

## **The Basic Basketball Moves Without the Ball**

Offensive basketball is played mostly with the ball in one of your teammate's hands. Four-Fifths of the time, you don't have the ball. What you do with this time has a direct relationship to your and the team's success. It all starts with your fundamental position.

Your fundamental position is how you stand on the court. You must keep your body low, knees flexed, feet kept apart at shoulder's width, hands raised at chest level and close to the body. When you are in this position, your body is balanced. You are able to receive the ball and move in any direction. When quick movement is needed, your fundamental position keeps you set and ready to make them.

This "basketball position", as some coaches call it, is one of the least understood fundamentals of basketball. Young players often don't fully understand its relationship to shooting and scoring. Unfortunately, they often neglect to work on their basketball position. The "perfect player", however, maintains his basketball position from the starting tip to the final buzzer.

If a player is standing straight up, with his hands on his hips, he is not ready to make that split-second move. Correct positioning may not seem important; however, it is the foundation of your entire game.

### **Foot Placement**

Basketball is a game of quick moves, cuts, and pivots. To make any of these moves, properly, you must start with good foot positioning. How and where your feet are positioned has great effect on how the rest of your body moves. Therefore, it greatly effects the quality of your play.

Keep your feet a shoulder's width apart, or slightly further spread. The non-pivot foot should be slightly out in front of the other, with the toes of the pivot foot on the same plane with the heels of the front foot.

Either foot can be placed forward in this staggered stance. Generally, right-handed players will lead with their right foot and pivot on their left; while, left-handed players lead with their left foot and pivot on their right.

Both feet should be on the floor, with the body weight distributed over the full length of each foot. A common mistake is to put all body weight only on the balls of the feet. This tires the calf muscles and will also slow you down when you begin to make a move.

## **Leg Position**

Get in a crouched position so that your knees are comfortably flexed. When you keep your knees flexed, your muscles are "loaded," ready to give the power and quickness you want. When you stand straight-legged you lose this quickness, because your leg muscles are stretched out. Only when they first contract and then stretch out again will you be able to move with speed and power.

## **Arm Position**

Keep your arms and hands held close to your chest. The wrists and the elbows must be flexed so you are ready to receive the ball. This, also, helps the body to make quick moves. Keep your fingers spread out.

## **Head Position**

How you hold your head will affect your movement. If you hold it too far backward, or too far forward, your entire body is out of balance.

For proper balance, imagine a straight line running through the middle of your head, body, to a spot on the floor exactly between your two feet. Your head needs to sit right in the middle of this invisible line at all times. Your head is really the most important factor in body balance.

## **Move Quickly and Smoothly**

Basketball is a game of ever-changing tempos. In order to play the game effectively you have to get from one spot on the court to another as quickly and smoothly as possible.

It's quickness, rather than basketball talent, that counts for a good portion of your success in the game. If you can hit your shot consistently, you will have a certain value to the team; but, if you are slow, your offensive skills will be less value when compared to those of a quicker teammate.

Speed and quickness have similar qualities; however, they shouldn't be confused with each other. Your maximum level of speed that you can run up and down the court is a gift of God. It's an inherited trait; but, can be developed through practice. Even though you may not be the fastest runner, you can teach yourself to be quick.

You begin by always maintaining your "fundamental basketball position" and diligently work on your starts, stops, pivots, and changes of pace. These are simple, yet, little practiced basketball movements. They help eliminate wasted movement.

## **Quick Starts**

Always do your best to maintain the "fundamental basketball position." Most importantly, stay alert. Be ready to react and move.

When you make a movement to the right, start by turning your head in that direction. At the same time, shift your weight over to your right foot as you move. It's extremely important for you to keep low. Pump with your arms to develop a powerful drive. Keep your initial steps short and fast. Quickness is enhanced by not taking long steps. It's how fast you can move your feet that's more important than the distance you cover with each stride.

