

## PASSING (Progression teaching)

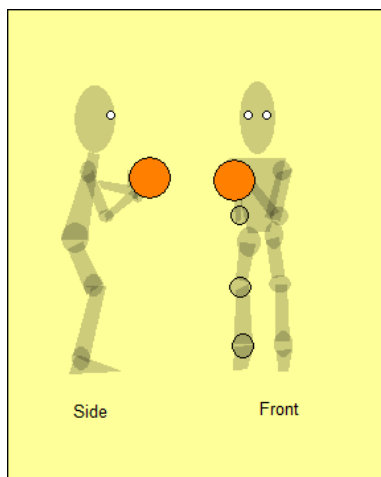
Passing is not an individual skill like shooting or ball handling. It is a core skill by which a player starts to build a relationship with a teammate. Great teams are teams that pass the ball with pride.

*Trust among teams is built with a good and accurate pass.*

The different game situations determinate the type of pass. Read the defence to choose the type of pass that is needed to be made. Passing is a need every single player on the team has. Let the players choose as many different types of passes as possible (build their own fantasy).

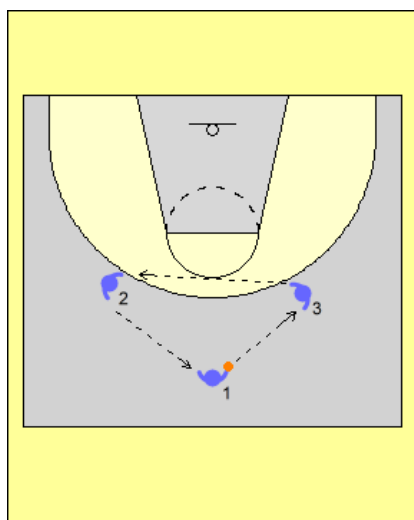
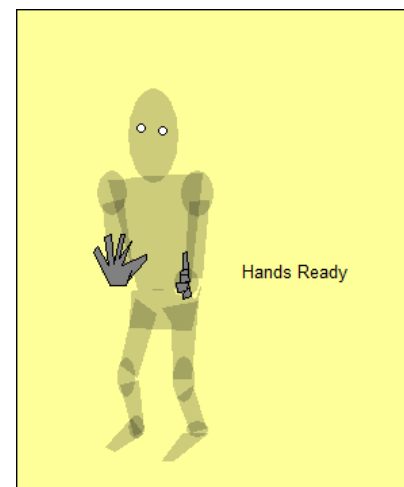
### Key points:

- Hands preparation (receiver) – “Show hands”
- Position where the ball has to be released – “From shoulder “
- Timing (passer) and target (receiver) – “On time and target”
- Pass under pressure (pivot foot) – “Keep the ball in front of pivot foot”
- Make the pass shorter (passer and receiver) – “Step to the ball”



When teaching passing, start the player with the ball in a good ready position (first phase of shot form). The player should have their wrist set and is ready to pass, dribble or shoot.

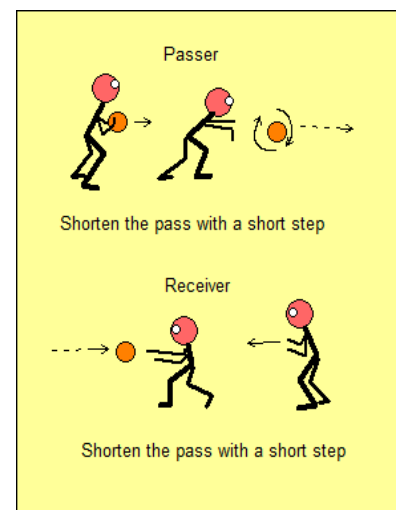
The receiver should be in the same ready position, showing their hands.



### Side Pass

Start practicing passing in a group of three players in a triangle formation. This allows them to work on a side pass which is much more prevalent than the chest pass once defence becomes a factor in the game.

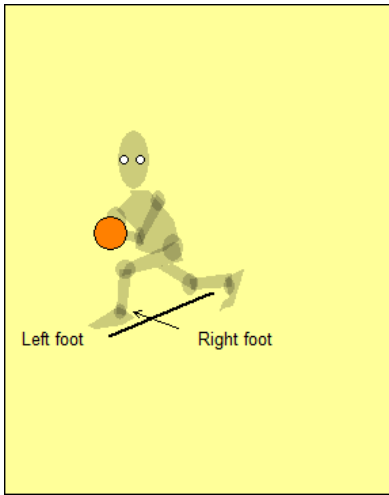
Both the passer and receiver have a responsibility to shorten the pass.



This is accomplished by stepping into the pass and stepping to receive the ball. A good passer must be

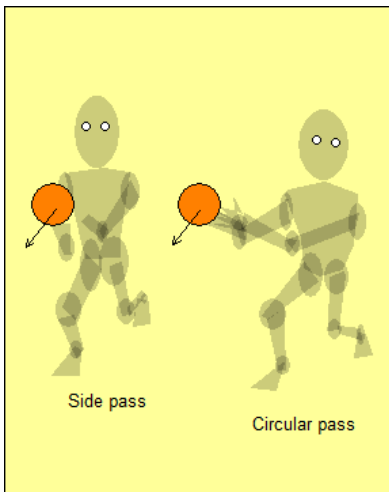
able to step with either foot (depending on which foot has been established as a pivot foot). Some key points to watch for:

- The player uses the same universal release, wrist flick, as in shooting the ball.
- The guide hand is still involved; this is not a one-handed pass, 1.5 hands.
- Be able to use both pivot feet.
- The step is short, this allows the player to:
  - Generate power in the direction of the pass
  - Shorten the pass
  - The player can push back if the pass is not open
- Notice that the shoulders of the passer get closer to the knee when passing. This helps with balance and power generation.



