

Basketball SKILLS & DRILLS



Jerry V. Krause

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Preface

Saying that basic skills are only for beginners is like saying that shacks need better foundations than skyscrapers. In fact the reverse is true. The higher a player or coach hopes to rise in basketball, the better his or her basic skills must be. Just as an error in stationary posture is amplified in movement, so too an error or weakness in a basic skill will disrupt performance of every higher-level skill.

In *Basketball Skills & Drills* I have provided thorough explanations of every skill, beginning with basic locomotor movements and leading to the fundamentals of offensive and defensive team play. Read the in-depth description of the skills, study the detailed drawings and diagrams, practice with the drills at the end of each chapter, and perfect and streamline your game from the bottom

up. The explanations are comprehensive yet simple to understand, and the illustrations make the skills apparent at a glance.

Part I of the book addresses the individual basketball skills needed to play the game while Part II builds on these fundamentals with basics of team play.

Basketball Skills & Drills distills over 30 years of basketball coaching (all age and skill levels and both genders) into concepts that are easy to understand, apply, and master. Thus, *Basketball Skills & Drills* can function as a textbook for coaching theory classes and teaching-basketball lab classes, a guide for coaches and instructors, or a handy reference on fundamentals for coaches, players, and players' parents alike.

Acknowledgments

My primary appreciation goes to the players—the young men and young women I have been privileged to work with and learn from. The opportunity to learn from those players has been the catalyst for developing this book. It is my hope that future players will benefit from it as much as I have from developing it.

To the outstanding assistant coaches who have been my foundation and support, I am especially indebted. Each has affected my approach to teaching the game and has contributed to the ideas presented here.

In addition to these people there are four I single out for their strong positive influences on my growth and development as a person and a coach.

To them I dedicate this book:

George Sage, the first head coach that I had the privilege to work with at the college level. He provided me with the opportunity and encouragement to become a college coach and physical educator. His example as a true professional, educator, and coach has been my continual model.

Jack Leighton, former chairman of physical education at Eastern Washington University and a man of high principle who has dedi-

cated his life to the physical education profession. He hired me in my first college teaching and coaching position and gave me the responsibility and freedom to grow and to develop my ideas.

John R. Wooden, former basketball coach at UCLA. He is enshrined as a player and coach in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. When I was a young coach searching for assistance, and Coach Wooden was at the pinnacle of his career, he was patient and understanding in providing personal time and help as well as a professional example through his coaching and teaching. I will always appreciate his accessibility.

Ralph Miller, with whom I had the privilege of coaching during the 1982-83 season. He is one of the all-time greats in basketball coaching. I have found him a master at simplifying the game of basketball and life. He is a consummate strategist as well as a fine teacher of fundamentals. I will long treasure his counsel and guidance.

A final debt of gratitude is owed to my primary source of inspiration—my wife, Christy, who has provided meaning and balance to my basketball world.

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Part I

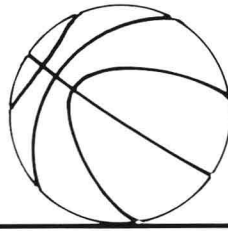


Coaching the Individual

Chapters 1 through 8 address the individual basketball skills needed for success in any system of play. Team patterns depend heavily on the sum of the individual skills each player brings to the team, as well as on the proper use of these skills at the right time.

Universally, basketball players spend most of their individual practice time developing the offensive skills that involve the ball—dribbling, passing, catching, shooting, and rebounding. Few coaches encourage players to work on individual defensive skills, or offensive skills without the ball. I recommend that you focus on a balanced approach to players' self-development, coaching athletes to devote time to all the skills of the game. As a coach, emphasize the individual defensive skills and offensive moves without the ball to balance the typical overemphasis of ball-related offensive skills. This will ensure balanced and complete development of *all* players.

Chapter 1



Fundamental Movements

One of your first and foremost tasks is to teach players how to move and control their bodies. Fundamental movements are sometimes called the *basics* of basketball; they are essential tools for each of your players to learn.

