

Basketball Grade Characteristics and Lesson Plan

5th and 6th Grade

Focus on the Fundamentals

- Shooting - Stance
Shooting hand Grip
Guide or Balance Hand
Follow-through
Jump Shots
- Passing - Chest Pass
Bounce Pass
- Dribbling and Ball handling - Head up at all times
Traveling
Carrying/Palming
Double Dribble
Pivoting
- Rebounding- Hands Up
Box Out
- Defense - From Mid-court
Man-to-Man
- Foul Shooting- Fouls
Positioning
Free-Throws
- Basic Screening- Moving Screens
- Three Seconds**
- Back Court**
- Lay-Ups



CONSIDER THIS: Great skill begins with the **desire** to master the ball and the key elements of the game.

Shooting

EYES ON TARGET

- To improve accuracy, locate the target (rim) as early as possible.
- Keep your eyes on the target and do not follow the flight of the ball.
- Keeping your target focus is very important!

STANCE AND BALANCE

- Feet are shoulder width apart for good balance.
- Feet should be in a slightly staggered stance that is consistent and comfortable for you. Your

shooting foot is slightly ahead of the non-shooting foot in a comfortable position.

- Point your feet in the general direction of the basket, but not necessarily directly at it. We prefer an open stance, but you can also use the closed (squared) stance if that's more comfortable for you. With an open stance, your feet point towards one side of the basket. For example, a right handed shooter will point his or her feet just to the left of the rim for a more natural position and shooting motion.
- Once you develop a comfortable stance, line up your feet the exact same way on every shot. Whatever stance you use, consistency is critical.
- Flex/bend your knees on every shot.

SHOT POCKET

- As you catch the ball, move it quickly into the shot pocket.
- Line everything up so the ball and your shooting eye form a straight line to the basket. This is VERY important.
- Position the ball several inches above your waist.
- Grip the ball properly and be ready to shoot.
- Position the ball in your shot pocket the SAME way every time you catch it.

GRIP

- Place the air hole between the middle and index fingers.
- Line up your fingertip pads parallel to the long seams of the ball, so you can monitor the back spin.
- Leave space between the ball and the middle of your palm. You should be able to insert a pencil between the ball and your palm area.
- Spread your fingers far enough apart to comfortably balance the ball in one hand.
- The ball should sit on your finger pads.

BALANCE HAND

- Your non-shooting hand should be on the side of the ball.
- Your balance hand should not add force or spin to the shot.
- Your non-shooting hand should not move on delivery and should ALWAYS come off the ball FIRST.

DELIVERY

- The ball should start motion directly upwards from the shot pocket (no dipping of the ball).
- Your elbow should be positioned comfortably under the ball.
- The ball stays in front of you and should not go behind your head.
- Uncoil your body with your legs, core, and arm power all coordinated.
- Your elbow and wrist should extend in a straight line to the basket.
- Your shooting hand should extend in a straight line to the rim.
- Hand position on delivery is very important. The ball should come off the hand with

perfect symmetrical backspin.

- As shown in the picture to the right, your guide hand stays to the side and does not influence the flight of the ball.

UPFORCE AND LANDING

- Release the ball on the way up, just before the top of your jump.
- Use your legs to generate upforce.
- You should land in the same spot that you jumped, which shows that you have good balance on your shot.

FOLLOW-THROUGH

- Your wrists should be floppy (relaxed).
- Fingers should be pointed at the target (rim).
- Finish high. You should see your fingers at the top square of the back board.
- Hold your follow through position until the ball hits the rim.

Passing

CHEST PASS

The chest pass is named so because the pass originates from the chest. It is thrown by gripping the ball on the sides with the thumbs directly behind the ball. When the pass is thrown, the fingers are rotated behind the ball and the thumbs are turned down. The resulting follow through has the back of the hands facing one another with the thumbs straight down. The ball should have a nice backspin.

When throwing a chest pass, the players should strive to throw it to the receiver's chest level. Passes that go low to high or high to low are difficult to catch.

BOUNCE PASS

The bounce pass is thrown with the same motion however it is aimed at the floor. It should be thrown far enough out that the ball bounces waist high to the receiver. Some say try to throw it 3/4 of the way to the receiver, and that may be a good reference point to start, but each player has to experiment how far to throw it so it bounces to the receiver properly. Putting a proper and consistent backspin on the pass will make the distance easier to judge.

OVERHEAD PASS

The overhead pass is often used as an outlet pass. Bring the ball directly above your forehead

with both hands on the side of the ball and follow through. Aim for the teammate's chin. Some coaches advise not bring the ball behind your head, because it can get stolen and it takes a split-second longer to throw the pass.

