignant skill to young kids, so the sooner we can teach players to score, to do a lay-up, the more likely they are to enjoy the experience - and continue playing! Footwork is the key. Break down the footwork. From a standing start, work on the final step only, concentrating on their knee lift and shot technique. Then work off two steps, beginning with a stationary start and then off a run (coach handing the ball off). It is important that players catch the ball in the air and drive their knee, this changes their momentum from forward to up - hence the term, lay-**up**! A handy tool is to draw oversized feet on the court with some chalk. Then add a dribble or pass so the players learn to get their feet organized. Put the ball out in front with the dribble/pass so they can run onto it and catch in the air, landing with the appropriate footwork.

Most lay-ups are taught from the wing, but of course this is not always the case in the game, so teach players how to execute the lay-up from all angles. Early on, I advocate teaching 'banana steps', where players final to steps curl around to the side of the basket, to create that angle for a shot off the backboard. As kids (and your coaching) progress, you can teach the 'why and how' of underhand lay-ups, power lay-ups and reverse lay-ups. Again practice lay-ups under pressure e.g. give a dribbler a small head start and have a defender chase them. If they take too many dribbles they will get caught! I like to score lay-ups out of three; focusing on footwork, the use of the backboard and the end result. Invariably if they get the footwork right, the next two fall into place very quickly.

More information on the techniques is available from coaching co-ordinators, resources and from your TV. Watch the truly great shooters and identify the strengths of their shots. Watch shots that miss (from stars and your stars-to-be) and see if you can identify why. Your job as a coach is to provide solutions not just identify the problems. While developing shot techniques and teaching lay-ups may take time, "perfect practice makes perfect" and it will pay off. What we hope to develop is 'muscle memory' so that every opportunity that presents itself triggers a fundamentally sound, consistent and effective response i.e. they put the ball in the hole!



## **BUILDING BETTER BASKETBALL**

*ISSUE NO. 8 COACHES*

### **SHOOTING AND LAY UPS**

Good technique and plenty of practice  
can make any player a good shooter!!



*For more information visit [www.basketball.net.au](http://www.basketball.net.au)*

Welcome back to the Building Better Basketball Coaching Series. This months edition, on Shooting and Lay-ups, again presents an area of the game that players have no hesitation in practicing - even if it does include an overly high proportion of 3-pointers and half-way shots! Hopefully we will see the benefits of teaching the ready position, our offensive stance, transfer into shot technique. Despite bearing the brunt of frustration, the ball is blameless, it will go where your body guides it. Below are some important teaching points.

**Balance** - In a correct stance a player will be balanced. The head should be kept centred and slightly forward - "nose in line with toes".

**Alignment** - It should be possible to draw a straight line through the ball, elbow, knee and foot. The ball should be held above the elbow (which should rest comfortably by the side) with "wrinkles in the wrist". This sets us up to get 'in and under' the shot. Another ball should be able to fit between the back of the shooting hand and the shoulder. This allows the player to get 'under' the ball, as opposed to 'behind' the ball.

**Rhythm** - Everything "flows from the toes". Use the legs to provide power, arms to provide direction, arc and follow-through. We want players to develop that effortless feeling, if they try and shoot using their arms they will tend to twist to generate the power, the use of legs will make it easier and reduce trunk rotation (and misdirection).

**Follow-through** - A consistent "lock and snap" are vital in being a great shooter. We want players to lock their arm so the ball, if our alignment is set correctly, will go straight. The snap provides back-spin, putting a nice arc on the ball and forcing the ball to grip/stick on contact with the ring or backboard. This 'soft-touch', will hopefully help get the ball in! Other cues to use include "elbow to eyebrow" and "See the ball (your set-up) and "hear your follow-through" (finish). If you can see the follow-through, the ball will most likely have been short and flat.

**Hand Position** - The shooting hand should be in the centre of the ball, which makes it easier to direct because the forces will then act through the ball's center of gravity. The ball should rest comfortably on the fingertips. Some coaches teach young players to draw an imaginary 'T' between the two thumbs. The guide hand should not impart any force on the ball, and stay on the side of the ball as it is lifted up. This improves ball security, balance and protection from the defence. When the shot is complete, the fingers on the guide hand should be pointing up to the sky, and on the shooting hand down into the basket - like a 'gooseneck'.

**Footwork** - The key to a quick release. Whilst I will not delve into the stride stop versus jump stop argument, it is important that players learn to get their

feet organised, catch the ball in the air and land ready to shoot and use that landing to 'drive' their shot.

**Aim/Focus** - Again different coaches have their own philosophy. Golfers used to be taught to draw a line for their putt, now they are taught to draw train tracks, similarly I like my players to have this 'soft focus'. Rather than aim for a specific spot, I like to just focus on the whole area, the inside of the ring.

**Backboard** - Demonstrate the value of using the backboard. I use the analogy of a "grandma kiss" to develop that soft touch off the glass. You don't want to plant one on there - just soft, quick and gentle!

When teaching little kids it important that we try and develop a technique that will serve them throughout their basketball career. If any style is practiced enough, it will become increasingly effective. However, if we can practice great shot technique, well obviously it will bear fruit more consistently and stand-up under pressure. "BEEF" is a popular cue 'B' is for Balance, 'E' for Eyes on the target, 'E' for extend legs and arms, 'F' for follow-through. I have also heard people use one of the E's for elbow - I'll let you decide!

A technique drill I like to use for shooting uses the whole court and keeps players active. I ask players to place their dominant foot on a straight line and get in stance. Lift the ball and drop off the guide hand, we call this "statue of liberty shooting". Players start with their upper arm parallel to the floor, forearm at 90 degrees and 'wrinkles in the wrist'. The players practice their "lock and snap" and, hopefully the ball lands on the line. They may repeat this a number of times up to half way. At half way they have to shoot over the head of a coach/teacher/parent. Place a coin on the line behind this person, and if they can hit the coin they can keep it. This is harder than expected, because have to get the line, arc and distance right. They then use this technique at the ring (usually allow 3 shots -one from each side and one in front). If players need more power, allow them to bend their knees and add leg power rather than dropping the ball down to their shoulder and throwing it. They can repeat this process back down the other sideline/ring but adding the guide hand.

As important it is that players become great shooters, it is more important they become great scorers. They have to be able to shoot off a pass, off the dribble and off a rebound. Practice shooting with physical pressure i.e. defence and mental pressure. You can do this by setting goals/targets in shooting drills, shooting buzzer beaters (even imaginary shots to win the game). They can't finish the drill or leave until you make 2 in a row.