You will need to teach each player to move effectively (because the bottom line is getting the job done) and also efficiently (moving the best way). Teach players to conserve time and space and to reduce wasted motion so they can develop balance and quickness. In other words, your players should always move with a purpose.

Basketball is a game of quickness (hand and foot) and speed (overall body motion), used at the proper time. Your coaching should continually emphasize the principle of doing things right, doing things quickly, and then making the right move quickly at the right time.

The five fundamental positions and movements of basketball that you will teach are basic position, starts, steps, stops, and jumps.

BASIC POSITION (OR STANCE)

Your players need to learn to be ready to move at all times, developing the habit of a

good basic basketball position to ready them for quick movements. Teaching basic position is a challenging task, and you will need to be patient with younger players, who may not have the strength and muscle endurance to stay in position very long.

Teach players the feeling of good position—being ready for anything, feeling quick. Maintaining basic position is hard work; players must become comfortable in an awkward, unnatural, monkeylike position. Remind them frequently to get in and stay in their stance. If you consistently emphasize basic position early, your athletes will soon learn to assume it automatically.

Foot Position

The best foot placement in most situations is the staggered stance. Feet should be about shoulder-width apart, with the heel of one foot along the same horizontal line as the toes of the other (see Figure 1.1). This position should be used when a player needs to be able to move in any direction.

The parallel stance shown in Figure 1.2 is used for side-to-side movement, as well as for catching the ball and stopping, stopping after dribbling, and responding when a defender moves laterally. In time, players will learn which situations warrant which stance.

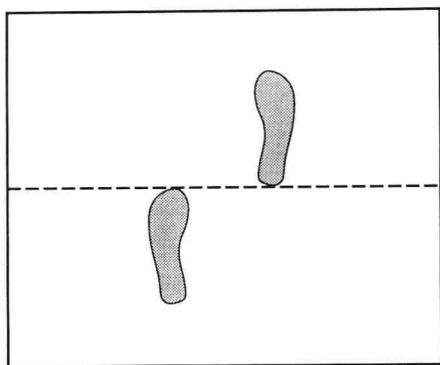


Figure 1.1 The staggered stance (top view). A heel-and-toe relationship, shoulder-width apart.

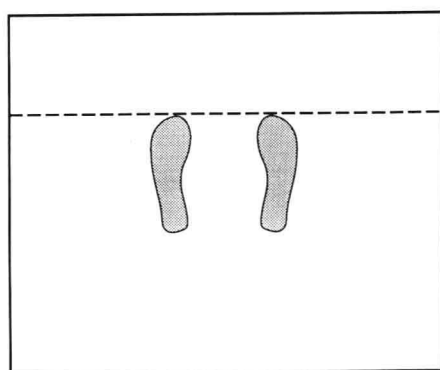


Figure 1.2 The parallel stance (top view). Toe-to-toe relationship, shoulder-width apart.

Weight Distribution

Body weight should be evenly distributed from side to side, from front to back, and between feet. Heels should be down, with most of the weight on the balls of the feet, although pressure should be felt on the toes and heels.

Players may incorrectly place all of their weight on the balls of the feet with the heels off the floor, but this position is slower—it requires that the heel be brought down before any forceful movement can take place. A good way to teach the feeling of proper position is to ask players to take an “eagle claw” position, with heels down and toes curled.

When players are on defense, they should add one more thing to their basic position—footfire. This means keeping the feet

active and in constant motion without leaving the floor surface, a technique that helps keep leg muscles ready for action. Have players imagine that they are standing on a bed of hot coals, but don’t let their feet leave the floor.

Head and Trunk Position

The head is a key to balance because of its relative size and location at the top of the body. Have players keep the head centered over the support base—the head should be the apex of a triangle, with the legs as two equal sides and a line between the feet as the base when seen from the front (Figure 1.3). The head is also to be centered from front to back. Players should be taught an erect trunk position with shoulders back and trunk slightly forward of vertical.

