FOURTH EDITION

# BASKETBALL
## SKILLS & DRILLS

*The best-selling guide on the basics of the game!*

Foreword by
**Mike Krzyzewski**

Jerry V. Krause   Craig Nelson

FOURTH EDITION

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CRAIG NELSON

HUMAN KINETICS

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Coaches often learn much from their players. One of my former players, Don Meyer, spent his 40-year career at the small-college level and became an eight-time hall of fame coach. We both had roots in the small town of Wayne, Nebraska; he grew up there, and I graduated from Wayne State College. Years later, our paths crossed at Colorado State College, where I was fortunate to coach Don as an assistant basketball coach. We became lifelong friends and coaching brothers who shared a passion for the game as well as for giving back to coaches and players through the sharing of knowledge.

For more than 30 years we collaborated on clinics, DVDs, and books to share basketball coaching ideas with other coaches and players. Don and I shared the belief that a coach's good example as a role model isn't just one way to teach players life lessons—it is the *only* way. Here are three life lessons we learned together:

1. **Always take notes.** My "Never stop learning" mantra is based on Don's belief that we should "get all good ideas" (learn) but pick out those that are best for you and your team. His rule is still true today, particularly thanks to the ease with which coaches can share ideas in this age of technology. Learning is more effective with handwritten note-taking compared to using electronic devices.

2. **Always say *please* and *thank you*.** This was his way to teach players civility and kindness. I used this rule to develop my theme of *respect*: develop your own self-respect and earn the respect of others.

3. **Always pick up trash.** This was Don's way of making our world better. My approach to this lesson is this: Practice leaving your personal world better than you found it on a daily basis. This can be accomplished even with the simple act of picking up trash around your personal or business space.

Don, thank you for helping me model these values for others to learn. Your extraordinary example set a high standard of excellence for coaching knowledge, and you shared so much with so many. You were incredible! Thank you, my coaching brother; you taught me well, and I learned with you as best I could.

In respect, love, and gratitude,
Your friend, Jerry Krause

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*(continued)*

| Drill | Level | Specific focus | Warm-up component | Conditioning component | Page |
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*(continued)*

**Drill Finder** *(continued)*

| Drill | | Level | Specific focus | Warm-up component | Conditioning component | Page |
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| **Rebounding (continued)** | | | | | | |
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| No-Babies-Allowed (NBA) or Survival Rebounding | ▶ | Advanced | Aggressiveness as a rebound skill | | ✓ | 252 |
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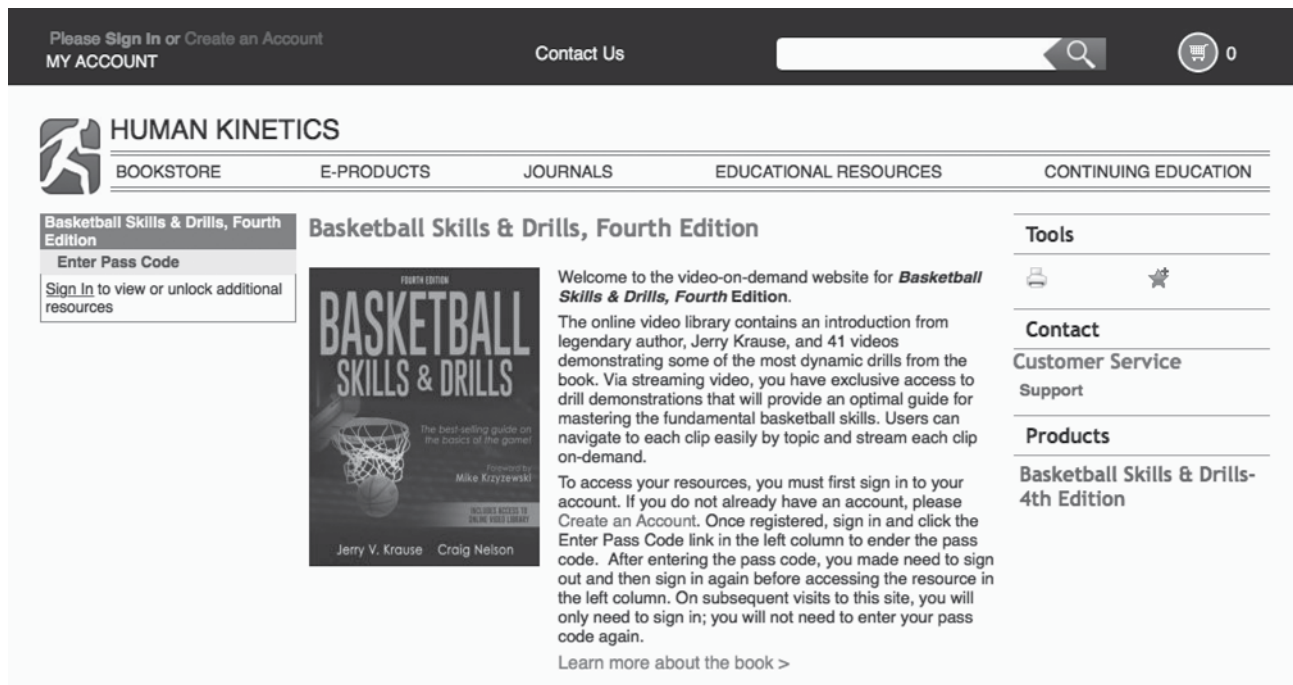
The ▶ symbol indicates which drills can also be found in the online video.

T his book includes access to online video that includes 41 clips demonstrating some of the most dynamic drills from the book. In the drill finder and throughout the book, exercises marked with this play button icon indicate where the content is enhanced by online video clips: ▶

Take the following steps to access the video. If you need help at any point in the process, you can contact us by clicking on the Technical Support link under Customer Service on the right side of the screen.

1. Visit www.HumanKinetics.com/BasketballSkillsAndDrills.

2. Click on the **View online video** link next to the book cover.

3. You will be directed to the screen shown in figure 1. Click the **Sign In** link on the left or top of the page. If you do not have an account with Human Kinetics, you will be prompted to create one.



**Figure 1**

4. If the online video does not appear in the list on the left of the page, click the **Enter Pass Code** option in that list. Enter the pass code exactly as it is printed here, including all hyphens. Click the **Submit** button to unlock the online video. After you have entered this pass code the first time, you will never have to enter it again. For future visits, all you need to do is sign in to the book's website and follow the link that appears in the left menu.

Pass code for online video: **KRAUSE-43TD-OV**

5. Once you have signed into the site and entered the pass code, select **Online Video** from the list on the left side of the screen. You'll then see an Online Video page with information about the video, as shown in the screenshot in figure 2. You can go straight to the accompanying videos for each topic by clicking on the blue links at the bottom of the page.



**Figure 2**

6. You are now able to view video for the topic you selected on the previous screen, as well as all others that accompany this product. Across the top of the page, you will see a set of buttons that correspond to the topics in the text that have accompanying video. Once you click on a topic, a player will appear. In the player, the clips for that topic will appear vertically along the right side. Select the video you would like to watch and view it in the main player window. You can use the buttons at the bottom of the main player window to view the video full screen, to turn captioning on and off, and to pause, fast-forward, or reverse the clip.

# FOREWORD

It is a real honor for me to write the foreword for the fourth edition of *Basketball Skills & Drills.* For more than 25 years, this book has stressed basketball fundamentals. More than 250,000 copies have been sold, and it continues to be translated and published around the globe. To say the least, all of us in the game should feel a great sense of pride for the work that Jerry Krause and Don Meyer have done to enhance teaching, learning, and coaching the fundamental skills of basketball.

