



BASKETBALL
Practice Plans

YOUTH BASKETBALL COACHES CLINIC

Presented by: Coach Bill Flitter

BasketballPracticePlans.com



Agenda

1. A Coach's Role
 2. How To Run An Effective Practice And Maximize Gym Time
 3. How To Teach A Complete Offense In One Practice
 4. Implement '51' Defense To Lock Down Opponents
 5. Practice Walkthrough & On-court Demos
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Thank you for coaching! You play a vital role in a child's development.

- **Have fun.**
Enjoy the journey. Learn how to have fun even when losing.
- **Teach.**
You are a teacher first. The court is your classroom. You are teaching kids how to compete, how to win and lose, how to work with others, how to achieve goals, and all kinds of life skills that will serve them into adulthood. Practice is one of several classes that students attend each day. Like all classes, the students should expect to be taught something. Have a clear objective for the day, as well as a well-planned lesson designed to help the players accomplish those goals.
- **Relax.**
There are multiple ways to teach the game of basketball. It is a complex game. You will constantly be second-guessing your decisions, especially when you get that first parent complaint. Stay the course. Read up. You don't have to be an expert just have to be ahead of those you are teaching.
- **Know your role.**
As a youth coach, your basketball task is to a.) create a healthy environment that encourages mistakes and creates a desire in kids to keep playing, b.) teach them how to play (not play) c.) focus on the fundamentals. Don't put the focus on winning.

A Coach's Mindset

- **Be Excited.**
Be eager and excited for practice every day. Your enthusiasm for practice should be obvious to the players and contagious.
- **Make Mistakes OK.**
Create an environment where mistakes are ok. Remember, they are kids and learning. Put yourself in the mindset that if players keep making the same mistakes, you are not teaching them well. If the student is not learning, change your teaching methods.
- **Believe**
Believe you can win regardless of the team you have.
- **Praise Often**
Praise what you want to emphasize

Change your vocabulary:

- Old saying like “play hard.” What does that mean? Point it out when you see your definition of playing hard. Show a video of a youth team playing hard. Clearly define it. Example: Play Hard = Everyone dives after loose balls; in transition, your first 3-steps are long and quick, take a charge
- Take a great shot. What is a great shot?
 - Instead, define it.
 - Wide open layup
 - Drive and kick 3
 - Two-footed power layup when a body is in front of you
 - When a defender is a body length away
 - Designate Greenlight shooters who can shoot anywhere

Designing a Practice Plan

Practice is the lifeblood of every successful basketball team. Your team is defined by carefully planning and skilled implementation of effective practice plans. Having great practices leads to having the most success in games.

The quality of practice greatly influences the outcome of games, and practice is something you have complete control over.

Key Principles of Practice

1. **Plan ahead.** Plan your entire season and progression from practice 1 to your last practice. Create a list of skills you want your players to accomplish in the season.
2. **Create sound habits:** You practice like you play; you play like you practice. It's what you emphasize and accept that will make a difference in your team. Don't compromise on fundamentals. What you accept at practice will translate to games. Focus on the little things (see 7 below)
3. **Be efficient with time:** Make the most of limited gym time. Each drill should focus on one thing but incorporate many things. Keep players moving and not standing around. Transition quickly from one drill to the next. Talk less, play more!
4. **Small burst:** Keep practice moving from one drill to the next.
5. **Make practice competitive:** Keep score on shooting drills, and play small-sided-games.
6. **Make room for the magic:** Get 70% of the way and leave room for the magic. You can't script everything. It will help kids learn.
7. **Have fun:** Don't be a player's last coach. Remember, they are kids and are learning.

Tips to get more done and boost learning.

1. Develop a master plan for the season that includes what you want your team to learn.
2. Time each practice and drill, and don't spend more time on a drill the team isn't learning. Assume you are not teaching it correctly. Come up with a different way to teach it next practice. Keep each drill under 5 minutes.

