TWO AND THREE PLAYERS, WORKING TOGETHER

Team play basics

Most good team play is two or three players working together. Teach six simple actions, show players what the defender is telling them, then reward the action in a game.

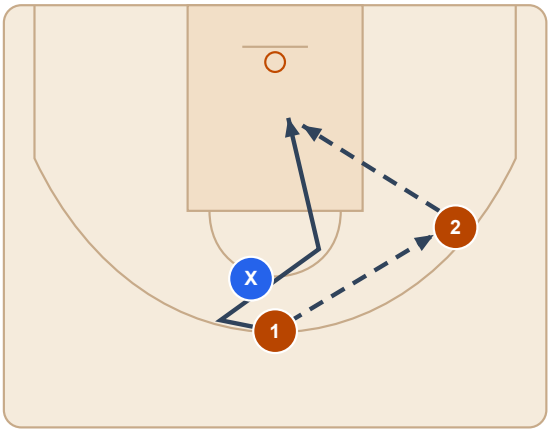
Inside this pack

A five-step ladder to teach any team action.

Six actions: pass and cut, backdoor, drive and pass off, screen away, screen and roll, post entry.

The read, coaching cues and fixes for each one.

A game-day guide and a printable minutes sheet.



1 passes to 2, jabs away and cuts in front of X for the return pass.

WHO IT'S FOR

Coaches of U11 to U16 teams moving from individual skills into playing together. Use the actions with younger groups once they can pass and catch on the move.

HOW TO USE IT

Pick one action for a block of two or three practices. Teach the shape, add a defender with a job, play it live, then reward it in a small-sided game.

Find the linked drills at swishplanner.com

THE TEACHING LADDER

Shape, read, play.

1. SHOW THE SHAPE

Walk it 2v0 or 3v0, then run it at game speed. Keep it to one or two minutes: players need the picture, not perfection.

2. ADD A DEFENDER WITH A JOB

Give the defender one behaviour to show, such as denying the pass or helping on the drive, so attackers practise the read.

3. PLAY IT LIVE

2v2 or 3v3 to a score or a stop. Let the defence play properly and let attackers choose.

4. REWARD IT IN A GAME

In 3v3 or 4v4, a basket that comes from the action is worth two. Remove the bonus once it starts to appear on its own.

5. CHECK IT IN 5V5

Watch a scrimmage or a match. Note when the action appeared, when it was available but missed, and train that next.

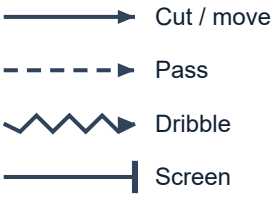
What the defender is telling you

Your defender is tight between you and the ball	**Cut backdoor to the basket.**
Your defender turns their head or relaxes after a pass	**Cut in front of them: give-and-go.**
Your defender sags off you	**Catch, face up and shoot or drive.**
A defender leaves your teammate to stop a drive	**Pass to the teammate they left.**
Your teammate's defender is caught on a screen	**Use the space: cut, shoot or roll.**

Spacing in four rules

- Stay about four to five metres apart: far enough that one defender can't guard two of you.
- When you cut, finish the cut, then get back out to an open spot.
- When a teammate leaves a spot, fill it so the passer always has a target.
- Keep the lane clear for drives and cuts; don't stand in the paint.

Diagram key



Orange numbers: attack. Blue X: defence.

ACTION 01 | 2 PLAYERS

Pass and cut (give-and-go)

Pass to a teammate, then cut to the basket for the return pass before your defender reacts.

THE READ

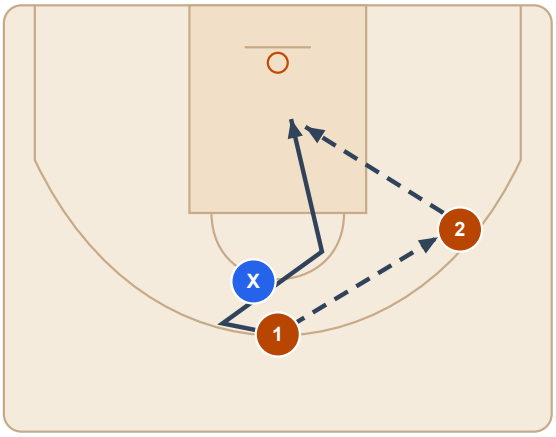
Cut in front when your defender watches the ball or drops off after your pass. If they jump to the ball, cut behind them or replace yourself.