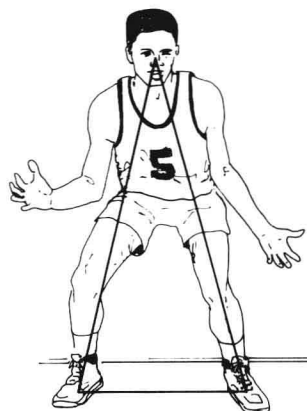


Figure 1.3 Head, the key to balance, carried up and alert—the apex of the triangle.

Arms and Legs

Teach players to keep their joints (ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows, and wrists) bent and ready. The hands and arms should be bent and kept close to the body for balance and quickness. Remember, the whole foot bottom should be touching the floor. Remind the players to “stay low”—the angle at the knee joint in back of the legs should be 90 degrees to 120 degrees to maintain a low center of gravity.

COACHING POINTS FOR BASIC POSITION

- Be ready for action.
- Keep knees bent with hands and head up; get low.
- Stay in the stance.
- Keep weight on the whole foot with the heels down.

STARTS, STEPS, AND STOPS

Starting, stepping (pivots, moves, turns), and stopping are the fundamental movements used to move effectively and efficiently in and out of basic stance. These are called offensive and defensive “moves.” Remember the coaching rule: teach players to first do it right (execute the skill correctly), then do it quickly, and finally, do it at the right time, every time.

A player’s overall speed is important but not as critical as quickness (hand-foot speed). As a coach, you need to strive to improve the quickness of each player. Thinking quick and being quick should be your players’ constant focus.

Starts

Starting is the first skill your players must learn that uses basic position. To start quickly players should shift their weight in the desired direction of movement. For example, to move to the left, body weight is shifted over the left foot by leaning to the left. Remind players that because the head is the key to balance it always leads the weight shift (Figure 1.4).

In order to be quick at the right time, players must remember that all motion change begins on the floor. This means taking short, choppy steps whenever a change of motion is needed. Teach players to keep their feet in contact with the floor as much as possible; teach them that they can use the floor to their advantage by staying close to it.



Figure 1.4 Moving laterally left: weight to the desired direction of movement (over left foot).

Front Foot First

From basic position, players should shift weight in the direction of movement and start by taking the first step with the nearest foot. For example, to move to the right, the first step is taken with the right foot; to move forward, the first step is with the front foot.

Point-Push-Pull

On defense, players should use a sliding motion. Have them keep feet at shoulder width and use very short, quick shuffle steps. This technique is called point-push-pull. The lead foot points in the direction of desired movement as a short, quick slide step (lead foot first) is taken (Figure 1.5). The force for the point and slide step comes from a push from the trail foot, which moves the body and transfers the weight to the lead foot. This is



Figure 1.5 Point and push.

quickly followed by a pulling slide step taken with the trail foot to regain basic position.

Players should learn to execute defensive starts and slides in side-to-side, forward, backward, and diagonal directions, all done with the head level. Watch for head-bouncing that shows that a player is bouncing along instead of sliding and is not staying in a stance. Such bouncing, known as the "bunny hop," means losing the floor as a friend and is a waste of time and space. Emphasize to players that the head must be kept level.

COACHING POINTS FOR STARTS

- Be ready to start by maintaining basic stance.
- Learn that using the floor works to your advantage; keep feet on the floor when starting.
- Shift your weight in the desired direction of movement, and lead with the head moving first in that direction.
- Stay down and pump the arms when starting.
- Use the principle of front or lead foot first.
- For defensive slides, use the point-push-pull technique.
- Move and start in straight lines.

Steps (Pivots)

Turning, or pivoting, is motion that rotates the body in a circular fashion around the ball of one foot while the player maintains basic position (Figure 1.6).

As the basic skill for beginning all motion changes, the pivot is one of the most important player tools for quickness and balance. It is also one of the least used and poorly learned skills in basketball.