In order to be a good player and to have a good team, fundamentals must be stressed. *Basketball Skills & Drills* breaks the game into its simplest form. It is easy to understand for both coaches and individual players at any level. I enthusiastically recommend the book to everyone who wants to become a better player, coach, or teacher.

I believe that all coaches take great pride in being called Coach. I also believe that all coaches feel that they are teachers. The ability to fundamentally teach this game is essential for a coach to become better. I have benefitted greatly from reading this book and using many of its ideas as I have taught the game for the past four decades. Please take the time to study each of the pages in this treasured book. You will benefit greatly from it!

No coach in the history of the game has taught this great game better than Don Meyer. As I read the pages in this book, I can visualize Don teaching these fundamentals. He loved this game as much as anyone could ever love it.

Finally, I want to thank Jerry Krause, Don Meyer's coach and mentor, whose love of the game is unmatched. Jerry, thank you for this fabulous book and video library and for what you have done for the game throughout your life!

Mike Krzyzewski, Head Men's Basketball Coach at Duke University
and U.S. Olympic Coach (2008, 2012, 2016)

*"I seek to leave the world a little better place than I found it."*

James Naismith, inventor of basketball

Basketball Skills & Drills rests on a foundation laid by *Better Basketball Basics* (Leisure Press), which focused only on fundamental skills of the game. That 1983 publication featured 550 sequential pictures, became extremely popular with coaches, and sold out its two editions. In 1991, its main concepts were refined and developed into the first edition of *Basketball Skills & Drills* (Human Kinetics). That book quickly became a best-selling reference for teaching and learning basketball. Today, nearly a quarter-million players and coaches around the world agree that this book is the simplest, most comprehensive treatment of basketball basics—the fundamental skills of the sport.

For the second edition of *Basketball Skills & Drills* (1999), the addition of Don Meyer and Jerry Meyer as co-authors brought expertise in successful playing and coaching from two more generations of linked experts who built their careers around successful execution of basketball fundamentals. The book's third edition (2008) had significant innovations. Specifically, it included two hours of video demonstrations on DVD, thus adding a new component for those who prefer visual learning for key skills and drills. In fact, that package provided a legacy for future basketball players and coaches and became the basis for a new video library made exclusively for *Skill & Drills* readers for this fourth edition. Readers will gain special access to an array of video clips covering all of the fundamental skills and the critical cues for teaching and learning them, plus selected drills for developing all of the basketball basics. See instructions on how to view the video clips located on the previous page titled Accessing the Online Video.

Thus, *Basketball Skills & Drills* has become the definitive source of fundamentals for coaches, players, and parents. Improvements in this edition include the following:

- Updated and expanded primary and secondary concepts for the fundamental skills (integrating insights from the Krause–Meyer basketball family tree, as well as drills derived from Dennis Hutter that are direct offshoots of our philosophy)

- Additions to the teaching methods and alternative ways to teach and learn skills more effectively for all players

- References to players and coaches who also place a special emphasis on fundamental skills

- Addition and modification of court diagrams to ensure clear, accurate illustrations

- New focus on developing a teaching and learning community

- Addition of advanced either-pivot-foot (EPF) footwork and facing-the-basket post play with new "Zak-attack" techniques designed to help players attack the basket from the high post and short corners

- Expansion of the sequential, progressive drills for each chapter

- Revised troubleshooting sections addressing common problems and remedies

- Skill assessments, including both observational measures (in the troubleshooting sections) and quantitative measures of status and improvement through development and addition of "peer-pressure" shooting drills (presented in chapter 4). These drills originated in Krause's year spent with Naismith Hall of Fame coach Ralph Miller of Oregon State University in 1982-1983. Miller used this self-assessment technique with offensive fundamentals to set scoring goals, as well as related drills, so that players and teams could compete against the game. He developed a complete self-assessment system of teaching individual and team offense and defense

through the careful selection of six drills. These peer-pressure self-training drills are very useful for coaches. This technique greatly enhances coaches' and players' ability to help each other in practicing game moves at game speed.

- A special emphasis on the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) rules with the inclusion of EPF footwork and greater emphasis on facing-the-basket post play. FIBA footwork differences are noted, and the difference between U.S. and FIBA fundamentals are discussed.

One further note about the book's history from the lead author, Jerry Krause. The origins of its first edition date back to 1982, when hall of fame player and coach John Wooden, one of my mentors (and the mentor of my primary coach mentor, George Sage of the University of Northern Colorado), hosted me at UCLA. Wooden was a gracious host and mentor, especially to young coaches—a lesson I never forgot. When asked how he learned the fundamentals, he told me of a continual yearly process of updating and researching other coaches' ideas about fundamental skills and adapting these ideas for his program and teams. I adopted this approach and began compiling key concepts in each skill area. By 1984, this work led to the creation of my first book on the fundamental skills (*Better Basketball Basics*, mentioned earlier). In recognition of Wooden's contribution to the game and the fact that he inspired me to author my first book, each chapter in this edition ends with a John Wooden quote—a nugget of Wooden Wisdom—that has been especially meaningful in my career. Without Coach Wooden's example, I would not have become the most prolific author in basketball history.

The basic skills lay the foundation for success at all levels of basketball. For example, Michael Jordan, Tim Duncan, LeBron James, and Stephen Curry—four of the greatest male players ever, as well as female greats Courtney Vandersloot, Sue Bird, and Diana Taurasi—have all combined great natural ability with proper and quick execution of exceptional fundamental skills. These superior skills were developed through years of dedication to continuous improvement. Coach Wooden stated that all players must learn to execute the fundamental skills properly and quickly in order to succeed, both individually and as a team. *Basketball Skills & Drills* can help all coaches and players reach this goal, as coaches strive to become more effective master teachers who make the game of basketball simple and easy to learn, so that players can learn more effectively and efficiently, as well as develop their love of the game.

---

## Wooden Wisdom

*"It isn't what you do, but how well you do it."*

—John Wooden

## DEVELOPING A TEACHING—LEARNING COMMUNITY

*"I'm a teacher and coach. Teaching is what I love most, the heart of my coaching style. The best thing about my profession is that I can teach."*

Mike Krzyzewski, Duke University, U.S. Olympic coach, Naismith Hall of Fame coach

Learning is one of the most valuable ways to spend time. In fact, life is about learning, and players and coaches need to develop lifetime habits of learning. More specifically, they need to commit themselves to learning constantly in order to make progress, avoid repeating their mistakes, benefit from others' experience, and improve their performance—both in basketball and in life.

The value of learning should be appreciated both by players and by coaches. It can be natural, enjoyable, productive, and satisfying when approached with a positive attitude. When we are open to learning and growth, we will learn, and that learning enables us to achieve. We need to make connections between what we want to achieve and what we need to learn in order to be successful. In basketball, coaches need to make the game simple and easy to learn, and players need to be ready and open to learning in order to develop the foundation for success.

Knowing *how* to learn effectively helps both players and coaches make the most of the instruction offered in this book. The essential concepts are as follows:

- **Admit mistakes or ignorance.** Acknowledge that you don't know something and even be willing to look foolish while you learn and make mistakes. Fear of failure is a common trait and must be overcome in order to maximize learning and become a lifelong learner. Develop a *mistake mentality* by asking questions and taking risks. You must make mistakes in order to learn. It is a necessary part of the learning process.

- **Begin learning with questions.** Let what you already know about basketball skills be a starting point each day. Start with a challenge, problem, or question that propels you to learn more. Muster the humility to use your limited knowledge as a starting point for further learning.

- **Bring your knowledge to life.** If you learn why you are using a skill, then that skill will hold more meaning for you. Every skill or concept can be learned better when you know the reason for developing and using it. As a learner, discover the "why"; then, if you are a teacher-coach, communicate that "why" to your student-players. This process enhances learning as well as providing motivation for the learning process.