3. Before practice, know the number of baskets and adjust your practice accordingly.
4. Use small-sided games to teach both offense and defense.
5. Use progressions and constraints with each drill. Teach the foundation drill and build from it. This way, you are not wasting time teaching new drills.
6. Teach one concept at a time. Don't overload the kids. They will learn much quicker, and you can move on to the next phase.
7. Explain the 'why' behind each drill. Again, kids will connect the dots and translate what you teach games more quickly.
8. Keep your discussion to 30 seconds - think of it as a timeout.
9. If players are not involved in a drill/scrimmage, have them do ball-handling.
10. Have players grab water as needed vs. having a scheduled water break. It takes up too much time to get the kids back to focus.
11. Keep your offense and defense simple. See my ABC Offense as an example. Don't teach plays; show them how to play.
12. Get 70% of the way to 'perfection' and leave space for the magic. The kids will figure it out. Basketball is not perfect.
13. Start practice out fast and get the kids running right away. They will be better listeners the rest of the way.
14. When scrimmaging, give more points to the things you want to emphasize - even defense can score. Kids will try to score more points, boosting learning quickly. For example, award 4 points for every rebound.
15. Name each drill, and have players repeat the drill's name so you know they are listening and you won't have to repeat yourself.
16. End practice with a team huddle and end on a positive note with one or two highlights - ask a player who stood out or demonstrated your team's 'way.' Have players give coaches fist bumps.

Developing a Youth Basketball Master Plan

You can't be good at everything... choose what you want to be great at and make that your identity! It's better to go deep with fundamentals than wide offense schemes.

First Step. Ask yourself these questions.

1. What do I want to be great at? (max of 3)
2. What do you want to be good at? (3-5 items)
3. What can you live with as a weakness (2-3 items)
4. What can you live without practicing (1 thing)

Next...

Step #1 Answer each question below as thoroughly as possible. The more thorough you are, the easier it will be to create your practice plan.

Step #2 Write out 3 foundation drills or practice activities that you will do to accomplish each of the answers you wrote. Think of these drills as the core, and you can bolt on constraints and progressions to keep the drills fresh.

Step #3 Make a master list with every drill and activity from step #2 and organize the drills, skills, and schemes into the four quarters of practice

- Offense
- Transition to Offense
- Defense
- Transition to Defense

These 4 quarters map to the 4 parts a player is in throughout the game. Organizing these segments will help players apply what you teach to that game segment.

1. What core basketball beliefs do you have:

Example: Every youth player should: finish with a power layup, cut after they pass, rebounding is the number one thing that wins/loses games, etc

2. What are your non-negotiables

Example: We never show bad body language, Hi-fives, or acknowledgment after an assist, the loudest bench of any team. "Can't" is a 4-letter word; we use not-yet.

3. What life lessons and experiences do you want your players to have

Example: How to show good sportsmanship in wins and losses, leave the gym cleaner than when we got there, thank the refs after every game

4. What are your season goals, and what skills do you need to develop to reach those goals?

Example: Have fun, learn how to beat a press, and keep opponents under x points.

5. What stats will you take in practice and games to know that you're progressing (keep in minimal)?

Example: Field Goal Percentage, Free Throw Percentage, Rebounds

6. By the end of the season, players should know how to do...

Example: Set screens, box out, play help defense.

7. What habits do you want to instill in practice?

Example: Showing up on time with shoes on, when coach blows the whistle everyone run over.

8. What must you do to build a team rather than a group of individuals?

9. What offensive do you prefer?

Example: 5-out, 4-out,

10. What defense do you prefer?

Example: Man-2-Man, Zone, Packline

11. What situations do you want to do a specific way?

Example: At 20 seconds, we hold for the last shot of the quarter or a lay-up

12. What's your style of play?

Example: Fast uptempo, trapping,

Other questions for advanced youth teams

1. What teams do you need to beat to reach your goals?
2. What skills do you need to beat those teams?
3. What adjustments will you make if "Plan A" is not working?
4. What are your goals for each defensive possession?
5. What are your goals for each offensive possession?
6. What cuts or movements will the shots come from in our offense and inbounds plays?
7. What specific offensive movements will you see and have to learn to defend during the course of the season?
8. For each movement that you must defend, what are the rules?

Write Down and Communicate Your “Way”

This might seem too much for a youth team, but remember that people want to belong to something bigger. Plus, this exercise will help you stay focused. It is so easy to get distracted by the shiny new drill or second-guess your decision. Establishing your “Way” will guide you on what you want to teach and emphasize and help you decide when you are second guessing.

Your ‘Way,’ is a collection of your beliefs and ideas to make the team successful. Keep it simple and make it an acronym - if you can. It makes it easy for the kids to remember and recite. When in doubt about something, refer back to your ‘way.’

Ours is R.E.D. D.O.T. Pride. We are the cougars, so ‘pride’ has a double meaning. Pride means being proud to be a part of the team, and also pride means a group.