Pivoting can be done upon either foot as the stationary center of rotation. When body rotation is toward the front—a pivoting motion that moves the trunk forward around the pivot—the pivot is called a front turn (see Figure 1.7). Likewise, a rear turn is used to pivot a player's backside to the rear (Figure 1.8).

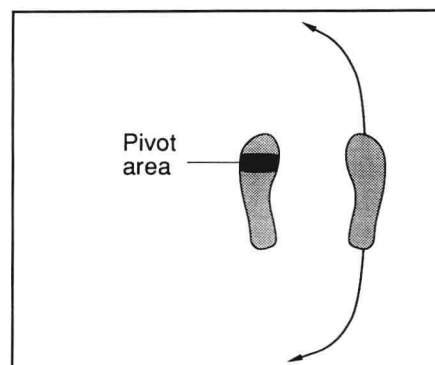


Figure 1.6 Pivoting: a rotation of the body where the ball of the nonpivoting foot remains stationary.

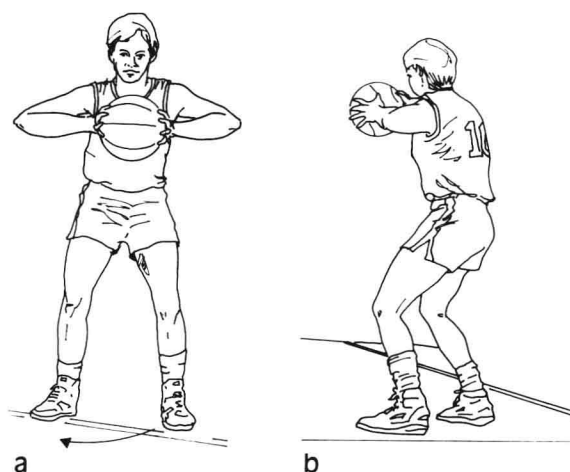


Figure 1.7 Right foot pivot—front turn. Starting position (a) and ending position (b).

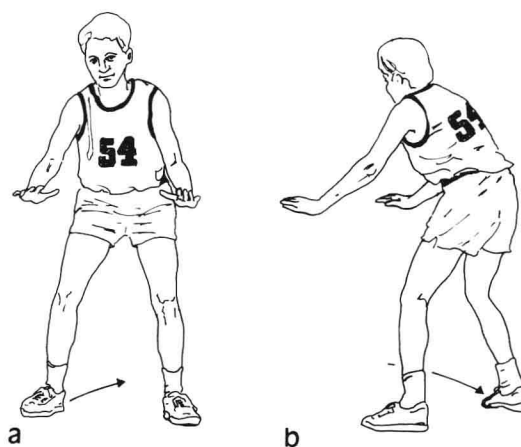


Figure 1.8 Left-foot pivot—rear turn. Starting position (a) and ending position (b).

Players must learn to make pivots with and without the ball on offense. On defense, the pivot is the first move that players use when changing from one position to another and