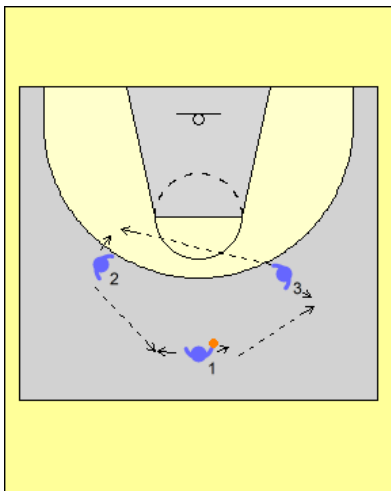
### Error Detection

When doing a crossover step the players will often cross their upper legs. This puts the player in an unbalanced position. When stepping, there should be a twisting of the hips that allows the player to stay on balance by stepping without crossing the upper legs.



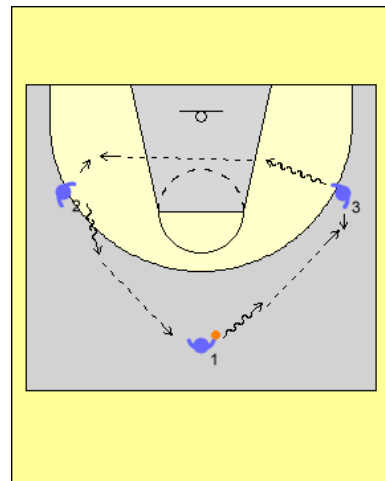
### Circular Pass

The players need to be able to throw a circular pass from the ready position. This pass is needed when the defence is close. It is important for the coach to be able to explain the subtle difference in the two passes. The side pass is pushed from the shoulder. The circular pass is more of a side-arm toss around the defence. For this reason the elbow must lead the ball, ever so slightly, just before release. If the elbow leads, the player can only generate power from a wrist flick. It is still a 1.5 handed pass.



When practicing the circular pass the receiver will give a target outside their body frame and will have to move to catch the ball.

Passing off the dribble can be added. The players need to be able to make the side pass and the circular pass from a stationary position and using a dribble. Be sure to go both right and left.



It is important that the coach brings attention to the players about the timing of the pass. When a pass is made the player receiving the ball has an appointment to meet the ball at the right spot at the right time. The coach can assist the players by using words *on time*, *late* or *early* to define the timing. Words such as *on target*, *high*, *low*, *inside* and *outside* can help the players understand the proper spot.

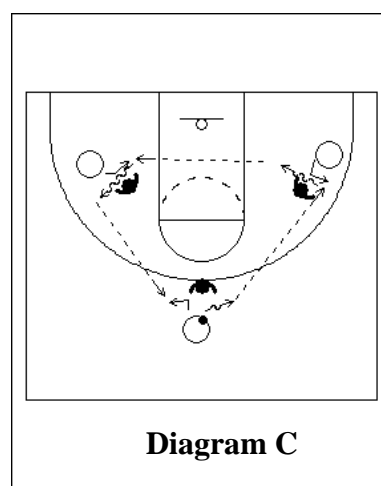
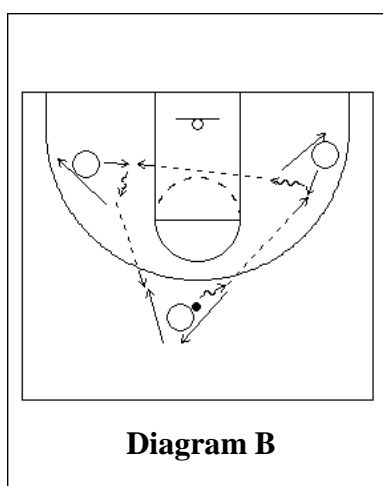
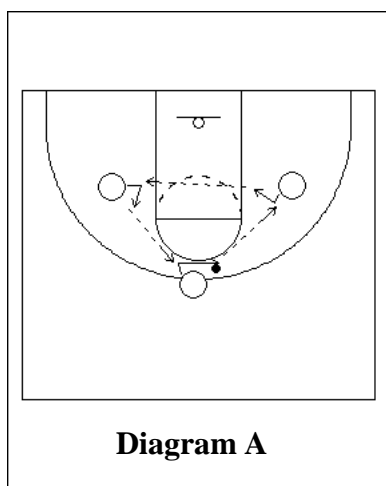
## EXERCISES

**Triangle passing:** Progression teaching in groups of three. The players practice form passing – shoulder pass or circular pass (outside shoulder line). Shoulder pass: leaves from shoulder and is passed in a straight line.

**Circular pass:** Leave from shoulder, but the ball moves outside the shoulder line to get around the defender.

Points of Emphasis:

- Take a short step towards the target
- The ball should be at the shoulder (phase one) to pass
- Finish the pass with a follow through like phase three of shooting (This is the universal release of the wrist used in passing, dribbling and shooting)
- The passer must bring the chest closer to their knee (stay low)
- The receiver must take a short step towards the passer in order to shorten the pass.



Try to always pass with the arm on the same side as the target (right hand when passing to the right, left hand when passing to the left) and pass only if the receiver is showing a target with hands ready.

**Diagram A** – The passer looks at the receiver (eye contact) and waits to see the target hands of the receiver (target). The passer takes a short step and makes a shoulder pass to the receiver. The receiver steps with the foot closest to the passer when the ball leaves the passer's hand (timing). Upon catching the ball, the receiver pivots and makes a crossover step to make the next pass. The players should never cross their femurs when doing this drill. They will lose their balance.

**Triangle pass:** The same drill as **Diagram A**, but add a guided defender. The receiver has to show the target and hold the defender with the forearm before stepping to meet the pass. Make a crossover step before the next pass.

**Diagram B** – Triangle passing: make a dribble before the pass (passer). The passer returns back to the original spot. Meet the pass with a few short steps (receiver) before catching the pass. Catch the ball with the foot closest to the passer. Next, make a crossover step (the foot furthest from the original passer is the pivot foot) before the pass to the next receiver.