The basketball-related items we focus on.

- Rebounding
- Efficient Scoring
- Defense

Our core values

- Drive: Consistently doing the right things, in the right way, and in the right frame of mind—all while working very hard—can lead to success over an extended period of time.
- Open: Excepting new ideas, and different ways of doing things, share issues that come up inside the team
- Together: We win, lose together. We play for the name on the jersey

At each game, we use a Sharpie to put a red dot on each player's hand to remind them of our values. We also have a board with all the players' names on it. They get a red dot next to their name when a teammate recognizes them for doing something great in practice at a game or outside of school.

Organizing Drills

1. The game breaks down into 4 stages. This is where you fill in the blanks of the drills you want to teach
 - a. Offense
 - b. Transition to offense
 - c. Defense
 - d. Transition to Defense
2. Drills
 - a. Use fewer but stackable drills
 - b. Have your foundation drills. Your foundation drills are the core that can be stacked with progressions and constraints.
 - i. Map out progressions and constraints for each drill
 - ii. Progressions - as the team advances, the drill gets harder.
 1. Simple example. 1v1 to 2v2 to 3v3
 - iii. Constraints - This is typically a disadvantage or pressure situation for either offense or defense.
 1. Examples: 2v1, No dribble when playing 3v3, x makes in y time.
Only dribbling with the left hand
 - c. There are 3 phases of teaching. Drills progress through these three phases and help you create a focus for that one practice. In the first practice, for example, you may be in the teaching phase.
 - i. Teach
 - ii. Train
 - iii. Play
 - d. Know the point of precision - what is the most important thing for that drill

(see resources below - practice plan example)

Implementing an Offense in One Practice

The ABCs offense is a fast-paced motion offense that's easy to teach in one practice. It's rules-based and focuses on the fundamentals. Know your ABCs!

Three Actions - Simplicity Wins!

Without the Ball - 3 options

Goal: Create rim pressure

1. Always Be Cutting & Sprinting
2. Always Be Cutting and Screening
3. Always Be Creating Space

With the ball - 3 options

Goal: Beat one player, in one second, with one dribble. Holding a ball for more than one second is like a grenade in your hand.

1. Always Be Catching and Shooting
2. Always Be Catching and Scoring
3. Always Be Catching and Sharing

What to do WITHOUT the ball in the ABCs Offense

1. Always be Cutting & Sprinting

- a. Cutting creates rim pressure. Bolt through the lane with a sense of urgency and purpose.
- b. Passers and cutters are working together hunting for layups
- c. When to cut
 - i. A cut immediately follows a pass
 - ii. If you get dribbled at, cut
 - iii. If your defender steps across the 3pt line, cut
 - iv. If you see your ball handler under stress, cut to create a passing opportunity for yourself or the person filling in behind you.
- d. Bolt through the lane with a purpose
 - i. The first 3 strides are explosive and long
 - ii. The goal of the cutter

1. Get the ball back
 2. Clear the lane for the driver
 3. Create an opportunity for the filler
 - a. A high percentage layup is when the filler creates a draft drive off of the cutter
 - iii. The ball is a decoy for our cutters.
 1. Looking for burn cuts - this is when you see the back of your defender's head, and you cut to the basket to get the ball.
 2. The ball handler is hunting for layup opportunities by cutters
 3. If you see your ball handler under stress, cut and see if you A) can get a pass B.) player behind you can get a pass
 - iv. If you get stuck/stopped by a player on your cut, put your hands in the air, and that tells the ball-handler you are screening for them or posting in the lane
- 2. Always be Cutting and Screening**
- a. Screens: On ball, off ball, and ghost screen
- 3. Always be Creating Space**
- a. Race to Space. Space is the offense
 - b. After you cut, fill opposite the ball to the designated spot
 - c. Maintain 2 body lengths away from other players unless you are screening
 - i. Teaching Space: Show 5 perimeter spots on the floor and 6 interior spots. All action takes place at those spots. One person in a spot at a time. All perimeter spots need to be filled.
- 4. 3 basic Rules**
- a. If you pass right, everyone fills one spot closer to the ball. Cutter fills left or opposite direction he/she through the ball
 - b. If you drive left, everyone is in a circle motion to the left
 - c. If you drive right, everyone is in a circle motion to the right

