

How to Teach Players to Dribble the Basketball

There are two ways to move the basketball. The preferred and quicker method is the pass.

However, if the defense is tight and the passing lanes clogged, the dribble is used to set up the offense. Since the dribble can only begin and stop one time it is in a player's possession, he should make his dribble count. Any dribble should have a purpose.

The dribble, along with the pass and the shot is one of the offensive triple threats every player must have in his arsenal. Use the dribble to:

1. Move the ball on offense.
2. Blow past your man to the hoop.
3. Escape from a tough and sticky defense.
4. Shoot.
5. Move around a screen and get off your shot behind it.
6. Get a better passing angle.
7. Freeze the ball in the closing minutes.

Don't pound the air out of the ball going nowhere. If you want to get from point "A" to point "B", do it with the least amount of dribbling that's possible. Once you put the ball on the floor, it should be to help you get where you want to go. If the dribble can't help you, pass to a teammate.

Isiah Thomas said, "The mistake that I see many young players make on the court is that they just dribble too much. Many of these players don't realize they're hogging the ball because they're too intent on their own dribbling. But while they are playing with the ball, four other teammates are standing around waiting for something to happen. Before you know it, the defense begins to tighten. More often, than not, the dribbler gets trapped and turns the ball over to the defense, which often scores two easy points."

How to Dribble

Contrary to what many young players actually do, dribbling is not done while staring at the ball. You dribble with your fingertips and pads of the hands without looking at the ball. Keep your head up at all times. Keep your eyes focused on what's happening on the court.

A properly inflated basketball will always bounce straight up at least 75-percent of the height from which it was dropped. Therefore, you don't have to watch the ball as you dribble. "See" with your fingertips. Simply have your fingers there to feel and control the ball.

To dribble, push the ball down by spreading the fingers and flexing the wrist. You don't need to push it down hard. Light pressure is enough. Also, keep your legs flexed and your back straight, ready to make a quick move.

All players should learn to dribble equally well with both hands. This ambidextrous ability will open up your offensive game. It will help discourage the defense from trying to overplay you on your strong side.

There is one important rule to keep in mind whenever you decide to put the ball on the floor. *Do not pick up your dribble, until you know what you are going to do with the ball!*

Types of Dribbles

There are about as many types of dribbles as there are players. The important ones will be discussed in this chapter. If you want to be a good player, practice enough on all that you can use them whenever a situation arises.

The Low Dribble

The low dribble is to be used whenever you are closely guarded. This type of dribbling simply entails keeping the ball low to the floor and in your control. Extend your dribbling hand and arm down as much as possible to shorten the distance the ball has to travel. Keep the elbow of your dribbling hand close in at your side. Dribble the ball on the side of your body away from the defender. The palm of your dribbling hand is kept over the ball. Don't watch the ball as you dribble. Look over the court and prepare your options. Use your other forearm to shield the ball from the defender. While being tightly guarded, be careful not to blatantly push or shove the defender with your forearm.

The Speed Dribble

Once you're in the open court, you need to go as fast as you can with the ball while still remaining in control of the ball and your body. Since you are not tightly guarded, keeping the ball from the defenders is not a priority here; however, maintaining top speed is a priority.

To run fast and dribble at the same time, push the ball out in front of you at waist height and run after it. Keep your head up so you can see the entire court, your teammates, and whatever defenders are in front of you. The faster you run, the farther out in front of you the ball has to be pushed. With this type of dribble, your hand is not directly over the ball as in the low dribble, but behind it (at nearly a 45-degree angle to the floor) so you can push the ball hard and in front of you with your arm completely extended.

The speed dribble requires a high dribble, but make sure that the bounce is not higher than hip level, else you may lose control of the ball as you sprint down court.

The Change-Of-Pace Dribble

This dribble is one of the most common and is used to make the defender think that you're slowing down or going to pick up your dribble and stop.

When your man is closely guarding you, slow your dribble down and almost come to a stop. Straighten up your back as if you are looking for a teammate to pass to, but still keep your dribble.

Once the man guarding you loosens up his defense, quickly bend over, dribble the ball out hard and long. Explode by him at top speed, protecting the ball with your free hand as you move around him. The dribbling hand slides from the top of the ball to behind it, to nearly a 45-degree angle to the floor.