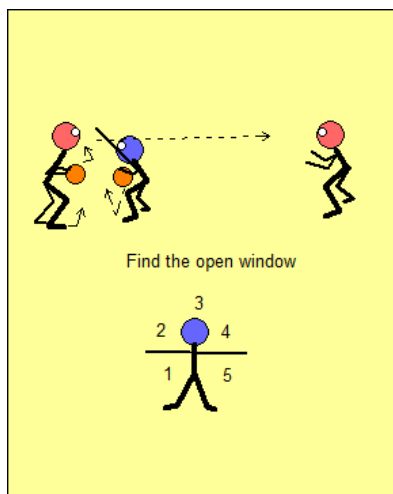
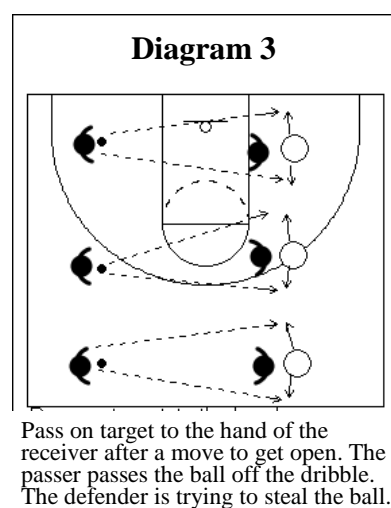
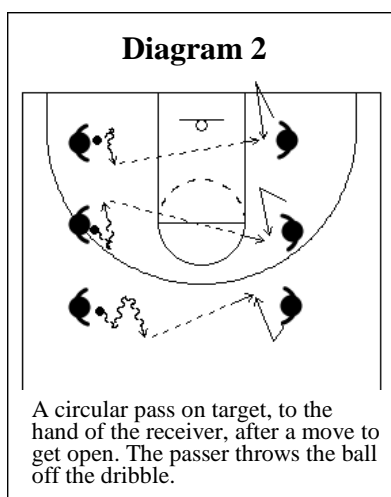
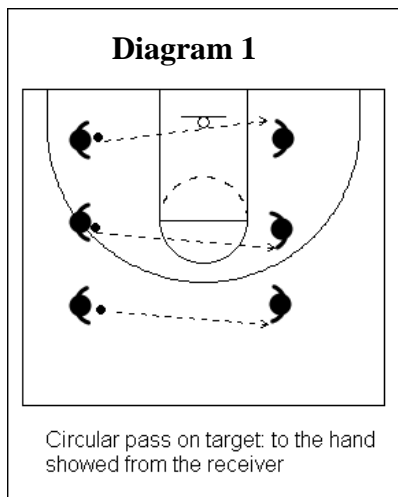
**Diagram C** – Add a soft defender (Phase C of the teaching progression). The same drill as **Diagram B**, but add a guided defender. Offensive player has to hold the defender with the forearm before releasing to meet the pass. The player dribbles by their defender to make the next pass.

## **ON TARGET**

**Diagram 1** – Groups of two. One player shows a target while other practices shoulder or circular passes. Receiver must meet the pass by taking a short step.

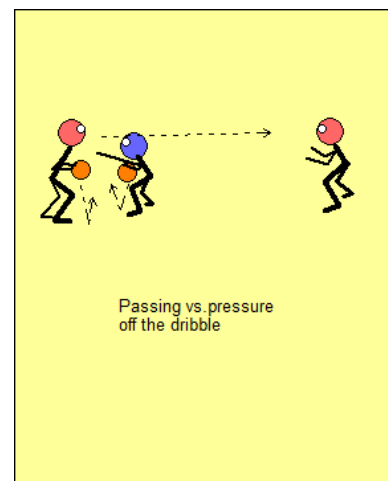
**Diagram 2** – Same setup as previous drill, but this time ball-handler must move side-to-side. When the receiver shows target hands, the passer must pick up the ball and execute the shoulder pass and get it to the receiver on time (At the appointment – the ball and the receiver must arrive at the right spot at the right time). The receiver must still meet the pass with a short step and catch with two hands.

**Diagram 3** – Variation, add a soft defender facing the passer. No eye contact; the defender cannot see where the ball will be passed. The passer must work on faking. The passer is passing to the appointment spot not to the spot where the receiver begins. The receiver needs to move first by indicating a target.



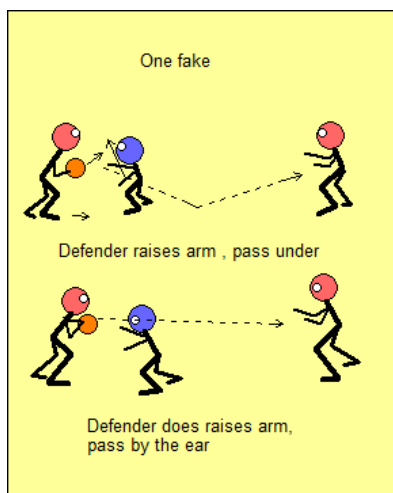
### Passing Versus Pressure

Here is a version of the previous drill that focuses on reading the open window. It helps with the passer's awareness. In this version, the passer is static and the defender is dribbling a ball. The dribbler can change hands and is trying to deflect the ball. The passer must read which of the five windows is open to pass through. It is recommended that the passer and receiver start close together at first. If not, the quality of the passes will be poor.



In the second version, the passer is also dribbling. The drill can be loaded by the passers passing to the receiver only when the target is shown. It cannot be stressed enough that the coach must make error detections and corrections. Many players will focus on the outcome and make a lazy, loopy, overhead pass. The coach must ensure the players focus on the process. All of the correct footwork and body position must still be in place.

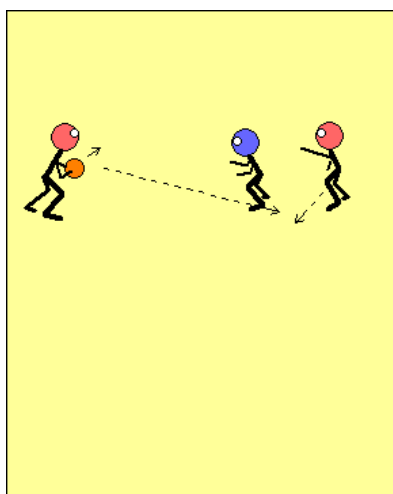
In the final version, the defender is not dribbling. The defender can cover two of the five windows.