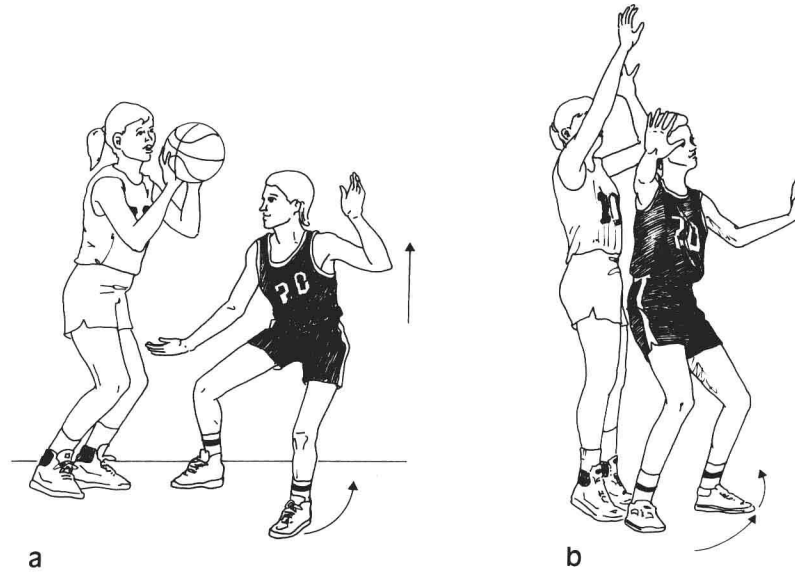


Figure 1.9 Changing position (a) and rebounding (b).

COACHING POINTS FOR PIVOTS

- Stay down in basic stance and keep the head level.
- Keep the feet wide apart.
- Maintain balance and keep the head up.
- Pivot quickly but properly.
- Use the pivot to turn up to a half turn (180 degrees); repeat pivots if more turning is necessary.

when rebounding, as illustrated in Figure 1.9.

Stops

Being quick with balance and control means that players must be able to use basic position, start properly, move quickly (by running or sliding), and finally stop quickly in a balanced position.

The two recommended basic basketball stops are the one-count “quick stop” and the two-count “stride stop.”

Quick Stop

The preferred stop for beginners is the quick stop, sometimes called the jump stop. The quick stop is executed at the end of a running or sliding motion. When running, a player

does a quick stop by jumping slightly from one foot, skimming the floor surface, and landing in a parallel or staggered stance (basic position—see Figure 1.10). Both feet hit the floor at the same time (one count).

The quick stop is almost always useful because it conserves time and space—it takes only one count and occurs quickly, it can be used on defense or offense (with or without the ball), and it is a complement to the pivot, one of the primary tools of body control and movement. Basketball rules allow players to use either foot for pivoting after a quick stop. This gives them a wide variety of motion

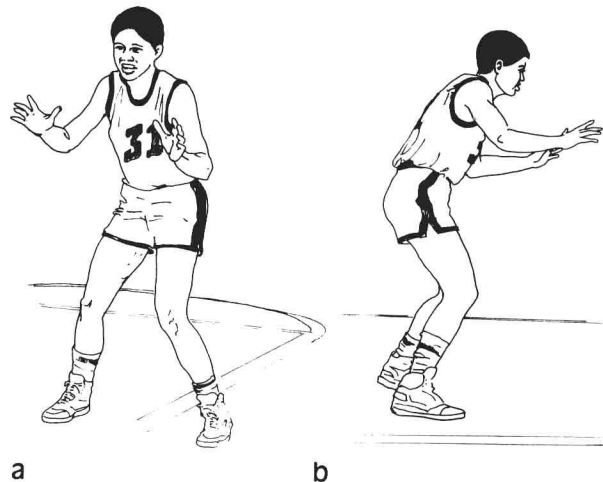


Figure 1.10 Quick stop (a) and landing in basic position (b).

COACHING POINTS FOR STOPS

- Use the quick stop unless changing direction (180 degrees) when running; then use the stride stop.
- When using the quick stop, jump from one foot and land in basic position on two feet at once. Stay close to the floor.
- Stay low and sit on the back foot when making the stride stop.

possibilities with control and balance. The quick stop is important for getting into quick basic position for shooting, passing, or dribbling and can be used very effectively after dribbling or receiving a pass.

Stride Stop

The stride stop is a two-count stop executed by landing on the rear foot (first count) with the front foot hitting immediately afterward (second count). Its primary use is to reverse direction when running forward. For all other motion situations, players should use the quick stop.

JUMPS

Jumping is an especially important skill in a sport with an elevated goal. Coaches often consider jumping a natural ability that players have or do not have and a skill that cannot be taught. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There are basic principles for improving jumping skill. First, players need to be taught to be in basic stance ready to jump. When players learn to be ready to jump, then it is possible for them to jump quickly in any situation.