TEACH IT

1. 2v0: top passes to the wing, jabs away, then cuts hard to the basket for a return pass and layup. Both sides.

2. 2v1: add a defender on the passer. They choose to jump to the ball or stay; the cutter reads it.

3. 2v2 live from the same start. The give-and-go is one option, not the only one.



1 passes to 2, jabs away and cuts in front of X for the return pass.

COACHING CUES

- **Pass and go: cut while the ball is in the air**
- **Hand up as you cut: show a target**
- **Wing: catch and look inside first**

COMMON MISTAKES AND FIXES

Passer stands and watches the catch

Fix: Count "pass, step, go" out loud for the first few reps.

Return pass is late or behind the cutter

Fix: Wing receives on the outside foot, pivots and passes ahead to the hand.

DEFEND IT

The defender on the passer jumps towards the ball as the pass is made, staying between the cutter and the ball.

REWARD IT IN A GAME

3v3: a basket straight from a give-and-go is worth two.

Full drill with animated diagram: Give and Go

ACTION 02 | 2 PLAYERS

Backdoor cut

When a defender overplays the pass, cut behind them to the basket.

THE READ

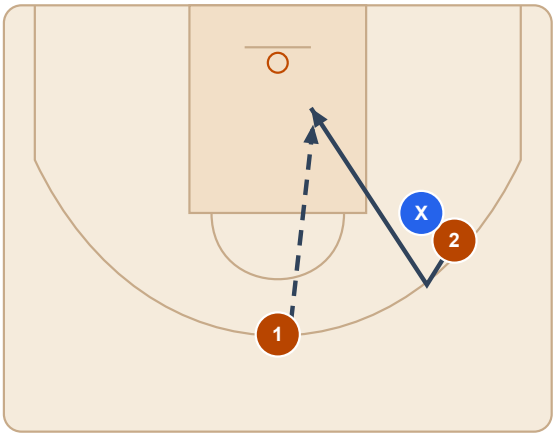
If your defender is between you and the ball with a hand in the lane, the space behind them is open. Go when the passer is looking at you.

TEACH IT

1. 2v0: wing takes two steps up as if to receive, plants on the outside foot and cuts to the basket for a bounce pass.

2. 2v1: the defender denies the wing. The cutter only goes backdoor when the defender is denying.

3. 2v2: add a defender on the passer, so the pass has to be made under pressure.



X overplays the pass to the wing; 2 cuts behind X for a bounce pass.

COACHING CUES

- **Take them high, then plant and go**
- **Passer: bounce pass past the defender's back foot**
- **Cut to the rim, not to the block**

COMMON MISTAKES AND FIXES

Cutter goes backdoor when the defender is sagging

Fix: Ask: where is your defender's hand? No hand in the lane, no backdoor.

Passer telegraphs the pass

Fix: Fake a pass to the wing first, then pass on the cutter's first step.

DEFEND IT

Open up towards the ball as the cutter changes direction. See your player and the ball; don't turn your head away.

REWARD IT IN A GAME

3v3 with a no-dribble rule for the first three passes: cutters have to get open.

Full drill with animated diagram: Backdoor Cut

ACTION 03 | 2-3 PLAYERS

Drive and pass off

Attack the gap. If a second defender helps, pass to the teammate they left.

THE READ

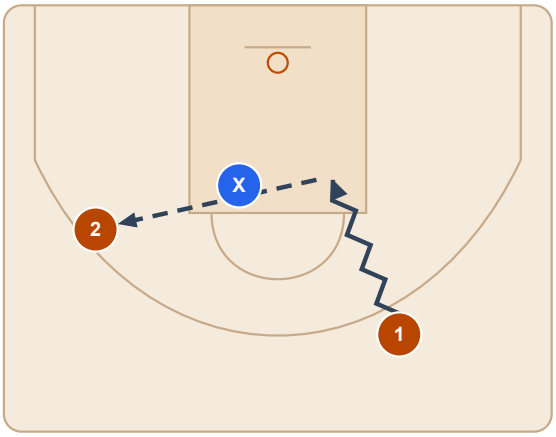
Keep going to the basket if no help comes. If help steps in, pass to the open teammate: the kick-out on the perimeter or a dump-off to a cutter.

TEACH IT

1. 2v1: a ball handler and a shooter against one defender who starts in the middle. Score or pass, based on the defender.