### Pass Fake

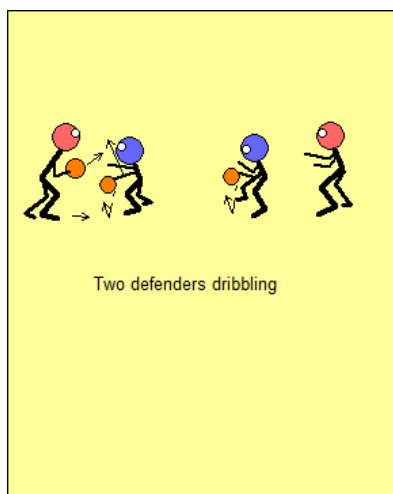
The passer should only make one fake when passing to a teammate. This is a shrug of the shoulder and the ball. It is either a shrug up or down. The passer should stay compact so they can read the reaction of the defender quickly and make a quality pass. If the defender reacts to the shrug up, pass under the arm. If the defender does not react, pass by the ear. The opposite is true for the shrug down.

When the offensive player makes more than one fake, the defender will start to randomly move their arms. The chances for a deflection increase.



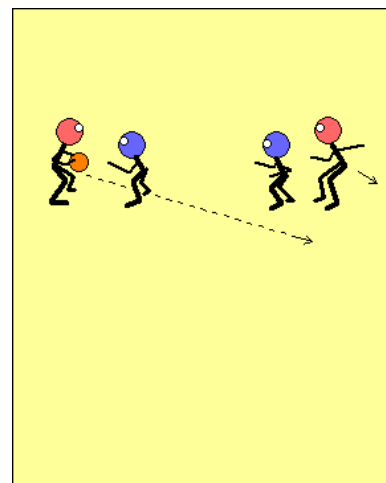
### Fake the Defender Off the Ball

It is also important the passer learns to fake the defender off the ball. In this version of the drill, the defender plays with their back to the receiver. The passer and receiver must communicate with target hands as to where the pass will be made. The defender tries to read the passer's eyes. A smart defender will start to guess that sometimes the pass will be opposite of where the passer is looking. The fakes must be convincing. The timing of the pass and the movement of the receiver is very important. The receiver must break first. This allows the passer to judge the speed and timing of the pass.



In this version both defenders are dribbling. It gives the two offensive players a slight advantage. At the same time it is improving the ability of the defenders to dribble and not watch the ball at the same time.

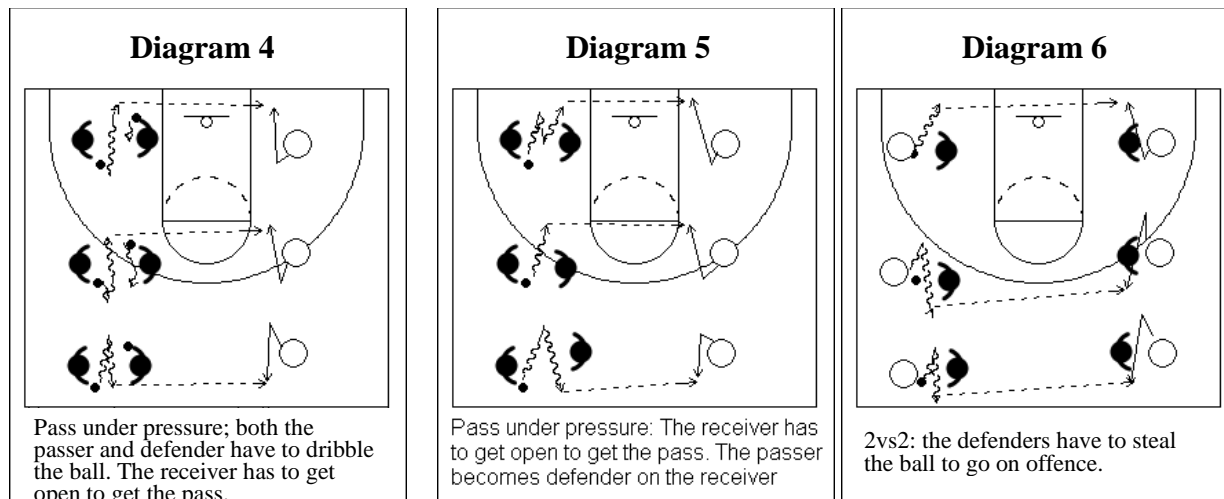
In the final version, the defenders do not have basketballs.



## PASS ON TIME, ON TARGET

**Diagram 4 (5 – 6)** – The passer and defender each dribble one ball facing each other. The receiver is about 10 feet away behind defender. The passer must look to pass the ball to the receiver on time and on target, by passing either over the defender's dribbling hand or over their head. The defender may knock

down the pass with the opposite hand. The defender is allowed to switch dribbling hands. Load the drill by adding a defender, with the ball, on the receiver.



### SUGGESTIONS:

- Pass the ball from shoulder-to-shoulder.
- Stay low while pivoting and push the ball with legs to have more balance on the physical contact.
- Bring the ball outside the body of the defender and hold the ball with both hands until passing it (one and half hands).
- Move the ball with short moves with energy. The arms should not be extended when faking.
- Only one fake is required.
- Under pressure the pivot foot is always the one away from the defence.

### PASS ON TIME, ON TARGET (DEFENCE ON THE PASSER)

#### Note: Teaching progression

Phase A – the drill is done on air (1vs0, 2vs0, etc.)

Phase B – the coach guides the offensive player's actions

Phase C – add a guided defender to the drill. The defender is usually placed to give the offensive player a one-second advantage.

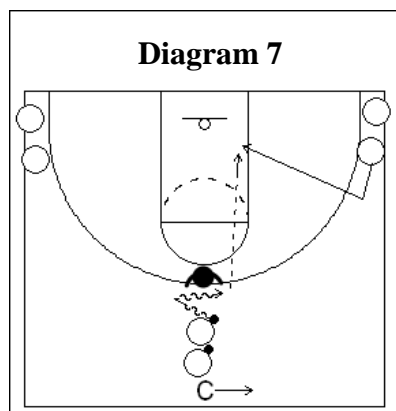
**Passing to win: Diagram 7** – Phase A – One line in each corner outside the three-point line and one line with balls up top. The coach stands behind ball-handler. The ball-handler dribbles side-to-side scanning the court. The coach lifts an arm signalling for the player on that side to cut and receive a pass. The receiver must time the cut to when the passer is ready. On the catch, the receiver must keep moving and either attack middle or baseline (dynamic one-on-one). The passer cuts to the basket and fills the spot of the receiver.