Second, your players will be able to jump higher if they increase the muscle strength in their legs. Coaches should help players improve their leg strength through resistance training as well as their jumping skill.

Third, it should be pointed out to players that how they land after a jump will deter-

mine how quickly and how high their next immediate jump will be. The best landing position is in basic stance with balance and a wide base. A player is then ready to jump again. Body position and control are best taught when players have first learned to jump using both feet and both arms.

The sections that follow explain how to execute two-foot jumps, one-foot jumps, and quick jumps and when to use each one in game situations.

Two-Foot Jumps

A two-foot takeoff for jumping is slower than jumping from one foot on the move. It is best used when players are in high-traffic situations (such as battling a crowd of players for a rebound) or on power lay-ups with close defenders.

The takeoff foot (or feet) should be planted firmly before the jump is made (players should visualize themselves stamping their feet through the floor) to provide maximum leg-muscle contraction.

Teach players to use momentum transfer whenever possible, by (a) using the forward momentum of a running jump with forceful contact on the takeoff foot (or feet), and (b) swinging the arms forcefully to add to the body's momentum (when time and space permit) (Figure 1.11).

One-Foot Jumps

Jumping from one foot is beneficial when movement and maximum height are required. Players should know how to do one-foot takeoffs so they can attack the basket on lay-ups and jump high toward the basket or backboard.

Quick Jumps

Quick jumps are the best compromise between conserving time and space and maintaining body position and control. A quick jump should be used wherever there is congestion, contact, or a contested jump around the basketball. These are two-foot-two-hand

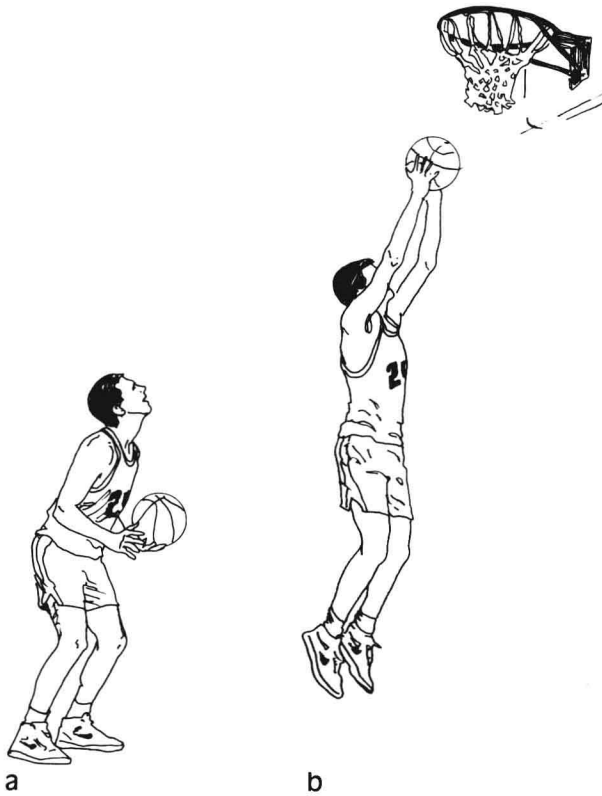


Figure 1.11 Ready position (a) and quick jump (b).

jumps without momentum that start from basic position. The hands are held head high with the upper arms near horizontal before a quick jump is made.

COACHING POINTS FOR JUMPS

- Be ready to jump—Get in basic position, jump, and land in basic position.
- Jump from two feet with two hands most of the time (especially when rebounding).
- Use a two-foot takeoff for power and control and a one-foot takeoff for speed and height.
- Use momentum transfer from running forward and from the arms swinging upward whenever there is time.
- Use quick jumps whenever possible.
- Use quick stops and quick jumps when shooting a jump shot.

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT DRILLS

STANCE CHECK

Purpose: To develop the skill of recognizing various basic stances, getting in a basic stance, and maintaining that stance.

Equipment: Half-court floor space (minimum).

