



# Building an Introductory Defence Course

## Importance of Terminology

As coaches, we often assume players speak the same language as we do. They Don't. Make sure you define the different parts of the court and teach the court markings. Line players up at half court and call out court markings for players to run and stand on to learn and visualise terminology.

## Goals for defence

1. Make the offense shoot the farthest shot from the basket.
2. Contest every shot. Contesting means making it difficult for the offense to get a clean shot off. This can be accomplished by having one or two hands up to block the shooter's view of the basket while guarding tight.
3. Limit the opponent to one shot only on an offensive possession.

## The defensive stance

Proper defensive stance begins with the feet out wider than the shoulders, the weight on the balls of the feet and the knees bent. Keep the hips back and the chest and eyes up. The arms should be spread out wide, making the defender look as big as possible.

Beginner players have the tendency to arch their backs and hunch over, bend their knees into each other or place their hands on their knee, as this position can be difficult to comfortably maintain over a long period of time.

Advanced defenders will not only be comfortable holding this stance in place, but also maintaining proper form while on the move.

Quick close outs, wide slides to cut the ball handler off, understanding how much distance to beep between oneself and the offense and pressuring the ball when it is picked up are key when applying the defensive stance to game situations.

Teach a proper, balanced stance first before adding any side to side or forward or backward sliding movement.

## Close out technique

- The act of the defender going from a denial or help position away from the ball to an on-ball position as the defender's player receives a pass.
- Simply running out to the player is risky as the offense can lower their shoulder and drive past the defence. The defender must approach the offensive player in a low close out with choppy feet ready to move on a drive and high hands to deter an automatic catch and shoot.



- The purpose of the close out is to contest the shot and decrease the scoring percentage.
- defence sprints to the shooter and for the final third of the distance uses short, choppy steps.
- Throw both hands up high while remaining low in a stance.
- Be ready to step laterally at any time if the offence attacks.
- When closing out to a perimeter player, angle the feet so the offense is forced to the baseline.
- One the drive, throw the baseline slide leg out with a big first step.
- When the ball is picked up, body up to the offensive player and trace the basketball with both hands.
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#### **Close out 1-2 Pick Ups**

- Close out to the shooter with both hands high then maintain active hands on the ball.
- Guard the ball handler with pressure for two steps.
- When the dribble is picked up, close the space by bodying up and trying to get a deflection.

#### Defensive positions

On Ball defender – The defender guarding the player with the basketball. Position should always be between the basketball and the basket. Push offensive player to the corner baseline, not allowing a pass or drive to the middle, which shrinks the amount of court to protect.

Denial Defender – The defender guarding the player one pass away from the basketball. Position should always be halfway between the player being guarded and the basketball. Arm closest to the ball is extended with the inside hand thumb pointed down.

Help Side Defender – The defender guarding any player more than one pass away from the basketball. Position should always be in the middle of the court to help if the on-ball defender gets beat on the drive. Constantly see both the defender and the basketball and point to each.

#### The Passing Lane

The passing lane is the imaginary line between two offensive players, when one of those players has the basketball. The defender guarding the player without the ball must be positioned halfway between the ball and their player. The passing lane is constantly changing as players move, with the angle or length of the passing lane adjusting. To provide a visual representation of the passing lane, have the two offensive players hold a retractable tape measure to make an actual line between them. Have the offense move so players see how the defender must constantly reposition to remain in the middle of this lane.



## 2x2 Help Side defence

In addition to guarding, one's assigned player, help side defence means helping to guard the offensive player with the ball should the defensive teammate get beat on the dribble. The key principle of help side defence is "the ball scores". A player only focused on guarding their assigned player is not committing to the team goal of not allowing the ball to score. Teaching players 2x2 help side defence means teaching awareness of what's happening on the court, beyond just the assigned player, so a player can step up and help their teammate stop the ball from scoring.

## 3x3 Help and Recover

With three players on the court on offense and defence, teach the defence how to help on the middle or baseline drive, as well as how to recover back to the original offensive player. The help defence must help early rather than late, don't let the ball advance to the basket. A quick, jab motion cuts off the dribbler. The help defender cannot linger and must recover back to the originally guarded player as soon as the threat of the offensive drive is stopped. Build up to live 3x3 with the offense trying to score and then 4x4 help and recover.

Help defence is a bounce and get back action, not a full rotation. Always help early on the drive rather than late. Baseline help defence must be outside of the lane.

## Zigzag defensive slide footwork

- Stay in a low athletic stance.
- Push off the back foot and do not bring the feet together on the slide.
- Utilize a drop step to change direction.
- Keep the hands above the waist and the head straight at the ball handler.

## Defensive slides

- Dictate the direction in which the offensive player will dribble.
- Move the foot in the direction the offence is going. If the offence dribbles to their right, defence will step with their left foot first.
- Point the toe of the foot you are moving first in the direction you are moving.
- Keep the eyes on the waist of the offensive player.

## Jumping to the ball

- Jumping to the ball is a quick defensive action.
- Defensive players need to physically jump to reposition when the offense passes the ball.
- Defender must see both their player and the player with the ball.



## On-ball defensive obligations

Top Defender – Do not allow a drive inside the elbows.

Wing Defender – Do not allow a middle drive.

Baseline Defender – do not allow a baseline drive.

## Basic Ball Screen Options

Switch – Two defenders involved in screen switch guarding assignments on the two offensive players.

Hard Hedge – Screeners defender jumps out to stop drive off the screen until another defender recovers back to ball.

Jam – Screeners defender jams up against the screener to prevent a roll as other defender goes under the screen.

Blitz - Both defenders involved in screen double team the ball handler to make dribbling or passing difficult.

Step Back – Screeners defender sags off, creating an alley for the other defender to slide under the screen.

## Transition Defence Principles

- 1.** In a transition from offence to defence, all players must sprint back down the floor on defence.
- 2.** Prioritize protecting the rim and stopping the attacking ball.
- 3.** Communicating the location of the basketball and the offensive players are important aspects of effective transition defence.
- 4.** Drill disadvantage situations to practice defensive scramble and rotations to stop the offensive attack.
- 5.** On the transition sprint to the backcourt, players must be aware of the location of the ball, the offensive players filling lanes and key areas on the court to protect. Defenders should sprint down the middle lane to protect the basket first before filling a defensive spot.

## 2x2 Deny and Help drill

- Help defender stops the baseline drive.
- Defenders rotate from ball side to help side.
- Communication gives the defence confidence and aids in organisation.



### 7-point defensive drill

- Regardless of position, every player should learn how to defend every position and any scenario.
- Quickly jump to the ball and adjust to the pass and cutting offence.
- Apply proper defensive form and technique in each situation.