**Points of emphasis:** The ball-handler must deliver pass on time to the appointment (outside the three-point line foul line extended). This is the timing between the passer and receiver. Too often it is the receiver cutting too soon, before the passer is ready. After a few repetitions a defender on the ball-handler is added (as shown in the diagram). This would be Phase B of the teaching progression.

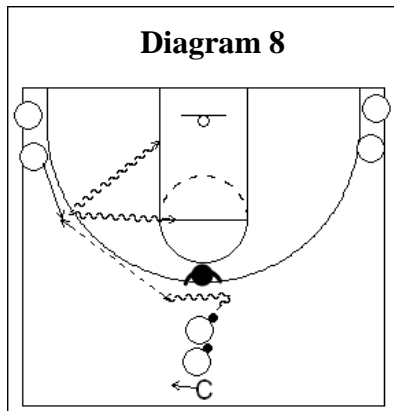
It is important that the passer be on the same side of the floor as the receiver. Shorten the pass by taking it to the appropriate side before passing.

**Back-door passing: Diagram 8** – Back-door passing: The same drill, but this time a pass fake from the shoulder signals for the cutter to cut back-door. The passer must deliver a bounce pass in the key, or an over the top pass leading the cutter to the basket. After a few repetitions a defender on the ball-handler is added.

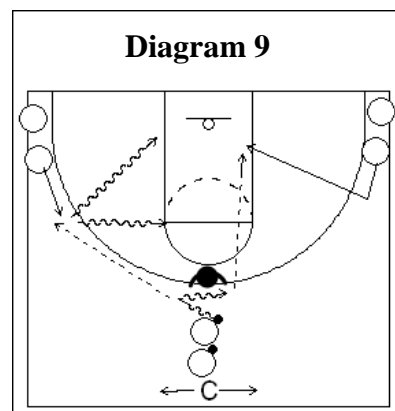
**Diagram 9:** The player without the ball decides whether to execute a back-door cut or catch and penetrate.



**Diagram 7**  
2vs1: The coach indicates to the receiver who will cut, he also indicates a back-door cut. The passer must make a quick decision.



**Diagram 8**  
2vs1: The coach indicates the player that has to receive the ball and play 1vs0. The passer has to dribble before passing.

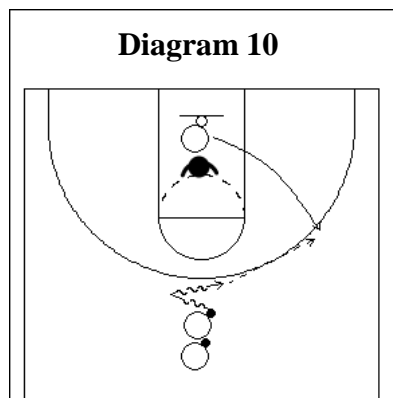


**Diagram 9**  
2vs1: The coach indicates the receiver that can play 1vs0 or a back-door cut. Player has to make a quick decision.

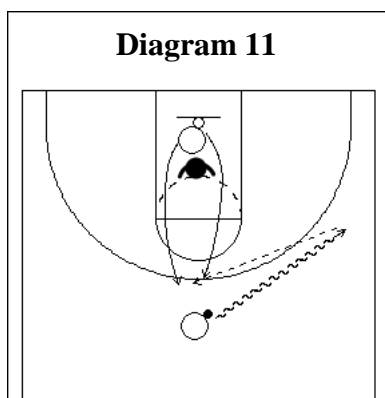
## DEFENCE ON THE RECEIVER

**Diagram 10 – 11** – Phase C – Add a defender on wings. The players can start from different areas on the floor.

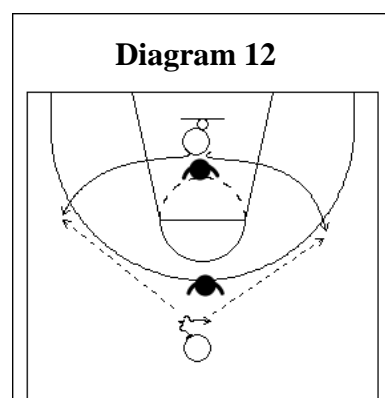
**Diagram 12** – Phase C – Add a defender also on ball-handler (2vs2).



**Diagram 10**  
2vs1: The defender is in front of the offensive player facing the ball. The offensive player decides when to get open and play 1vs1.



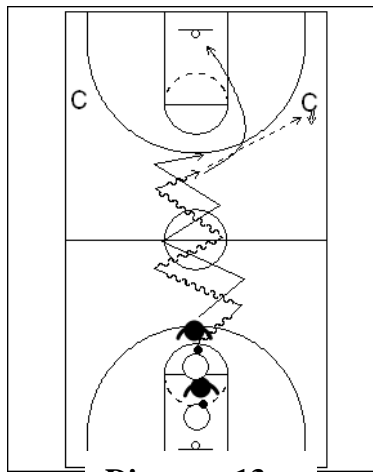
**Diagram 11**  
2vs1: The defender is in front of the offensive player facing the ball. The offensive player decides when to get open and play 1vs1.



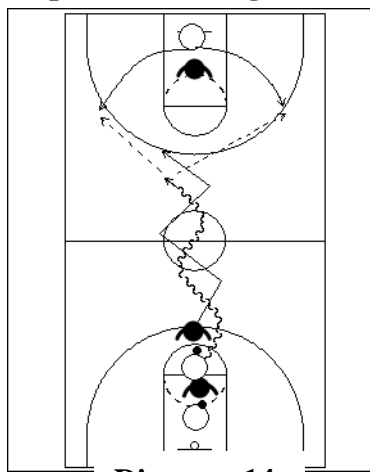
**Diagram 12**  
2vs2: The player under the basket decides where to get the ball.