Procedure: Players spread out on the basketball court facing the coach, assume a basic stance variation as directed, and maintain the stance while it is checked by a coach (or partner).

STANCE MIRROR

Purpose: To self-evaluate stance variations by recognizing the “look” of a good stance.

Equipment: Player and full-length mirror.

Procedure: Each player checks all stance variations in front of a mirror, holding each basic stance at least 5 seconds. A partner system may also be used if a mirror is not available.

LINE STARTS, STEPS, STOPS

Purpose: To develop skill in starting, pivoting, and stopping.

Equipment: Full court.

Procedure: All players are divided into four groups behind the baseline at one end of the court with the coach in the middle (Figure 1.12). The coach calls out the option players are to perform.

Options:

- Stutter-steps—Start from baseline and go to the opposite end line, keeping the hands up, and making the shoes squeak. Remember to use the floor to your advantage.
- Change-of-pace moves—Alternate two or three slow and fast moves after a quick start. Be quick and use a varied number of steps (avoid the same patterns).

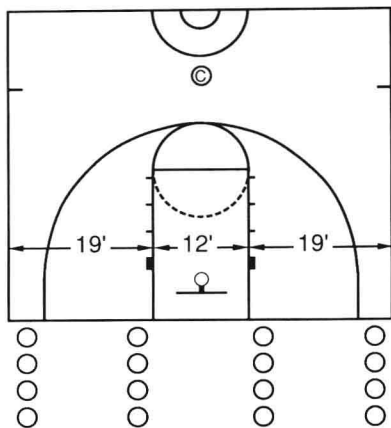


Figure 1.12 Line starts, steps, and stops.

- Pivots—Full front and rear turns (the same as stride stop variation).
- Split-vision jog—Four players start simultaneously and jog at half speed focusing on the far basket while using their peripheral vision to stay in a straight line from side to side.
- Quick stops—At free throw line, half-court line, and opposite free throw line.

Note: Coaches may hold players in any quick stop position to check their position and correct mistakes. Players may imagine they are dribbling a ball or sprinting without the ball (on offense). If defensive quick stops are used, the feet should be active at all times.

- Stride stops—Progressive forward and backward moves are made from the

baseline to the free throw line (stride stop, reverse), back to the baseline (reverse), from the baseline to the half-court line (reverse), back to the free throw line, and then to the opposite free throw line, back to the half-court line, and then to the opposite baseline, and so on (Figure 1.13).

- Spacing jog (a more advanced skill that can also be used with change-of-pace moves)—The first four players start on command and move at their own paces. The next person in line starts when the player ahead is 15 to 18 feet away and maintains that distance. This is especially challenging in combination with change-of-pace moves.

Note: The coach can advance to a “whistle stop” drill; four players start and on each short whistle they stride-stop (or quick-stop), then reverse and sprint until the next whistle. The next group of four players always starts on the second whistle after the previous group. The drill continues until a player reaches the opposite baseline and all players have run the floor. This is an excellent conditioning drill.

Drill Reminders

- Each variation is done in one circuit (down and back).
- The first players in each line should always come to basic position on the

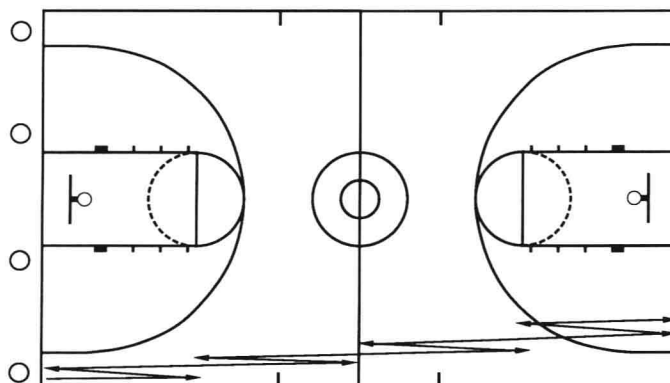


Figure 1.13 Stride stops option.