

# Don't Slip in the Mustard

## Practice Organization and Fundamentals

### Basketball Fundamentals

For many basketball coaches, as well as players, mastery of basketball's fundamentals is essential. Yet, how often do you teach and practice the fundamentals? They may seem like basic, unimportant skills that the players already have, but the fundamentals are important for all basketball players. Young players need to learn the basics early on and older players need a review of the fundamentals from time to time.

John Wooden once stated that he, "Discovered early on that the player who learned the fundamentals of basketball is going to have a much better chance of succeeding and rising through the levels of competition than the player who was content to do things his own way. A player should be interested in learning why things are done a certain way. The reasons behind the teaching often go a long way to helping develop the skill."<sup>1</sup>

From a coaching standpoint, fundamentally sound basketball players are essential in developing your offensive and defensive system. You may have designed the greatest offense or defense in the world, but without proper execution of the fundamentals, your offense or defense will not be effective.

If you coach young or beginning players or if you are a young player, a great deal of emphasis should be placed on the fundamentals. The fundamentals should be worked on every day in practice during the season. Players can and should work on the fundamentals during the off-season as well. By stressing the fundamentals the players will become ingrained with your teaching ideas and philosophies in that particular area. Players that learn and master the fundamentals will begin to take pride in their abilities as they transfer into game situations. That pride will develop into a confidence that allows individual players or the team as a whole to be prepared for any situation that arises during a game. If you are confident in your abilities, you will be confident when it is needed most.

I believe there are nine essential fundamental basketball skills that must be taught in the game of basketball. These nine fundamental skills are running, jump stopping, jumping, pivoting, shuffling, and passing, catching, dribbling, and shooting.

There is also one basic aspect that must be taught prior to teaching the above skills — basketball position. Some may call it ready position or athletic stance or any other number of terms but the idea is the same; basketball players should never stand straight up while playing the game. The basketball player must always be ready to move in any direction and must always be alert. This concept needs to be taught to all players. Young players will need it often and older players may have to go back to it if they become lazy during the season.

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<sup>1</sup> John R. Wooden, Head Basketball Coach, Emeritus, UCLA.

The following list is the seven points of emphasis for the basketball position:

1. Feet are shoulder-width or just wider and slightly staggered.
2. Knees should be bent to at least a 1/4 squat position and directly over the feet.
3. Hips are rotated in so that the rear does not stick out.
4. Back is straight so the shoulders are not rolled forward.
5. Head is up and on a swivel so player can see the whole floor.
6. Hands are above waist with elbows bent and relaxed so player is ready to react.
7. Body weight is evenly distributed but slightly forward and player should be on the balls of their feet.

Once the basketball position is learned the players can move on to the nine fundamentals. I have listed each fundamental below. You should use drills to help teach each fundamental skill and to ensure that your players are learning that skill effectively.

### **The Nine Basketball Fundamentals**

1. Running - techniques & drills for stops/starts, backpedaling, combination.
2. Jump Stops - why and how to jump stop, drills to teach the jump stop.
3. Jumping - more than having a high vertical jump, jumping quickly and explosively is equally important.
4. Pivoting - pivoting is a valuable skill for many areas of basketball.
5. Shuffling - a needed skill because of the amount of time spent on defense.
6. Passing - how and why to be a good passer and various types of passes.
7. Catching - more than simply catching a basketball - how to get open and how to catch to be prepared to be in triple threat position.
8. Dribbling - the importance of dribbling and ball handling skills and several types of dribbles to master.
9. Shooting - science and physics of shooting.