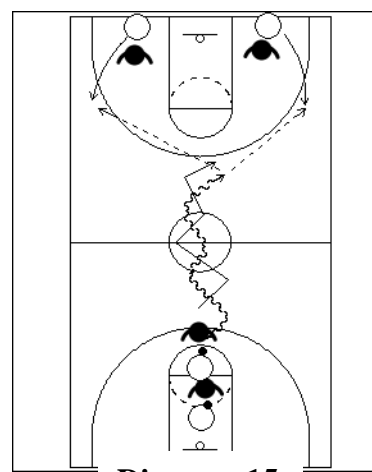
### PASS UNDER PRESSURE (1vs1 pivot foot) Diagram 13 – 14 – 15



**Diagram 13**



**Diagram 14**



**Diagram 15**

**Diagram 13 – 14 – 15** – Progress from 1vs1 to 3vs3 from three-quarter court: The ball-handler has to keep the dribble alive until the receiver gives them a target. One pair starts at the far foul line and goes one-on-one full-court. The next pair is waiting to go. The dribbler must keep their eyes up and is scanning the receivers. In **Diagram 13** one of the two coaches shows their hands. In **Diagram 14**, the offensive player will break to get open when the dribbler is in position to pass. In **Diagram 15**, there are two offensive players with a slight one-second advantage. The pass must be on time and on target.

Try to always pass with same hand as the side of the receiver (i.e. right hand on right side, left hand on left side). Pass only if the players are showing a target with ready hands.

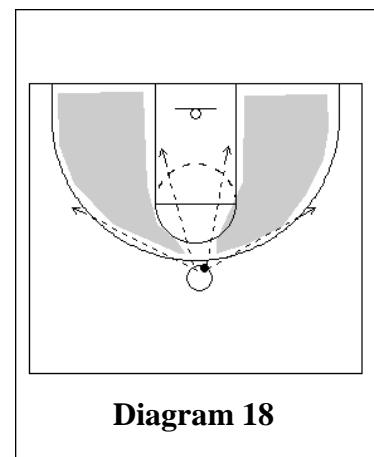
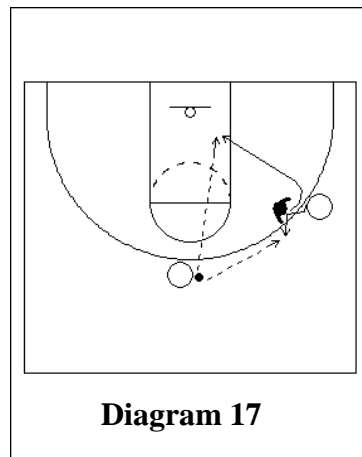
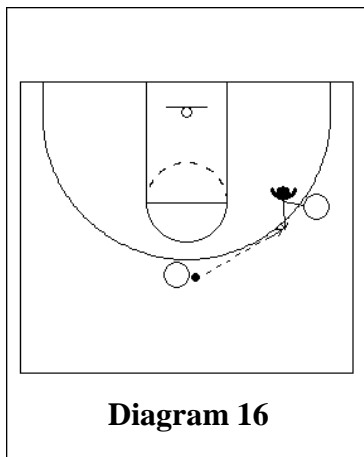
### **MAKE THE PASS SHORTER (under pressure)**

The offensive player makes contact with the defender to avoid being denied (**Diagram 16**). Back-door cut if the defender overplays the offensive player, rolling around the defender and holding them with the inside forearm (**Diagram 17**). Make a short step toward the ball to meet the pass and holding the defender with the inside forearm to make the pass shorter.

**Diagram 16** – 1vs1 to get open (defence faces the basket) and attack the basket (two dribbles max.)

**Diagram 17** – 1vs1 get open and back-door cut (defender play facing the ball)

**Diagram 18** – The ball has to be passed in the paint or on the three-point line

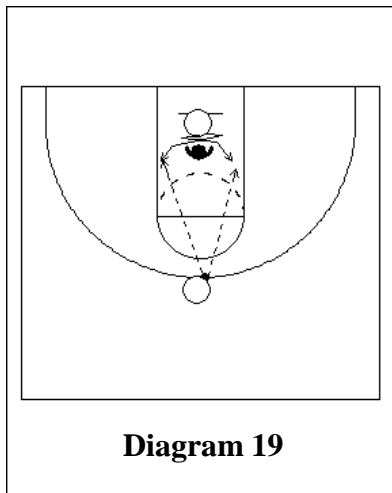


### **PASS IN THE PAINT UNDER PRESSURE**

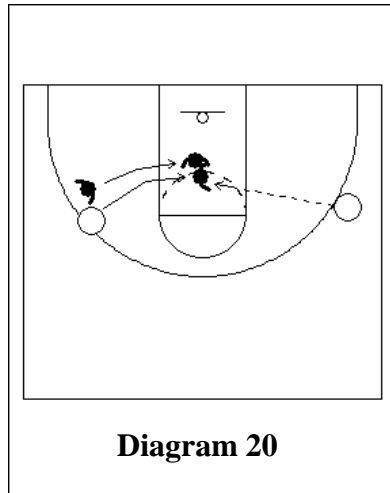
**Diagram – 19 – 20 – 21:** The offensive player tries to get position in the key, using outside/inside footwork to seal the defender (foot furthest away from defender is the pivot foot). The outside/inside step allows the receiver to push into and put the defender on their back. The passer is at top of the key. The passer must pass inside the key only. On the catch the offensive player tries to score. If the defender stays behind, use a bounce pass. If defender plays three-quarter defence, use a lob or high pass.

Add a cut to a seal **Diagram 20** and **Diagram 21**. The offensive player starts with a slight advantage since the defender is positioned shoulder-to-shoulder, but facing in the opposite direction. It is important to seal in the key and not continue to run. In **Diagram 20** the offensive player uses a “right foot, left foot stop” to seal the defender. The offensive player is on the high side. In **Diagram 21**, the offensive player uses a left foot, right foot to stop and seal. The offensive player is on the low side.