- **Take responsibility both for your own learning and for the learning of those around you.** The resulting synergy enables much faster learning and deeper learning on the individual and team levels. When a team (including both players and coaches) becomes a teaching–learning community, learning is dramatically increased because it serves as a central focus for both teachers and learners. A teaching–learning community facilitates learning in all situations—coach to player (and vice versa), player to player, and player to all other sources. These learning situations help develop a positive attitude that can move everyone along the path to becoming a lifelong learner.

- **Learn from experience.** Turn information into knowledge by applying it and working with it. Use drills to develop skills that can be used to play the game better. In turn, play the game to discover weaknesses that can be addressed through drills focused on specific skills.

- **Learn from other people, especially those who are successful.** Coaches can study the lives of hall of fame coaches to learn the best ideas from the best people. For example, hall of fame coach John Wooden identified the attributes associated with success and created his Pyramid of Success based on the cornerstones of *hard work* and *enthusiasm* for learning. Players can also learn from each other, including, of course, from players who are older and more skilled. Seeing skills from someone else's perspective is a great way to learn.

  Wooden's definition of success was developed over a long period of time during an illustrious teaching and coaching career. This definition came from his frustration with academic grades, which, in his opinion, did not allow all students who strived to do their best to achieve the success that they desired. He concluded that all students and athletes needed a definition for success where all could become successful if they learned to become their best. Thus, his success definition became the following: "Success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming" (Wooden and Jamison 2004, 86-87) Our interpretation of this learning mantra could be stated as "Do your best to become your best." What more can we ask than to have all players and coaches doing their best to become their best (in learning *and* in life)?

- **Learn by teaching others.** Players should be encouraged to teach and learn from each other (through buddy coaching) and teach younger, less experienced players. One of the best ways to teach others is by doing our own best, because others tend to be more interested in what we do than in what we say. At the same time, we ourselves never fully know something until we teach it to, or share it with, others. When players teach other players, the player serving as teacher-coach learns more than the student-player does, because serving in the role of teacher requires one to prepare and learn more in order to help the learner become more effective.

- **Just as the teacher-coach must be prepared to teach, players must be open to learning and ready to learn in order to accomplish learning objectives in a teaching–learning community.** As John Wooden stated, "The teacher hasn't taught until the student has learned" (Nater and Gallimore 2010, 103). The real objective is for the student-player to learn and improve, which is the ultimate test of teaching effectiveness.

- **Learning is one of the keys to living a satisfying life, and learning to live (well) is best done by living to learn.** Humans are naturally curious early in life, and they almost always respond well to the opportunity to learn. This philosophy is well expressed in the following simple statement: Learn to live by living to learn.

- **Never stop learning.** When you integrate learning into all you do, you benefit immensely. Every moment that you make learning a priority, you can bring something positive into your life.

# BASKETBALL SKILLS AND DRILLS

*Basketball Skills & Drills* focuses on the fundamental skills of basketball that coaches teach and players learn. The acquisition of basic skills depends greatly on optimizing the teaching and learning process to generate a successful end product—namely, athletes who have learned basketball skills at the highest level.

Because movement skills are learned over time, patience is essential. Any athlete brings to the game certain genetically inherited movement traits, which we often refer to as *abilities*. These fundamental movement components—such as reaction time, predominant type of muscle fibers, and depth perception—serve as the building blocks for an athlete's movement potential. Teaching and

learning, however, must focus not on these abilities themselves but on the skills developed from them.

Coaches and basketball experts often assert that too many players focus on style over substance and prefer to use inherited abilities (the quick fix) rather than develop fundamental skills (the slow process). For instance, many players find it easier to dunk the ball than to execute a challenging pass and catch for a team basket. This book focuses on the controllable and gradual process required to teach and learn basic basketball skills—a process that depends on the substance of the skilled athlete rather than the flash of the stylistic athlete who relies primarily on individual movement abilities. Coaches and players need to focus on teaching and learning the basic skills of basketball and emphasize the process more than the product (i.e., single performance). They need to build on each player's inherent ability base for developing basketball skills, by which we mean learned movements built on inherited abilities. This long, slow process provides the basis for individual and team success in basketball.

Coaches and players often use drills as necessary tools to enhance skill learning. Drills, however, are only tools—not the end result. Thus, the focus should always be placed not on the drills themselves but on the desired skills. The drills presented in this book have been carefully selected to help players and coaches improve fundamental basketball skills. All coaches can benefit from helping their players develop or modify skills that best fit their philosophy and system of play. Skills are best developed by careful selection of and proper use of drills that enhance learning.

Coaches and players can modify and develop their own drills to learn basketball skills that eventually result in performing game moves at game speed. As expressed by Naismith Hall of Fame coach Henry "Hank" Iba of Oklahoma State University, "Practice the game in the manner in which it is to be played" (personal communication, September 1969).

# LEVELS OF LEARNING

Movement learning experts have found that basketball skills are learned in three stages.

1. *Cognitive stage:* The player forms a mental picture of the skill, usually based on a demonstration or explanation from a teacher or coach. Because vision is usually the dominant sense, especially for this stage of learning, coaches should "paint perfect pictures" through their demonstrations and explanations.

2. *Practice stage:* The player imitates the demonstration, the imitations are corrected and reinforced by the coach, and the skills are performed repeatedly. John Wooden emphasized this critical step when he stated that the five final learning steps are repetition, repetition, repetition, repetition, and repetition.

3. *Automatic stage:* The player can perform skills without thinking; the movements have become habits and can be performed as game moves at game speed.

Drills should use this repetitive process to reach the final goal of achieving game moves at game speed.

Basic skill learning in stages can involve the senses of sight, sound, and feel.

1. The sight, or *look*, of a skill: A player needs to know what a skill looks like when performed properly, and this need can be met through partner or buddy coaching—that is, watching teammates perform a skill, reinforcing what they are doing correctly, and correcting their mistakes. To maximize team learning of basic skills, coaches should convince all players to take responsibility for their teammates' basic skill learning. A team is only as strong as its weakest link, and its strength also depends on each player teaching all of the other players (e.g., through echo calls [repeating back the coaches' instructions or "critical cues"], as discussed later), thus enabling all players to learn more efficiently. To coach such demonstrations effectively, coaches must provide explanations that are precise, concise, correct, and understood by all players.

2. The *sound* of a skill: After players know the look of a proper skill, their focus can shift to sound—for instance, the sound of a dribble on the floor or of proper passing (*ping*) and catching (*click*).

3. The *feel* of a skill: Feeling is the highest sensory development of a skill—for example, when shooting a free throw in practice with one's eyes closed or dribbling a basketball while keeping one's eyes focused on the net or rim with big vision (head up to see the whole floor).

Visualization is a mental tool that can be applied in all three sensory areas. When a player mentally practices a skill by *picturing perfect performance* of it, the player learns in a relaxed state. This approach works best when players focus on mentally reviewing their *own* successful performance—how it looks, sounds, and feels. Thus, players need to become aware of the look, sound, and feel of a skill through both physical practice and mental practice.

# COMMUNICATION

One of the paramount components of teaching and learning is communication. The ability to disseminate palatable information is a valuable tool—one that both players and coaches need to sharpen every day. What matters is not what coaches teach but what players learn. Players do not all learn in the same way or at the same speed, and what is effective for one player may not be effective for all. For coaches, the challenge is to know how to teach players in a way that allows them to learn best. Communication, like learning itself, requires patience, open-mindedness, and a common goal (usually that of gaining knowledge). When these elements are present, coaches, players, and teams create the greatest opportunity to grow and succeed through learning.