2. 2v2: the help defender must touch the paint with a foot before recovering. The ball handler reads the stop.

3. 3v3 with drives from the top or the wing. Players away from the drive move to open space.



X leaves 2 to help on the drive; 1 passes to 2, who is now open.

COACHING CUES

- **Eyes on the rim, then the helper**
- **Two feet, jump stop, pass**
- **Shooters: be on your spot and ready**

COMMON MISTAKES AND FIXES

Driver commits to a shot before looking

Fix: Count the defenders aloud between the driver and the rim: one means score, two means pass.

Teammates watch the drive and drift in

Fix: Tell them their job is to get out of the help defender's eyeline and stay ready.

DEFEND IT

Help early with your feet in the paint, then close out under control with short, choppy steps.

REWARD IT IN A GAME

4v4: a basket from a pass after a drive is worth two.

Full drill with animated diagram: Closeout 2v2 Drive & Kick

ACTION 04 | 3 PLAYERS

Screen away

Pass, then go and screen for a teammate away from the ball so they come free to receive.

THE READ

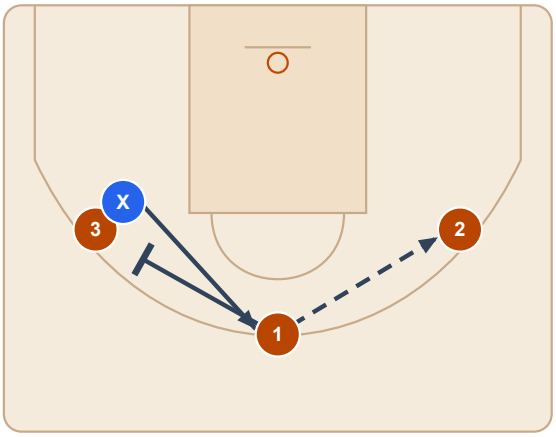
The cutter watches their defender: straight up to the ball if the defender trails, curl to the basket if the defender chases close behind, cut backdoor if they jump over the top.

TEACH IT

1. 3v0: top passes to a wing, then screens for the opposite wing who cuts to the top. Keep it going round.

2. 3v1: one defender on the cutter. They choose to trail, chase or cheat the screen; the cutter reads it.

3. 3v3 live: every pass is followed by a cut or a screen away.



1 passes to 2 and screens for 3; 3 comes off the screen to the top.

COACHING CUES

- **Screener: wide base, arms in, stand still**
- **Cutter: wait for the screen, then go shoulder to shoulder**
- **Screener: open up to the ball after contact**

COMMON MISTAKES AND FIXES

Cutter goes before the screen is set

Fix: Cutter takes their defender away first, then counts "one" after the screener stops.

Screener moves into the defender

Fix: Stop with two feet, a wide base and arms in; any contact comes from the defender running into a still screener.

DEFEND IT

The screener's defender calls the screen and steps out to help; the cutter's defender fights over or under the screen.

REWARD IT IN A GAME

3v3 no dribble: every pass is followed by a screen away.

Full drill with animated diagram: Screen Away into 1v1

ACTION 05 | 2 PLAYERS

Screen and roll

A teammate screens the ball handler's defender. The handler uses the screen; the screener rolls to the basket.

THE READ

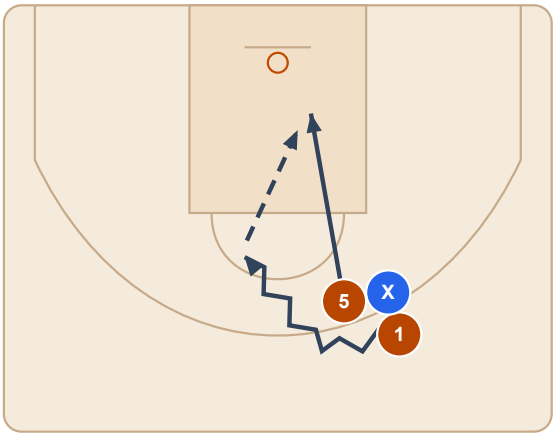
If the screener's defender steps out to stop the ball, the roller is open. If they stay back, the ball handler has the shot or drive.

TEACH IT

1. 2v0: from the slot, the screener sets on the handler's defender's side. Handler dribbles tight off the screen; screener rolls to the rim.

2. 2v1: one defender on the screener, choosing to step out or stay back. The ball handler reads them.

3. 2v2 live, then 3v3 with a shooter to pass to if help comes.