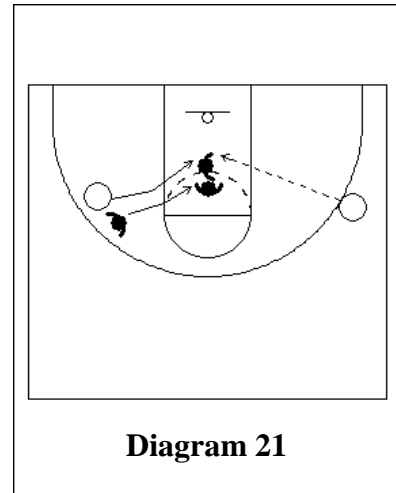
1vs1 fight in the paint



Weak-side cut (in front of the D)



Weak-side cut (back-door cut)



## FULL-COURT PASS

**Diagram 22 – Phase A**– Players line up in two lines at centre on the sidelines. Every player has a ball except the first player in one of the lines. The player without the ball runs wide, sprinting to get ahead of the ball. The first player with the ball takes two dribbles with their outside hand and makes the pass, with two hands, to the player running up the floor. The receiver catches the ball with two hands and scores a basket. The passer stops, changes direction and sprints to the other basket. The player in the opposite line takes two dribbles and makes the pass. This action continues. The dribblers must not dribble too soon or else they will end up in front of the runners.

**Phase B** – A coach stands in the key. If the receiver sees the chest of the coach in the drive line they will pull up for a shot. If the coach is not in the drive line, the players continue in for the layup.

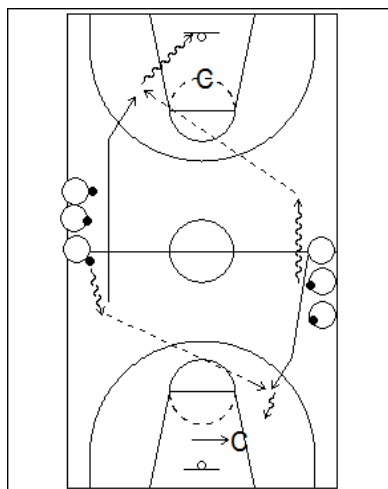
**Diagram 23** –The players line up at the free throw line and face the opposite end. There is a line of players near the sideline of the same free throw line. The coach (C) places cones in the far corners of the court. The offence starts to bring the ball up the floor, the wing runs the floor. The ball-handler can only pass the ball inside the imaginary line of the ball and the corner. The wing can only cut at the basket when reaching the free throw line extended at the three-point line (see **Diagram 27**).

**Diagram 24 – Phase B** – i) The coach plays defence on the ball-handler. The ball-handler must beat the coach to get up the floor.  
ii) Coach plays defence up the floor.

**Diagram 25 – Phase C** – A defender to the wing player is added.

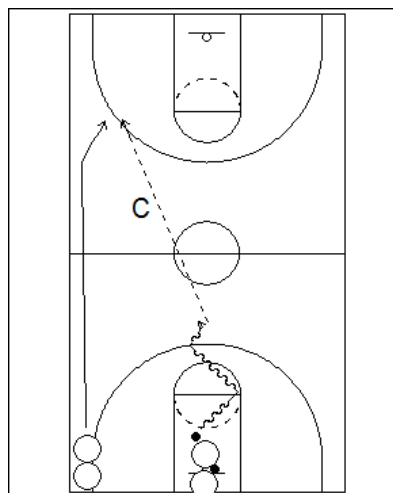
**Diagram 26 – Phase C** – Two wings with defenders. The ball-handler has no defender on them. The ball-handler starts up the floor. The wings try to get ahead of defenders. The ball-handler is not allowed to score the ball. They must pass to one of the wings or swing the ball.

Push the ball with two hands



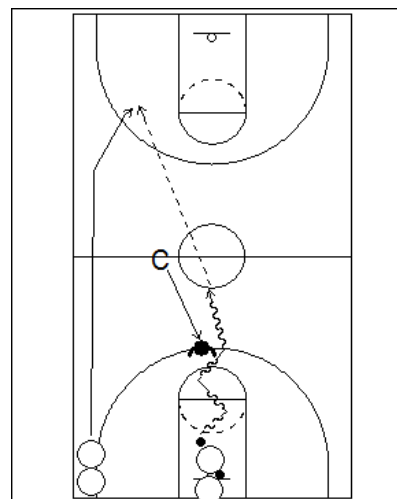
**Diagram 19**

Two versus the coach (high/low)



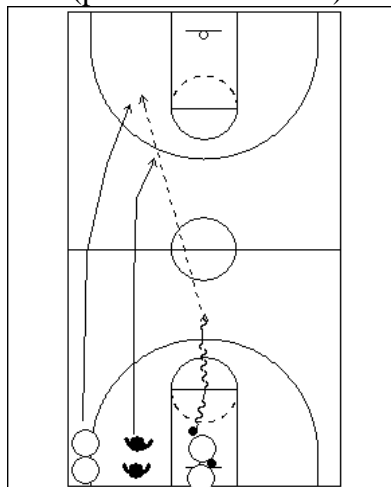
**Diagram 23**

Two versus the coach



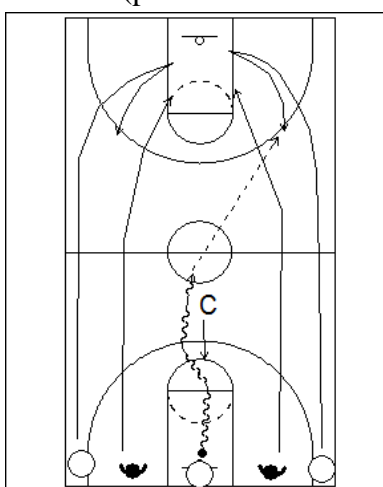
**Diagram 24**

2vs1 (passer cannot shoot)