## **Quick Stops**

Just as getting a quick start is important in basketball, equally important is being able to come to a quick stop and still be in the "fundamental basketball position." There are many times, in the course of a game, where you get the ball on the run. If you are able to stop immediately, pivot, take a shot, or make a cut while maintaining your balance, you will be a dangerous offensive threat.

If you are off balance when you stop, you then have to take the time to set yourself up. This wastes time, if only for a second. This is about all it takes for the defensive man to regain any advantage you had over him.

There are two good ways of stopping on the court. It only takes a little practice to learn to do both properly. After a few practice sessions, these two stops become an instinctive part of your basketball repertoire.

## **The Quick or One-Count Stop**

This is the most basic stop in basketball. You make the stop off the run by landing with both feet on the floor at the same time. The heels touch first and your toes act as brakes to slow you down. Your knees are flexed, back bent slightly backward. Your forward movement is eliminated with this stop. By crouching as you land, you are now in the "fundamental basketball position." You are ready to shoot, receive a pass, or make a cut (a sharp, quick move made to get open) in another direction.

## **The Stride or Two-Count Stop**

The stride stop is used when you are moving forward and need to change or reverse direction. It is also a good stop to use when you are dribbling and ready to go up for a jump shot.

To perform the stride stop, land on your rear foot and then on your front foot. The rear foot becomes the pivot foot, so don't move it if you stop dribbling. Keep your knees flexed and your back tilted slightly backward to slow your forward momentum.

## **Pivoting**

Pivoting, or turning, requires you to keep one foot, your "pivot foot," stationary, while you turn, or spin, your body around on the ball of your pivot foot. Pivoting

can be done with, or without, the ball. In order to pivot properly, follow these simple rules:

1. Keep your "fundamental basketball position." That is with knees flexed and feet a shoulder's width apart, or wider.
2. Pivots should be made on the ball of your foot; therefore, lift up the heel of the pivot foot. If you pivot on your heel, you will lose your balance.
3. You can make a full (360 degree) pivot, a half, or even a quarter-turn pivot. Just remember to keep your body low and feet spread wide.
4. It is best to make the pivot by swinging with your arm and elbow pointing in the new direction. This helps the body move more quickly.
5. Pivots are made, both offensively and defensively, two ways:
  - o A front turn is made when your chest moves around the pivot foot. This is a good way to square up to the basket for a shot.
  - o A rear turn is made by leading with your rear end.
6. You should practice pivots on both your right and left foot. This prepares you for possible game situations.

### **Change of Pace**

The change of pace movement is a good offensive weapon and should be used throughout a game. It is a three part move used to lose a defensive man. You execute it by running, then slowing down your pace, straightening up your body slightly to give the defense the impression you are going to stop. Usually, this gets a defensive man to relax.

If you bend over again and quickly accelerate, your defensive man will be knocked out of balance. He won't be able to react quickly. You will be in a position to set up a play, receive the ball, or penetrate to the basket with the ball.

Change of pace is an important aspect of basketball. You should use this move with or without the ball. You can't be successful by playing the game at one speed.

### **Change of Direction**

This is an explosive move that is used when you want to shake your defender, free yourself for a pass, shoot a shot, or just move to another part of the court.

To change your direction as you run forward, place your outside foot down hard with the weight of your body on this foot. This helps stop your forward motion. Quickly turn with your hips, trunk, and head in the direction you want to go. Make sure that your outside foot is pointing straight. If you turn this foot sideways, you will never be able to generate enough power to push off explosively in the new direction.

## **Hockey Steps**

As you run forward, at a moderate speed, take a series of short, quick, parallel steps. Stay low with the knees flexed. Combine this with a change of direction move and you will have your defender scrambling behind, trying to catch up. Also while you are making these steps, alternately shake your shoulders and head. This will confuse the defense because, with different parts of the body going in different directions, the defense can't be certain which way you will eventually run.