One example of an effective communication tool can be found in a practice known as *echo calls*, in which players repeat a critical teaching or learning cue or other communication from a coach to ensure that all players learn. This audible communication creates an environment in which players interact with each other. Players learn more efficiently when they teach and communicate with each other, and players on the floor can never communicate too much.

In order to develop communication skills, focus on the following six key areas identified by Rainer Martens in his best-selling book *Successful Coaching* (1997):

1. Credibility

2. Positive approach

3. Information over emotion

4. Consistency

5. Listening skills

6. Nonverbal communication

Let's briefly examine each of these areas. First, credibility with players is based on respect. Each player should be allowed the opportunity to build self-respect and confidence during the basketball experience. In fact, developing self-respect while earning respect from others should be the norm for both players and coaches.

Second, communication between players and coaches should generally be positive—that is, emphasizing praise and rewards more than punishment and criticism. In short, coaches should tell players what *to do* rather than what *not* to do. For example, when teaching shooting, coaches might tell players to shoot up rather than telling them that the shot is too low. Coaches should also look for what players are doing right instead of focusing on what they are doing wrong; this approach is a challenge common to most coaching paradigms or individual styles.

Third, messages to players should be filled with factual information rather than emotional outbursts. Players need to know what to do correctly; they do not need to be yelled at for making mis-

takes. Positive emotion or praise tends to be more helpful, especially when players can gather needed information from it in order to learn skills or correct mistakes. Coaches can use negative emotion and punishment sparingly and only when the negative approach is the best or last alternative. For instance, the "feedback sandwich" described later offers an excellent way to provide necessary information. In addition, information is used best by players when it is specific. Thus the statement "Your head is centered" may be more effective for learning than "Great balance!" In short, reducing judgment and increasing information are good guidelines for coaches.

Fourth, coaches should practice consistency of communication. Players are looking for consistent messages and feedback, which provide them with a comfort zone for communication, whether verbal or nonverbal. Moreover, whenever possible, what coaches say should match what they do. Athletes are quick to sense hypocrisy, and they expect coaches to be honest and real. As Martens (1997, 31) states, "Be as good as your word."

The next area of communication development—listening—is one of the most challenging. Good listeners maintain eye contact, constantly search for meaning, exhibit respect for the communicator, and practice active listening. Coaches should focus on two-way communication in which players can interact and voice their concerns and questions. Players' acceptance of a mistake mentality is helpful for enhancing listening and reducing the fear, doubt, and worry that can accompany coaching communication. Finally, effective listening also depends on nonverbal communication in the form of positive body language, such as gestures, appropriate touching, and voice quality.

The primary measure of communication is not what coaches know but what players learn. In order to enhance learning, coaches must improve their own listening skills and those of their players. One of the most effective tools for improving communication in teaching–learning communities is the SLANT strategy, which is used in many educational settings. This approach rests on the foundation of body language that facilitates active learning.

As shown in figure 1, the SLANT strategy, as suggested by the acronym that provides its name, includes the following elements: sit up (or stand up), listen, ask questions, nod, and track the speaker. On the first level, *sit up or stand up* and lean into learning; in other words, be open to learning. On the second level, do not just hear but purposefully *listen* to sounds from coaches, teachers, and teammates. To invoke this level, we often use the phrase "Give me two ears." To ensure involvement, the player must also feel free to *ask questions*, thus developing an open attitude toward learning and following up when he or she does not understand what is being taught. The fourth level calls for the player to give feedback with a *nod* of the head when she understands and feels connected through two-way communication. Finally, the best learning tip is for the player to actively *track* the speaker (i.e., coach or teammate) with both eyes. By applying these SLANT techniques, student-players and teacher-coaches can enable more effective teaching and learning.
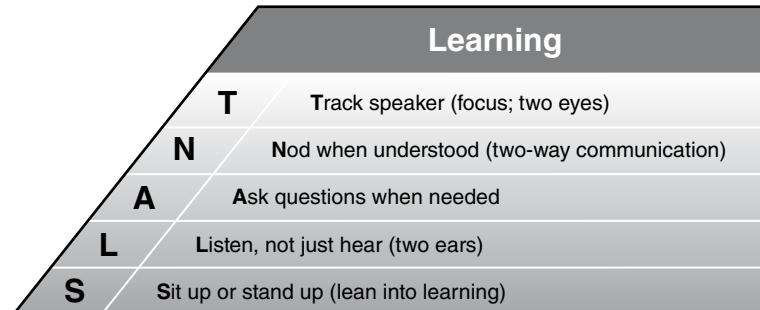


**Figure 1** SLANT learning.
Adapted from E.S. Ellis, "A Metacognitive Intervention for Increasing Class Participation," *Learning Disabilities Focus* 5 no. 1 (1989): 36-46.

# FEEDBACK

The learning process goes faster when appropriate feedback about skills is provided according to the following guidelines:

- **Feedback can best be provided by an experienced coach, but players also need to learn how to provide their own feedback whenever possible.** For example, a player can observe the starting point and landing spot of the feet before and after a jump shot, both of which are important factors in shooting with quickness and balance (the shooter should land slightly forward of the takeoff spot).

- **Players must be told what is correct (i.e., given reinforcement) and incorrect (i.e., given information about mistakes).** Mistakes should be known, acknowledged, and understood by players; then, a specific plan should be made for correcting those mistakes.

- **Correction of player errors should be consistent.** For players, the best learning approach to mistakes is to recognize them (with the coach's help), acknowledge them (to other players), learn from them, and then forget them.

- **Specific information is better than general feedback.** For instance, "Great full follow-through" is better than "Nice shot."

- **Provide feedback as soon as possible after performance.** Individual feedback can be given in this manner during practice by pulling a player aside. Players readily adapt to this coaching technique as a personal approach to learning that gives them necessary information; they are also motivated by the individual attention. This technique works well for both informational feedback about mistakes and reinforcement feedback for correct performance. One exception might be postgame situations, when emotions can run high for both coaches and players; in such cases, it may be more effective to provide feedback during the next meeting or practice.

- **Use "feedback sandwiches."** As recommended by Dennis Docheff, teaching expert from Central Missouri University, this type of feedback includes three parts: reinforcement (something done correctly), information (correction regarding a skill or behavior that needs improvement), and praise (encouragement). For example, you might say, "Jim, on your last shot, great follow-through at the elbow, but you need to get lower and have your feet wider for better balance. That's the way to keep working at game speed." Another way to conceive of this technique is provided by champion college coach Mike Dunlap of Loyola Marymount University:

  1. Praise—find a positive.
  2. Talk and tell—prompt, correct, and tell the player the next step. Talk and tell—prompt, correct, and tell the player the next step.
  3. Leave—give the player room and time to learn and absorb information.

Feedback helps players learn faster and retain skills better.

## General Tips on Teaching and Learning

1. Coaching is teaching.
   - Know why you teach a skill; knowing helps both teacher and learner.
   - Focus on the skill first (not on the drill or strategy).
   - Focus on how well something is done rather than on what is done (execution over repetition; quality over quantity).
   - When teaching or coaching, preview first (tell what you are going to teach), then "view" (teach it), and then review (tell what you taught).
   - Help players remove emotional obstacles to learning: fear, doubt, and worry.

2. Demonstrate and explain as follows:
   - Make sure that all players can see and hear you.
   - Demonstrate, correctly, to show the big mental picture.
   - Repeat the demonstration; provide two angles, two repetitions, or more.