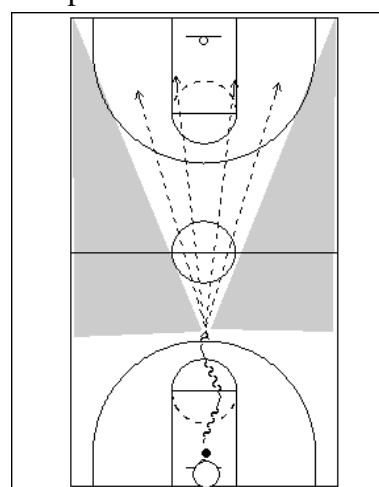
**Diagram 25**

3vs2 (passer cannot shoot)



**Diagram 26**

pass inside the white triangle



**Diagram 27**

## Key Points

- Getting open on the wing. Block arm of defender at the elbow and step over his foot. Seal then step to catch the ball. The passer must deliver the ball to the target on time.
- When playing 1vs1 or 2vs2, they must have support (an outlet) in order for them not to force shots. Do not encourage the players to take bad shots. The ball can always be passed to the outlet. Move to get the ball again.
- When passing with defence in front, keep chest moving toward the basket and use a circular pass.
- Use one and half hands when passing, especially when passing on weak-side.
- Make only one fake then find the angle to pass immediately from the fake.
- If a crossover is necessary when passing, make sure to step forward and to not cross femurs.

## Passing

Keep ball in front of pivot foot. Keep shoulder close to the knees when looking to pivot and pass.

Drill: the ball-handler starts at half and dribbles to the three-point line. Have two receivers lined up at the attack spot. The ball-handler picks up his dribble and a defender pressures them. The coach counts to three or four before signalling to which side to pass to. The receivers must work on moving to catch the ball and shortening the pass. This concept is the same as in **Diagram 27** but start from half-court.

## Getting Open

Start the run, stop (create contact) and then continue to run.

If possible, try to catch on a two-foot jump stop, facing the basket, in order to have the choice of pivots. If not, then use the reverse pivot to catch and create space. This is consistent with having a foot furthest from the defender as the pivot foot.

## SUGGESTIONS:

- Keep eyes up in order to see both players at the same time.
- Pass the ball always on the white triangle (**Diagram 27**), the receiver can see both the ball and the basket.

- Drive the ball slowly in order to be in balance and see the timing and the target while dribbling. The player is dribbling too fast when the eyes go down.
- Two-hand pass from the chest. Never use one-hand pass while dribbling in the open court, the coordination is lessened the pass will not be precise.
- Pass the ball in front of the player running in fast break.
- A one-hand pass from the shoulder can be used if there is need to pass the ball on the opposite side of the hand dribbling the ball and without defensive pressure.

No pass – no relationship

Forced pass – a forced relationship, it is never completed or never whole

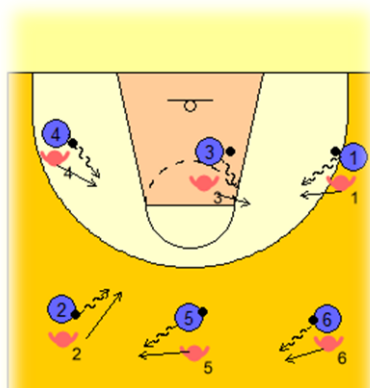
Dirty pass – a pass made after holding on to the ball for a long time

Clean pass – a pass made on time on target) - build a relationship of trust

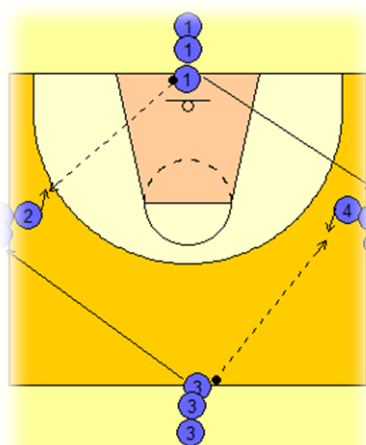
Players always have to make a short step before every pass with the foot from the side of the pass (in the direction of the pass and without crossing the legs), in order to:

- Increase the balance.
- Improve the angle of the pass without using a dribble.
- Decrease the distance between the passer and the receiver.

This is very important if there is a need to pass the ball to the low post; it is less important if having to pass the ball in a straight line. With the short step, the player also has to have their knees bent.



**Diagram 1**

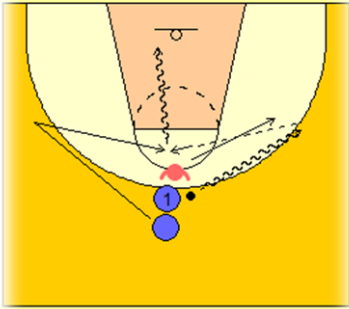


**Diagram 2**

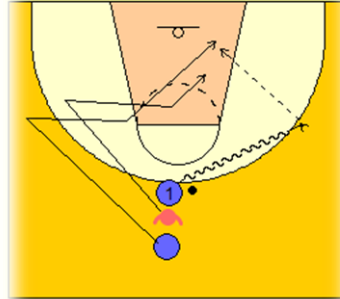
In **Diagram 1**, the idea is to teach the players how to use the pivot foot under pressure: the ball-handler makes two to three dribbles before picking up the ball. The defender has to put pressure on the ball for five seconds. The ball-handler has to rotate on the pivot foot to defend the ball and always keeping it in front of the pivot foot. The pivot foot is the one furthest from the defender.

**Diagram 2** “Rhombus Drill”: the players with the ball have to pass to the player on his left side and then run behind the lane on his right side. The receiver has to make one step toward the ball, show his hands (meet the pass), catch it and do the same. Option 1 - the passer makes one dribble before passing the ball.

Option 2 - when the coach says “switch” the exercise changes the rotation from one direction to the other. Make sure that the passer passes the ball only to the receiver that shows his hands.



**Diagram 3**



**Diagram 4**

**Diagram 3–4:** passing exercise in game situation to teach how to pass on timing and on target.

“Dean Smith drill”: Four-on-four; the offensive players have to make 11 points. Every pass counts one point but they have to make one basket before to make 11 points. Each player can also use two dribble to attack the basket or to release the defensive pressure.