What to do WITH the ball in the ABCs Offense

- Ball in your hand for more than one second is a grenade.
 - a. Beat one player, in one second, with one dribble
 - i. Always be Catching and Shooting
 - ii. Always be Catching and Scoring
 - iii. Always be Catching and Sharing
- Hunting for wide-open layups
 - a. When someone is in front of you, play off of two feet
 - b. When you see no one, finish with a traditional layup

- c. Drive and kick 3's
- d. Hunting for 10's, 9's, 8's.
 - i. Don't say, "we want a good shot" Explain it. Say, we want 10's and 9's this possession.
 - ii. 10 - Open layup
 - iii. 9 - 2-foot power
 - iv. 8 - Greenlight 3
- Establish 3 Non-negotiables. These are your must-dos without exception - examples below.
 - a. Power layup
 - i. Exception, when you don't see anyone else
 - ii. One-foot if you are quick and clever, and no-one around you
 - iii. Off of two feet if your shot is going to be blocked or bothered (if you see the defender's chest)
 - b. Drive and kick 3's
 - c. Peek and pump (pump-fake) on all closeout 3's
 - d. Dive to basket vs roll
 - e. Stampede - catch & rip, one-dribble finish
 - f. Only overhead or bound pass on inbound plays
 - g. On skip pass, the receiver MUST drive
- Secondly, give your players a Protection Plan - an insurance policy. What happens if I can't get to the rim or get stopped on a drive
 - a. Want to teach kids not to pick up the ball.
 - b. Barkleys
 - i. If you have 2-feet in the paint, you own it
 - ii. If you have one foot in the paint, your choice
 - iii. If you have no feet, view, and pass.
 - c. Nash
 - d. Stride Stop

How to Play Against a Zone in the ABCs Offense

1. Don't change or create a new offense against a zone - shift it. If you have one offense specifically for a zone and a different offense just for a man you'll be half as good at both.
2. Principles of play stay the same.
 - a. Cuts:
 - i. A cut immediately follows a pass
 - ii. If you get dribbled at, cut
 - iii. If your defender steps across the 3pt line, cut

- b. If you see your ball handler under stress, cut to create a passing opportunity for yourself or the person filling in behind you.
- 3. Filling on cuts
 - e. Cutter One fills high post-elbow or free throw line
 - f. Cutter Two bumps Cutter One to the short corner on the next pass. Cutter Two fills the high post area.
 - g. On the third pass or reversal, Cutter 3 bumps Cutter Two to the short corner, and Cutter One Races to Space.

How to Beat a Zone - F.A.S.T. P.A.S.S.

Goal: Get the defense to move, shift and be in recovery mode.

- **Fastbreak** - move the ball up the court quickly before they can get set up
- **Attack** the gaps with the dribble
- **Screen** (seal-in screens and ball screens, screens when ball is being reversed, especially at FT line)
- **Throw inside** (high post area, causes the defense to suck in and help)

- **Pass Fakes** (get defense to shift)
- **Always be cutting** (move with purpose)
- **Skip Pass** (reverse the ball)
- **Side Overload**

Fundamentals to teach in the ABCs Offense

- Cutting quickly and with a purpose
- Progression Passing & Catching
 - a. Foundation Passes
 - b. Chest
 - c. Bounce
 - d. Overhead Skip
 - e. 2nd level passing 5th grade plus
 - i. Twist - <https://youtu.be/qjoxfTljk-c>
 - ii. Flick (one-handed pass)
 - iii. Rugby (two-handed from the side)
 - iv. Hook - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0nEPzYpYUc>
- Ball-handling
 - a. Get rid of 1 dribble to nowhere, lateral dribble,
 - b. Unnecessary dribbles are devastating to your team. They:

- i. Kill your explosiveness
 - ii. Slow down your team movement
 - iii. Often trigger traps
- c. Use dribbles to go somewhere. Get someplace. Make something happen.
- Screen and Dive
- Layups
 - a. 2-footed
 - b. Regular
- Finishing around the rim
- Shooting
- Driving - rip and go.
- Mentality shift- holding on the ball too long
- What their Greenlight shot is

Press Break (On Court DEMO)

1. Don't change or create a new press break - extend the ABCs offense full court. Same rules apply

SLOB & BLOBS (On Court DEMO)

1. Don't change or create a new press break - extend the ABCs offense full court. Same rules apply
2. But if you must, see "Swipe File" in the resources section below.