- Explain precisely and concisely (don't talk players to death).
- Use only critical cues (don't talk too much).
- Practice immediately—players learn by doing and may forget the demonstration and explanation unless they apply it right away.
- Emphasize repetitive practice to make behavior permanent (and beware: this process works for both good and bad habits).

3. Use teaching progressions.
- Go from slow to fast. Do it right, then do it quickly (the final goal is game moves at game speed).
- Go from simple to complex; for instance, often start with footwork, then go to the whole body.
- Teach in sequence (from start to finish), then reverse it.

4. Both players and coaches need to remain open to learning; be green and growing, not ripe and rotten.
- Adopt the whole skill or concept as a beginner or adapt one idea to improve if experienced.
- Improve every day of the year (can't maintain—must progress).
- Look for the lesson; there is always a lesson to learn (search for it).
- Learn from others—both good and bad experiences offer lessons.
- Communicate and encourage teammates (generally, coaches should criticize when necessary, whereas players praise and encourage each other).
- Control what you can (all people have total control of their attitudes, actions, and responses) and let go of the rest.

5. Know how each player learns best.
- Visually (seeing the skill)—reading about it or seeing a demonstration
- Auditorily (hearing the skill)—getting more explanation or listening for sounds
- Kinetically (feeling the skill)—walking through the skill

6. Use the following tools:
- Word pictures (e.g., *footfire* for moving the feet)
- Analogies and metaphors (e.g., *start quick like a sprinter*)
- Critical cues (e.g., *full follow-through*, *freeze the follow-through*)

7. Teach fundamental skills and more:
- Conditioning
- Toughness and effort
- Life and character lessons
- Communication (early, loud, and often)
- How to compete
- Competitive greatness (Wooden's Pyramid of Success )

8. Become a full-package coach who helps players learn and develop in a well-rounded fashion.
- Physically (conditioning and skill)
- Mentally (psychologically)
- Socially (teamwork)

9. Evaluate all that you do as a player or coach. One quick and effective evaluation tool—the one-minute assessment—can be used to gather information and feedback about what players are doing on and off the court. For instance, it can be used by coaches to evaluate a practice session, team strategy (offense or defense), or team rule. The tool consists of three parts: one quality, action, or performance that is praiseworthy (and why); one element that could be improved (and how); and relevant insights or comments. This simple format allows coaches to print the relevant questions on index cards or plain paper or distribute them electronically for use in a variety of settings.

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### One-Minute Assessment

a. What was *excellent* and *why*?


b. What could be *improved* and *how*?


c. Comments:

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10. Coaches and players both need to know themselves, develop their own unique talents, and serve others—which is the ultimate personal lesson.

In order to develop an effective teaching–learning community, we must focus on the athletes and on their learning and improvement, both on and off the court. More specifically, in order to structure a strong development program built on a foundation of basketball fundamentals, a coach must develop a philosophy of teaching and learning and become a master teacher. The coach truly is the difference maker in any program—both as a leader and as a teacher.

Figure 2 depicts a step-by-step pathway to help coaches address critical areas in becoming a master teacher; this model has been developed over my lifetime of teaching and coaching. The essential elements for success are as follows.

1. Expectations: Set goals that are high but realistic.

2. Teaching–learning community: Build a community focused on student-athletes' learning.

3. Emphasis: Match teaching and learning with the time you spend through your words and actions. What you teach and spend time on in practice should reflect your coaching philosophy and emphasis.

4. Assessment: Provide measurements of status and progress for individual athletes, for the team, and for members of the coaching staff in all that you do.

5. Inspiration: Motivate all to become their best by living in spirit (i.e., your emotion should reflect your basic philosophy and intent).

6. Demand: Inspire and, as a final step, draw the leader's line in the sand—that is, hold everyone accountable.
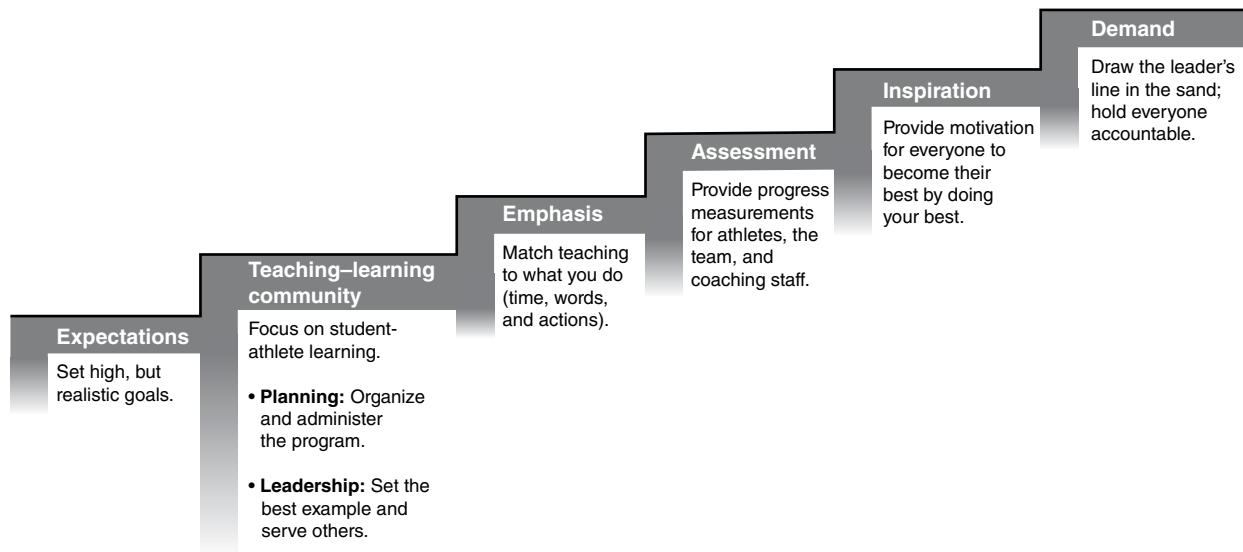
**Demand**

Draw the leader's line in the sand; hold everyone accountable.

**Inspiration**

Provide motivation for everyone to become their best by doing your best.

**Assessment**

Provide progress measurements for athletes, the team, and coaching staff.

**Emphasis**

Match teaching to what you do (time, words, and actions).

**Teaching–learning community**

Focus on student-athlete learning.

• **Planning:** Organize and administer the program.

• **Leadership:** Set the best example and serve others.

**Expectations**

Set high, but realistic goals.

**Figure 2** Becoming a master teacher.

This book provides considerable instruction and information. The potential for teaching and learning basketball skills depends on developing the skills to teach and learn effectively. To gain the most from the basketball skills and drills presented in this book, coaches and players can use the following guidelines:

- Develop a teaching–learning community.
- Make the game simple and easy to learn through diligent, purposeful practice of fundamental skills.
- Become a master teacher and learner to become the best you can be.
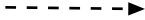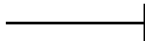
## Wooden Wisdom

*"It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."*

—John Wooden

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# KEY TO DIAGRAMS

⊕        Player with ball

○        Offensive player

X        Defensive player

⬚        Relocated player

■        Post player

C        Coach

1        Specific court location (spot)

⟶        Path of player

- - - ►        Path of ball

──────┤        Screen

∿∿∿►        Dribble

(1)        Pass number (indicates order of passes)

👣 👣        Footwork or player positioning

⟵┤        Facing direction

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# BODY CONTROL AND FUNDAMENTAL FOOTWORK

*"Footwork and balance are necessary every moment of a game, while ballhandling is needed less than 10 percent of the game."*

Pete Newell, Naismith Hall of Fame coach and former head coach at University of California, Berkeley

One of the foremost tasks of a coach is to teach players how to move and control their bodies. Fundamental movements, sometimes referred to as *basketball basics*, are essential tools for all players. Coaches need to teach players to move both effectively (getting the job done) and efficiently (moving in the best way); they need to teach players to conserve time and space and to move with purpose, thus reducing wasted motion. In essence, basketball is a game of balance and quickness, and all movements should focus on these qualities. Players should strive to "tighten" their game, which means playing at top speed (being quick at the right time) while maintaining body control.