5 screens X; 1 dribbles off the screen and 5 rolls to the rim for the pass.

COACHING CUES

- **Handler: wait, then go shoulder to hip**
- **Screener: roll when the handler's shoulders pass you**
- **Roller: hands up, eyes on the ball**

COMMON MISTAKES AND FIXES

Handler goes before the screener is set

Fix: Handler sets the defender up with a step away, then waits for the screener to stop.

Screener rolls too late or drifts

Fix: Roll on contact, straight to the rim, with a target hand.

DEFEND IT

The screener's defender calls the screen early and steps out to slow the ball, then recovers to the roller.

REWARD IT IN A GAME

3v3: a basket from the ball handler or roller after a screen is worth two.

Full drill with animated diagram: Pick and Roll 2v2

ACTION 06 | 2 PLAYERS

Post entry and inside-out

Get the ball into a post player near the basket, then move so the post can score or pass back out.

THE READ

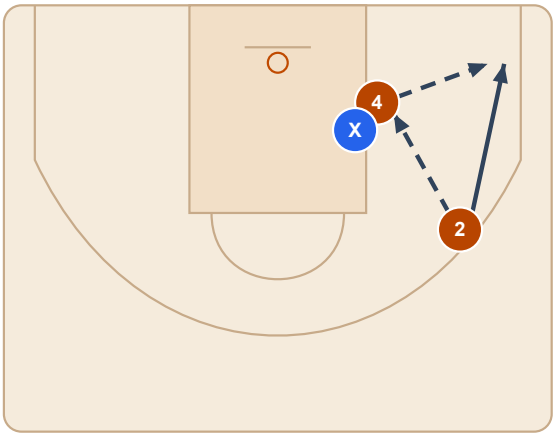
If the post defender is behind, pass straight in. If they are on the high side, pass from lower or lob over the top. When help comes on the post, the passer relocates for the inside-out pass.

TEACH IT

1. 2v0: post seals on the block with a target hand; the wing makes a bounce pass to that hand. Post scores, then repeats on the other side.

2. 2v1: a post defender plays behind or on the high side. The wing reads the position; the post keeps the seal.

3. 2v2 live: after the entry, the wing relocates to the corner or the top for a return pass.



2 passes in to 4, relocates to the corner and gets the ball back.

COACHING CUES

- **Post: wide stance, sit on the defender, hand away from them**
- **Passer: pass to the hand away from the defender**
- **Pass in, then move**

COMMON MISTAKES AND FIXES

Post catches and turns into the defender

Fix: Catch, feel where the defender is, then pivot away from them.

Wing stands still after the entry

Fix: After the pass, move to the corner or the top with hands ready.

DEFEND IT

Get a hand and a foot in front on the ball side and make the entry pass difficult. If it goes in, stay behind and wall up.

REWARD IT IN A GAME

3v3: the ball has to touch the post before a shot, and a three-point shot after an inside-out pass is worth four.

Full drill with animated diagram: Post Entry Passing

GAME DAY

Coach the game you trained for

Practice is where you teach. On game day, keep messages short, give everyone a role and collect notes for next week.

BEFORE THE GAME

- Write a minutes plan so every player knows they will play. Check your league's rules on playing time and timeouts.
- Warm up in small groups with plenty of shots and touches, not long layup lines.
- Give one or two messages, not ten. One for attack, one for defence.

DURING THE GAME

- Timeouts: water first, then one thing that's working, one thing to change and who does what.
- Substitute on a rhythm (for example, mid-quarter and at the break) so changes aren't a punishment.
- Coach effort and decisions, not just the scoreboard. Praise the right pass even when the shot misses.
- Speak to officials calmly and leave the rest to them. Players copy what the bench does.

AT THE BREAKS

- Ask players first: what is working? What is the other team doing?
- Agree one change for the next quarter and stick to it.

AFTER THE GAME

- End on effort, teamwork and one positive moment for the group. Keep individual feedback for later and keep it private.
- Write down up to three things you saw. They are the start of your next practice plan.

A timeout in three lines

Keep doing ... | Change one thing ... | Next possession, we ...

GAME-DAY SHEET

Minutes, timeouts and notes

Opponent: _____ Date: _____ Home / Away

Player	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total

Timeouts and breaks

Keep doing / change one thing / next possession

Three things to practise next

What did you see? Which action was there but missed?

Edition: 27 October 2026. Free to download, print and use with your coaching staff.