The Crossover Dribble

The crossover dribble requires dribbling with one hand, then as you get close to your defender, pushing the ball out in front of you, over to the other hand, and exploding past him. This move is a good way to lose your defender, but, since the ball is unprotected as you make the crossover, it can be stolen by the defense if the move isn't done smoothly.

Keep the ball low as you dribble. If you are dribbling with your right hand, once you get close to the defender, bounce it over to your left side near your left foot. The right hand must be kept on the side of the ball in order to push it over. Keep your left hand ready to receive the ball, with your palm held perpendicular to the floor for a split second to stop the movement of the ball and then push the ball out in front of you. Stay low, shifting your weight by pushing toward your new direction with the inside of your right foot. Lower your right shoulder and use your trunk to protect the ball from the defense. Cut as close to your defender as possible. For best results, combine the crossover dribble with a change of pace.

The Between-The-Legs Dribble

This dribble is a quick way to move the ball from one hand to the other when you are closely guarded or when being overplayed and you want to change dribbling direction.

Let's assume you are dribbling with your right hand and want to change over to your left. Keep your dribble low. On the last dribble you take before the changeover, put your right hand laterally on the outside of the ball and push it hard between your spread legs. Your left hand must be close to your legs to receive the ball with the fingers spread out and pointed to the floor. Continue dribbling with your left hand.

The Reverse Dribble

This dribble is another to be used when you are closely guarded. Its major drawback is that the dribbler will momentarily lose sight of his own teammates and other defenders while the move is being made.

As you move toward the defender, stop hard for about a half second. Using your left foot as the pivot (assuming you are dribbling right handed), stay low and turn your back on your defender. To do this, without walking, move your right leg, right shoulder, and head to the left while pivoting on your left foot. Keep dribbling with your right hand as you pivot on your left foot. To maintain proper balance, don't keep your feet close to each other as you pivot. The right foot must be turned and pointed quickly in the new direction to assist the rest of your body in making the turn. For quick execution of the move, swing your right arm and shoulder to help with your rotation. Shift the right hand from the top of the ball over to your right side, pushing the ball from the side and swinging it around. Slap the ball hard on the floor with your first bounce. It must pass laterally over your left foot. The dribble is then continued with the left hand.

The Half-Reverse Dribble

Start the move just as you would the normal reverse dribble. Make a 90-degree turn and then come back to your original position. To be effective, the move must be done quickly. Keep your palm on the side of the ball for the first 90-degree turn and then switch it to the other side of the ball when you bring it back to the starting position.

The Hockey Dribble

The hockey dribble is a staggered dribble move, used to throw off a defender, that combines a head-and-shoulder fake and a change of pace. To make this move, stay low and keep the ball at your side. As you get close to the defender, make small "stutter" steps (short, quick, parallel steps) with your feet. At the same time make head-and-shoulder fakes to confuse the defense. If you are dribbling with your right hand, fake to the left with your left foot and left shoulder, continuing your dribble at the same time. Then quickly cut back, pick up speed, and push the ball out with your right hand. Move past the defender with your right leg leading the way. In some situations you may want to also use a crossover dribble to get by your man.

The Behind-The-Back Dribble

As you approach the defender on the right side, change your direction slightly to the left to make the move past the defender on your left. After you have taken your last dribble with your right hand, slide your palm over and then outside on the ball, swinging it behind and across your lower back, pushing the ball to your left side.

End the movement of your right arm as close to your left hip as possible. This will give you the most ball control. Once you have control of the ball with your left hand, increase your tempo as you make the first dribble.

To make this move work really well, it's important that the first bounce on the left side be made way out in front and to the side of the left foot.

The Backup Dribble

This is mainly a dribbling move used to escape a dangerous defensive situation. When dribbling with your right hand, turn your shoulder to the defender, push back on your left foot away from the defender, and simultaneously make a dribble back. Protect the ball with your left shoulder and arm.

Ball Handling & Dribble Drills

Dribbling is a skill that is only developed after many hours of having the ball in your hands. As with all offensive basketball moves, your dribbling skills will only improve through hard work.

When you practice dribbling, avoid as much as possible the temptation to look at the ball. An excellent drill for beginners is to simply take a basketball with you everywhere you go. Dribble the ball as you walk to school or go visit a friend. The next time you go out for a jog, take the ball with you and dribble it the entire distance. After some time you'll be dribbling the ball without looking at it because you've made it such a natural and instinctive act that you don't even think about.