As a result, developing balance and quickness should be the overall focus for coaches and players at all levels. Balance hinges on footwork; it begins with the feet and ends with the head. Because of the human head's size (nearly 10 pounds, or 4.5 kilograms) and location on the body, it is crucial to balance, and it should be centered over the base of support. From there, the head moves in the desired direction to become unbalanced, thus committing the player to quick movement in that direction. Quickness is also related to the head and the feet, but in the opposite order. Quickness is first and foremost a state of mind (*think quick, then be quick*); thus it starts in the head and ends in the feet (it depends on footwork). Both balance and quickness, then, depend on proper footwork and relate closely to head position and state of mind.

Basketball requires quickness (of hand and foot) and speed (in overall body motion) to be used at the proper time. Therefore, coaching should continually emphasize the principle of doing things right, then quickly—making the right move quickly at the right time—while developing and maintaining individual, physical, emotional, and team balance and correct offensive and defensive position. Here again, we see that basketball is a game of balance and quickness. This idea can also be applied to learning for all skills—first do the skill properly (slowly), then do it quickly (progress toward game moves at game speed).

The six fundamental positions and movements of basketball are stance, starts, steps, turns, stops, and jumps. Because quickness is so important, these basic positions are all designated by the author with the word *quick*.

## QUICK STANCE

Players need to develop the habit of assuming a good basic basketball position in order to ready themselves for quick movements. Quick stance requires adequate levels of muscle strength and endurance in the core area (abdominal muscles in front, lower-back muscles behind). Teaching quick stance on offense and defense is a challenging task, and patience is essential with younger players who may not have the strength and muscle endurance to stay in this position very long. The most important part of a quick stance is to achieve and maintain bent-knee and bent-elbow positions. All joints should be flexed and ready so that the game is played low to the floor. The lower players get, the higher they can jump, the more explosive their moves to the basket are, the quicker they are on defense, and the better they can protect the ball. Thus *play low and stay low* is a critical concept for all players.

Coaches should also teach players the *feeling* of quick stance—being ready for anything and feeling quick. Maintaining this basic position requires hard work because players must become comfortable in an awkward, unnatural, monkey-like position. Players should sit into the stance—get low—and stay in it. Consistent and early emphasis on quick stance teaches athletes to assume it automatically. Quickness is a combination

of thinking quick, feeling quick, and becoming quick by improving one's skills. A good test for quick stance is to imagine sitting in a chair with the head positioned behind the knees, as shown in figure 1.1.

## Foot Position

The best foot placement in most situations is that of a slightly staggered stance with the toes pointing slightly outward, not straight ahead. The feet should be about shoulder-width apart, with the instep of the front foot along the same horizontal line as the big toe of the other foot (see figure 1.2). Players should use this position when they need to move in any direction. To get into this foot position, players should put the feet together, move the preferred foot forward until the big toe of the back foot is next to the instep of



**Figure 1.1**　Quick-stance test: Sit into the stance (side view).

the forward foot, and then step sideways with the preferred foot until the feet are about shoulder-width apart for balance and quickness.

The parallel stance shown in figure 1.3 is best used for side-to-side movement, as well as for catching the ball and stopping, stopping after dribbling, and responding defensively when a defender moves laterally. It is also important to use for shooting because it produces the body mechanics best suited to ensure that the shot goes straight and deep into the basket. In time, players will become equally adept at using either stance when needed.
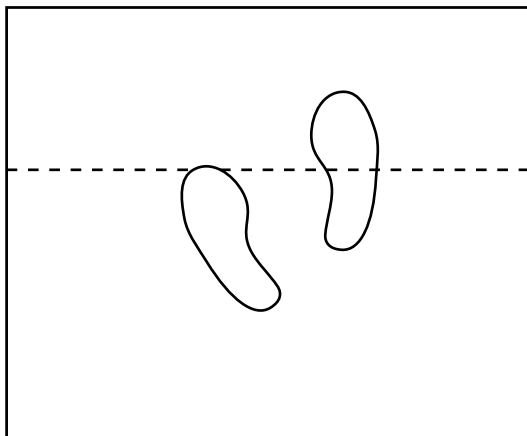
**Figure 1.2**　Staggered stance (top view), based on instep-and-toe relationship with the feet shoulder-width apart and the back foot toed slightly outward. The figure shows offensive quick stance (right-handed player).
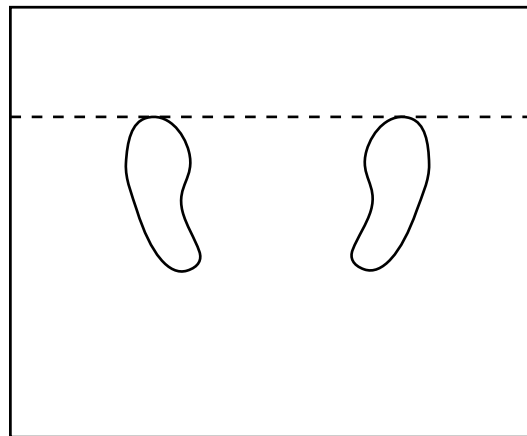


**Figure 1.3**　Parallel stance (top view), based on a toe-to-toe relationship with the feet shoulder-width apart and the toes pointed slightly outward.

## Weight Distribution

Body weight should be evenly distributed from side to side, from front to back, and between the feet. The heels should be down, with most of the weight (60 percent) on the balls of the feet, although pressure should also be felt on the toes and heels. The toes should be curled and the heels kept down on the floor.

Players may incorrectly place all of their weight on the balls of the feet with the heels off the floor; this position is slower because the heel has to be brought down before forceful movement can be made. A good way to teach the feeling of proper position is to ask players to take an "eagle-claw" position, with the heels down and the toes curled (flexed), so that they can feel the floor with their toes.

When players are on defense, they should add "footfire" to their basic quick-stance position. Footfire involves keeping the feet active and in constant motion without having them leave the floor by alternately lifting the weight off each foot slightly while keeping the whole foot in contact with the floor—a technique that helps keep the leg muscles stretched and ready for action and thus enables a defender to be quicker. Players can imagine that they are standing on a bed of hot coals, using an alternating foot motion without letting their feet leave the floor. The weight must be on the whole foot for either offensive or defensive quick stance.

## Head and Trunk Position

For proper balance, players should keep the head centered over the support base—at the apex of a triangle, with the legs as two equal sides and a line between the feet as the base when viewed from the front (figure 1.4). They should also center the head from front to back, assuming an erect trunk position, with the shoulders back and the trunk slightly forward of vertical. The back is straight, the chest is out, and the head is slightly behind the knees. Players should sit into this stance.

**Figure 1.4** Offensive quick stance (triple-threat position): *(a)* Front view—the head, the key to balance, is carried up and alert at the apex of the triangle. *(b)* Side view—sit into the stance with the back straight, the chest out, and the head up. *(c)* Pit and protect the ball.