Transition to Offense (On Court DEMO)

- Bolt: Big strides first 3 steps

Defense (On Court DEMO)

- Zone Buster: FAST PASS
- Funnel Down: Trap in
- Force Left
- Deny wings and other play help
- Trap first pass
- Man-2-man (see resource guide)
- Closeouts - touch and go
- Hands to the heavens

Transition To Defense (On Court DEMO)

- Bolt: Big strides first 3 steps
- Pinch & Tip
- Double-rebounder
- Full Court Press: 2-2-1, Man-2-Man

Create Your Language

It makes it easy for you to communicate quickly.

1. **Butter:** 10 second left in the quarter or shot clock
2. **WIN:** What's Important Now. Use when your players lose focus
3. **ABCs:** (See above)
4. **DIG:** Dignity, Integrity, Grace - when someone is about to lose their temper, argue with ref, get frustrated
5. **Bolt:** 3 big steps in transition or in the land
6. Stampede: rip and go to the basket
7. **51:** help defense, half between your man and player and one step back
8. **Peek and Pump:** For the receiver on a drive and kick, look at the basket, pump fake and drive
9. **No Vision No Comfort No Fouls:** when guarding the ball, be a crazy bird but don't foul - waving hands, talking.
10. **Red:** All-out blitz man-to-man defense, trapping, full court pressure
11. **Tag and Turn:** On a shot, hit defender to slow them down and go after rebounder
12. **Hands to the Heavens:** When you're guarding someone, raise your hands up to show ref, lean in with hips - mainly when offense is driving to the basket
13. **Bait and Plate:** Attack the middle of a zone defense to shrink it and create shot or drive opportunities for wings.
14. **Pinch & Tip:** In transition defense, slow ball handler down and create an opportunity for someone to come behind and tip ball out.
15. **Race to Space:** Cut through the lane and fill. Keep distance from teammate
16. **When in doubt, attack.** Being passive kills offense and defense. Attack offensively, Attack Defensively
17. **Bones over Cones:** play with defense. Easiest way to improve the transfer from drills to games, use a real body as quickly you can. Game like and it improves reads.

Tips for Managing Parents

1. Hold a parent at the start of the season
2. Over-communicate. Send individual notes on the progress their child is making

3. Give parents opportunities to get involved - especially when they comment on what you are doing
4. Listen to parents who voice concerns - but not after a game when adrenaline is high
5. Manage parent tensions with care

Resources

- Coach Bill - coachbill@basketballpracticeplans.com, 415.286.5606.
- Coaching Youth Hoops Podcast



- Coaching Youth Hoops Facebook Group.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/coachingyouthhoops>



- Swipe File - Offense, defense, BLOBs, drill library, other resources



- Basketballpracticeplans.com - kickstart your season with done-for-you basketball practice plans. www.basketballpracticeplans.com



About Coach Bill

I want to make it nearly impossible for you to fail.

Before I was a basketball coach, I ran start-ups in Silicon Valley. Like how many coaches get their start, I coached my son and daughter in their CYO league. Many times, running to practice late and without a plan.

I had no idea how to run a successful practice, let alone do it for an entire season (can you relate?).

So I did what most new coaches do – I searched Google and started piecing together drills that might work.

Many years and thousands of basketball practice plans later, I,

- Coach thousands of kids through my Level Up Basketball Training program,
- Coach High School basketball for over 10 years at two top ten California High Schools - Campolindo and De La Salle.
- Played Step Curry's basketball trainer in a TV commercial.
- Started the Coaching Youth Hoops podcast that reaches thousands of coaches worldwide.
- Coached the U.S.A. Basketball youth team during the 2016 Summer Olympics with former Dream Team player Chris Mullen.
- Started the largest 3v3 league in Northern California

An organized practice plan is one of the things I have always prided myself on (and now often sought after for advice). Each minute is accounted for and meticulously thought through.

A great basketball practice plan is more than just drills. It's an orchestrated symphony of players working toward a common goal. It's not always beautiful music – but it's progress.

The way many of us were coached, simply won't work for today's athletes. You need a practice plan that connects with today's athletes who have short attention spans and, quite frankly, can get access to all the same material you can.

You must establish a purpose for your practice, team, and season. I break the game down into the ABCs (quite literally) so everyone on the team understands it.

You can now access my knowledge in running a successful practice, team, and program.

Stop searching for the perfect drill and find a complete practice plan today.