Once you are adept with dribbling the ball without looking at it, start to work on the specific dribbling maneuvers (behind-the-back dribble, between-the-legs dribble, etc.) to perfect your court skills. It's important to remember that you first have to learn the actual dribbling mechanics of each move before trying to make the dribble move at game speed.

Practice them slowly, first. Increase the speed little by little after becoming comfortable with the ball at a slow speed. Following are some simple ball handling drills that you can work on by yourself.

Around The Legs

Keep your feet shoulder's width apart. Flex your knees and bend over at your waist. Holding the ball in your right hand, move it between your legs and around your left knee. Pick the ball up with your left hand, swing it around the front of your left knee and back to your right hand. Repeat. Do 20 repetitions of this drill on your left leg and then repeat it on your right leg.

Around The Knees

Keep your feet a few inches apart, flex your knees, and bend at the waist. Holding the ball in your right hand, pass it behind your knees to your left hand.

Pass the ball around the front of your knees with your left hand to your right hand. Repeat the drill 20 times going in one direction as quickly as possible. Change direction and repeat the drill again.

Around The Waist

Stand up straight with your feet a shoulder's width apart. Hold the ball at waist level in your right hand and pass it behind your back as far as possible to your left hand. Pass the ball around the front of your waist as far as possible to your right hand. Repeat the drill 20 times going as quickly as possible. Change direction and repeat the drill again.

The Figure-8

Keep your feet spread wider than a shoulder's width, flex your knees, and bend forward at the waist. Holding the ball at knee level in your right hand, pass it behind your left leg to your left hand. Pass it around the front of your left leg to behind your right knee to your right hand. Pass it around the front of your right knee to the back of your left knee. Repeat the drill 15 times going as quickly as possible. Change direction and repeat the drill. Don't watch the ball!

Figure-8 With Drop In The Middle

This drill is done exactly as the figure-8, except each time that you bring the ball between your legs from the front, drop it. Picking it up on the bounce, continue the drill as before. Repeat the drill 15 times going as quickly as possible. Change direction and repeat the drill. Don't watch the ball!

Between-The-Legs Run

This ball-handling drill is a good prelude to the between-the- legs dribbling drill. Assume a crouched position and begin moving slowly down court. As you move, pass the ball quickly from your right hand between your legs to the back of your left leg to your left hand. With the left hand, pass the ball around the front of your left leg, between your legs to the back of your right leg to your right hand. Repeat the drill continuously while moving down court.

Between-The-Legs Bounce And Catch

Holding the ball over your head with two hands, spread your feet slightly further than shoulder's width. Swing the ball forward and bounce it on the floor between your legs near your heels. Swing your arms back quickly and catch the ball with your two hands as it bounces up toward your hips. Repeat this drill 15 times as quickly as possible.

Ball Drop/Hand Clap

Here's a tricky drill that requires quickness and, since you won't be looking at the ball, a sense of where the ball is. Flex your knees, keep your feet together, and bend forward at the waist.

Holding the ball behind your knees, let it drop to the floor. Bring your hands to the front of your knees, clap them together, then quickly bring them behind your knees to pick the ball up before the next bounce. Repeat this drill 15 times.

Sit Dribbling

Sit on the floor with your legs crossed in front of you. With the ball in your right hand, begin to dribble it around your back as far over to your left hip as possible. Pass it to your left hand and continue dribbling in front of you as far as you can to your right hand. Repeat this drill 15 times and then switch directions.

Full-Court Speed Dribble

Move quickly down the court with the ball waist high and far out in front of you. Make the lay-up and head back up court, repeating the speed dribble and lay-up. Do this 6 times. Shoot 10 free throws, then repeat the drill again.

Crossover Dribble

Set up a series of folding chairs on the basketball court about 10 to 15 feet apart. Pretend that they are defensive players trying to grab at the ball. Begin at one end of the court and dribble around the chairs, weaving your way to the end. As you approach each chair, change your dribbling hand, remembering to keep the ball low and close to your body.

Reverse Dribble

Place three chairs 15 feet apart on the court and pretend that they are defensive players. Dribble toward them and make your spin move, using proper form and technique. When you arrive at the next chair, repeat the move. On your return trip, try to make the move with the other hand.