## Arms and Legs

Teach players to keep their joints (ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows, and wrists) bent and ready. Coach John Wooden suggested that all joints should be bent for quickness. Players on offense can tighten their game by bending the joints and keeping the ball close to the body—that is, pitting and protecting the ball in or near the shooting pocket. The shooting hand is behind the ball, and the offensive player is in triple-threat position, ready to shoot, pass, or drive quickly. Defensive players can also tighten their game (i.e., their movements) by bending the joints, keeping the arms close to the body (with elbows bent), and adding footfire to their footwork (figure 1.5). Keeping the hands and arms bent and close to the body enables balance and quickness. The entire sole of each foot should be touching or close to the floor. Coaches should remind players to stay low; in order to maintain the low center of gravity needed for quickness and balance, the angle at the knee joint in back of the legs should be 90 to 120 degrees.
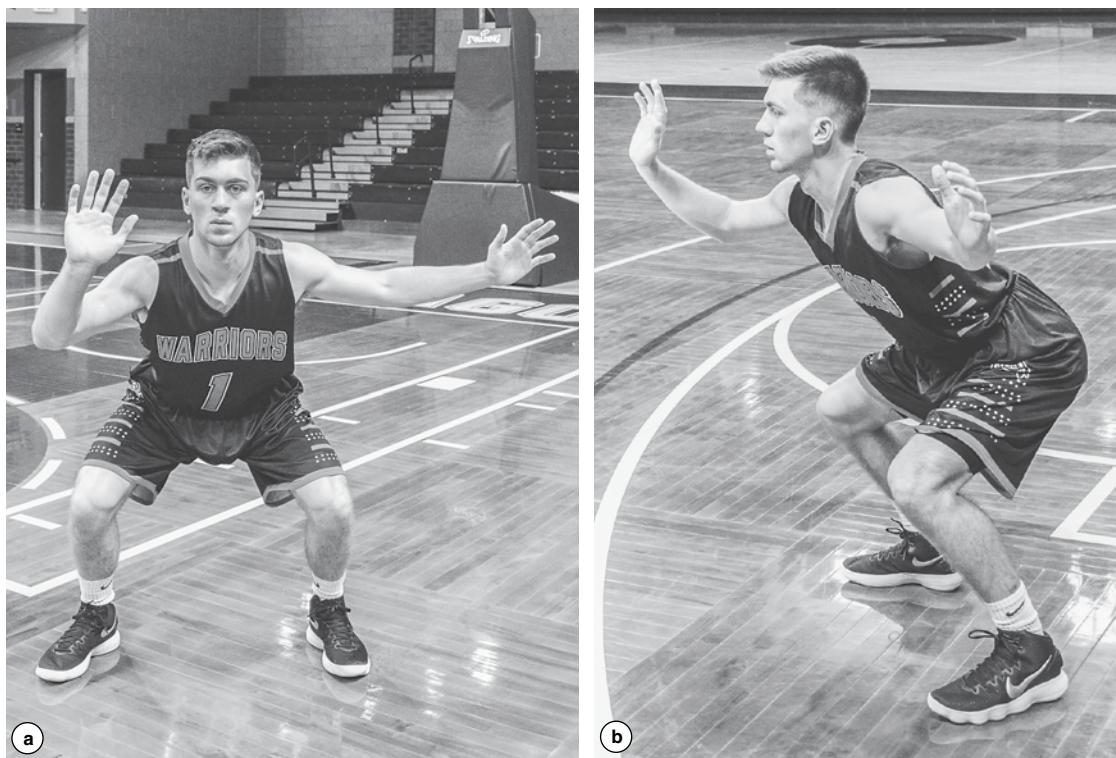
**Figure 1.5** Defensive quick stance with joints bent: *(a)* front view, *(b)* side view.

## COACHING POINTS FOR QUICK STANCE

- Be ready for action: feet ready, hands ready.
- Keep all joints bent.
- Play low and stay low; sit into the game.
- Get in and stay in a quick stance.
- Keep the head up, the chest out, and the back straight.
- Keep body weight on the whole foot with the heels down (eagle-claw position).
- On defense, keep feet moving (footfire).

# QUICK STARTS, STEPS, TURNS, AND STOPS

Starting, stepping, turning (pivoting), and stopping are the fundamental motions used in moving effectively and efficiently in and out of quick stance for both offensive and defensive purposes. Players should be taught to execute a skill correctly, quickly, and at the right time every time. To do so, they need to go slow, get a feel for executing the skill properly, find a rhythm, and then speed up progressively until they make a mistake. At that point, they learn from the mistake and then keep moving toward developing game moves at game speed.

A player's overall speed—that is, ability to move the body from point A to point B—is important in basketball, but it is not as critical as quickness, or hand and foot speed. Therefore, coaches should strive to improve the quickness of each player. Thinking quick and being quick should be the constant focus for both players and coaches.

## Quick Starts

Starting is the first skill that players must learn using quick stance. To start quickly, players shift body weight (and the head) 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. The weight shift is always led by the head, which is critical to balance (see figure 1.6).

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 or quick start is needed. Players should keep their feet in contact with the floor as much as possible and use the floor to their advantage by staying close to it.

**Front (Lead) Foot First** From basic (quick stance) position, players should shift weight in the direction of the intended movement and take the first step with the foot nearest to that direction. This movement is shown in figure 1.6, in which the left foot is the lead foot after moving to the left. Likewise, to move to the right, take the first step with the right foot. To move forward, take the first step with the front foot (push from the back foot and step with the lead foot). This lead foot technique is used most often when a player needs to focus on quick movement on offense or defense.

Sometimes, it is quicker on defense to step across with the trail (back) foot first and run or sprint in the desired direction of movement, particularly when a defensive player is beaten by the opponent and must run to recover. This technique (stepping across with trail foot to lead with the back foot) can also be used on offense for moving with the ball (i.e., making a live-ball move) when the ball handler uses a jab step with the front foot (i.e., a shot fake) and a crossover step (break) with the lead foot.



**Figure 1.6** Moving laterally to the left: Move body weight toward the desired direction of movement (i.e., over the left foot).

**Defensive Quick Start and Steps** On defense, players should more often use a sliding motion. Specifically, they should keep the feet shoulder-width apart and use short, quick shuffle steps that allow the head to remain level. This technique is called the *push step* or *step-and-slide* (stepping with the lead foot, sliding with the rear foot). The lead foot moves in the desired direction from the force of the trail foot at the same time that a short, quick push step (lead foot first) is taken (figure 1.6). The force for the push step comes from a power push from the trail foot, which moves the body and transfers the weight to the lead foot. It is quickly followed by a pulling slide step taken with the trail foot to regain basic position without bringing the feet together. Players should keep their feet wide at all times. The lead step and the pull and slide steps are short (1 to 2 feet, or 0.3 to 0.6 meters), and the stance is low and wide: *Step and slide, low and wide; can't get too low, can't get too wide*.

Players should learn to execute defensive starts and slides in side-to-side, forward, backward, and diagonal directions (figure 1.7)—all while keeping the head level. Head bounce shows that a player is rising out of the stance instead of using a push step or slide step. Such a bounce, known as a *bunny hop*, brings the feet together in the air, thus losing the advantage of floor contact for producing motion change, wasting time and space, and reducing quickness of motion. The head must be kept level. Players can imagine a steel plate above the head during all push-step motions to help them stay down in defensive quick stance, which produces low and level motion in which the head remains in a horizontal plane.

One exception to the step-and-slide footwork technique for defense occurs when a defender on the dribbler cannot stay in proper position ahead of the dribbler. When this happens, the defender guarding the dribbler should turn to face the direction of the sliding movement, sprint ahead of the dribbler in correct ball–defender–basket position, then return to basic stance and the step-slide technique. This method, also referred to as *run-to-recover*, is preferred by some coaches as their basic defensive movement to cover change-of-direction dribble moves. Consequently, they teach run-to-recover instead of step-and-slide.

**Figure 1.7** Defensive directions for starts and steps.

**Offensive Quick Start (Permanent Pivot Foot)** On offense, players with a live ball (i.e., who still can dribble) can execute a quick start from triple-threat position using the lead foot first. On live-ball moves, offensive players should establish a permanent pivot foot (PPF; left foot for right-handed players, right foot for lefties) and a permanent stepping foot for use either in dribble-driving past a defender or when the ball is held. Using the PPF, a player can do a quick start with the stepping foot (front foot first). These live-ball moves can be either direct drives (to the strong or preferred side) or crossover drives (to the nonpreferred side); these two types of moves are shown in figures 1.8 and 1.9, respectively.

The primary advantage of PPF footwork in live-ball situations is that it is simpler and easier for younger players to learn with the ball in triple-threat position. Also, using the PPF direct drive and crossover drive to get past a defender on the dribble relies on the safest driving footwork on the crossover drive (by protecting the ball from the defender with the crossover leg), which requires dribbling with the nonpreferred hand (figure 1.9). The PPF direct-drive move uses a direct step forward with the lead foot (figure 1.8). In contrast, when executing the PPF footwork on the crossover drive, the offensive player must move the ball across to the opposite side of the body (from pit to pit) while also making the crossover step to the nonpreferred side of the body in order to dribble-drive past the defender (figure 1.9). Either way, PPF provides a simple, quick method for attacking the front foot of the defender.
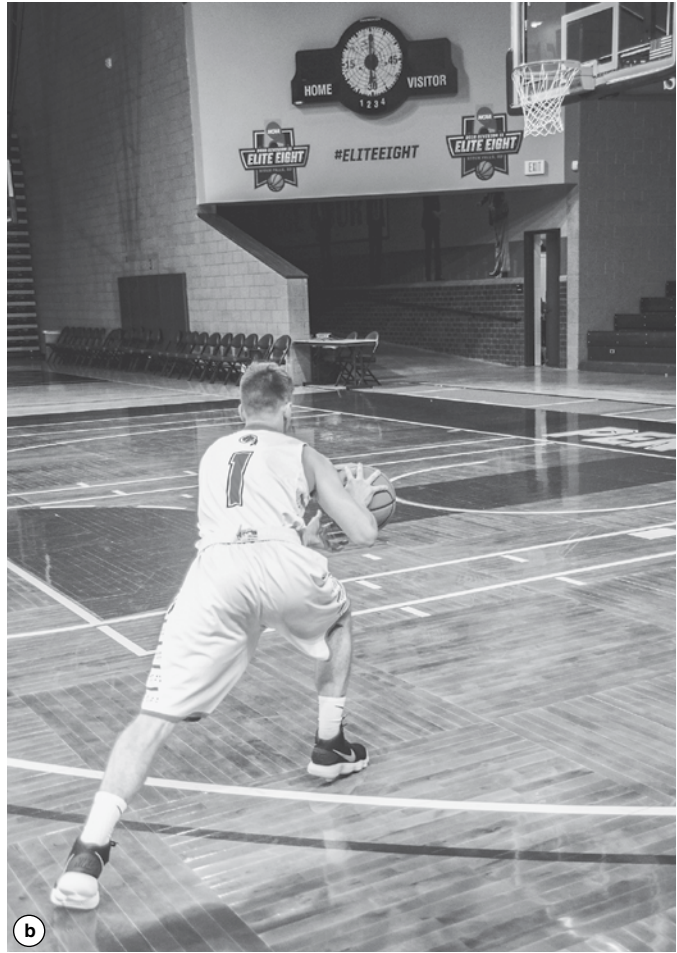
**Figure 1.8** Live-ball move—direct drive (PPF footwork): *(a)* offensive quick stance (triple-threat position), *(b)* first step—long and low.



**Figure 1.9** Live-ball move—crossover drive (PPF footwork): *(a)* triple-threat position, *(b)* circle-tight with ball (pit to pit), *(c)* long and low crossover step.
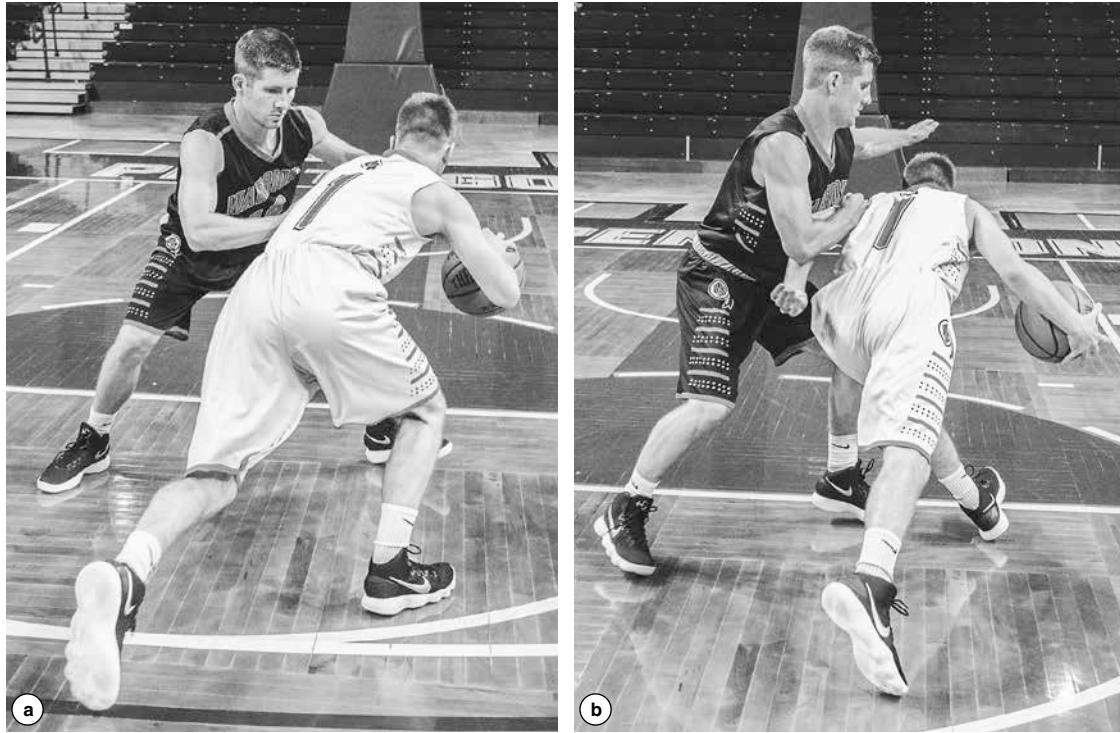
**Figure 1.10** PPF direct drive: *(a)* win the battle, and *(b)* win the war.

The advantages and disadvantages of PPF technique are shown in figures 1.10 and 1.11 and summarized in the following list.

• **Direct drive:** Quick-step forward to "win the battle" of the first step; get the foot by on the side of the defender's front foot (preferred). As shown in figure 1.10, this technique allows the driver to win the battle but *not* the war (establishing inside hip protection of the ball). For beginning players, however, this disadvantage of less ball protection is offset by the more comfortable advantage of using the preferred stepping foot and the preferred dribbling hand.

• **Crossover drive:** A quick crossover step to the nonpreferred side of the ball handler allows him or her to attack the defender's front foot (figure 1.11). Even though the nonpreferred driving side is not as comfortable, the crossover driver uses the recommended footwork to get the nonpreferred foot past or to



**Figure 1.11** PPF crossover drive (*win the battle and the war*).

the side of the defender's front foot, thus winning both the battle of the first step and the war of inside hip contact and ball protection on the first dribble by the front foot.

**CRITICAL CUE**
Live-ball moves: Attack the front foot.