WRAP AROUND PASS

Step around the defense with your non-pivot foot. Pass the ball with one hand (outside hand). It can be used as an air or a bounce pass. You will often see the wrap-around, air pass on the perimeter and the wrap-around, bounce pass to make an entry into the post.

Dribbling & Ball Handling

9 Tips To Improve Your Dribbling & Ball Handling

1. **Dribble the ball hard.** The more time the ball spends in your hand, the more control you have of the ball. The harder you dribble, the quicker it gets back in your hand.
2. **Head up at all times.** Look at the rim or a spot on the wall during all practice.
3. **Use your finger tips to control the ball,** not your palm.
4. **Use your imagination.** Picture when and how you would use each of the dribbles.
5. **Teach mentality.** There is too much dribbling for no reason in our game today. I like to teach that the primary purpose for putting the ball on the floor is to get a lay-up. If you don't have an opportunity, don't put it on the floor.
6. **Basketball is a game of length. Work on lengthening the dribble.** Work to get your opportunities with 1 dribble. You don't beat defenses with your dribble. You beat people with your feet; you SEPARATE from your defense with the dribble.
7. **Basketball is also a game of angles. Try to move in straight lines.** Whenever you make an "East-West" move (something that takes you toward the sideline), re-capture a "North-South" path (direct line to the basket) as quickly as possible.
8. **Don't do things in 2 dribbles that you can do in 1.**
9. **Practice outside your comfort zone.** Experiment; go faster than you are used to, use your imagination. When working on new skills, don't be concerned with losing the ball. Just pick it up and do it again. If you practice only things that are comfortable, then you will never improve.

Rebounding

Knowledge

Good rebounders understand the game and personnel. They study who shoots, when and from where. I know that that might be difficult when playing an opponent you have not seen before, but tendencies become apparent as the game unfolds. Be that as it may, there is no reason you can't study your own teammates. If you know Joey likes to shoot the ball from the right corner, instead of working on something that is going to be non-productive, get yourself in a position to

rebound when Joey gets the ball in the right corner. That is preparation that will allow you to overcome most players you have to rebound against.

The next thing good rebounders understand is where the ball will go. Shots taken from the wing down to the baseline rebound back at the same angle or over at an opposite angle 80% of the time. Only 20% of shots rebound to the front of the rim.

Shots taken above the foul line extended to the top of the key rebound 60% to the sides and 40% to the front of the rim. Good rebounders are proactive. Study where the shots come from and react accordingly before the ball misses. You might miss a few but you will get a lot.

Good rebounders also understand that a long shot often produces a long rebound. Not always, but you have to play percentages. How long will the rebound be? Well that would be purely a guess. However, while we understand that being close to the rim is good for rebounding, you can be too close. Assume that EVERY shot will be a long rebound and position yourself as such. A good guide for position is the NBA charge/block arc in the lane. That is about the area you want to get to on a missed shot.

Skill

The skills of rebounding are simple: prepare your hands, block out, catch the ball. As simple as it sounds, these are skills that have to be practiced.

Determination

While the shortest distance between 2 points might be a straight line, the same cannot be said of a rebound. While you can play the odds (see knowledge), trying to predict where a rebound will carom is like predicting how a football will roll after landing on its point. Balls hit hands, hits the rim multiple times, players are pushed out of position -- there are 2nd and 3rd chances when you did not think you had one chance. You have to condition yourself that you can get every rebound and go after it again and again until you grab it.

Boxing Out

Boxing on a rebound is very important. However, it is not as important as getting the ball. Boxing is a momentary action intended to impede the path of an opponent and delay his ability to go after the ball. I have seen many games lost due to a great box out but nobody went after the ball.

In addition, boxing out is a confusing term. Previously we discussed rebounding position (around the NBA block/charge line). What would you do if your opponent is inside of you in that rebounding position? You can't box him out because he is inside of you. I would box him in, turn and push him toward the basket. What if you are under the basket with your defender on

your back? Would you box him out into good rebounding position? I would turn and box him in, under the basket.

When boxing out, find your man as soon as a shot goes up. Pivot in the most comfortable and efficient way you can, into an athletic position that looks like you are sitting on a chair. Immediately your arms go up, your elbows go out and your hands get ready to grab the ball. We discussed above the reasons for getting your arms up and hands ready (see skills). The purpose for getting your elbows out is NOT to hit anyone, but it does make you wider and more difficult to go around. In this position, bump your man with your butt and then go after the ball.

Boxing out (or in) is not only a defensive maneuver but can be an offensive maneuver as well. Use it any time you are in position to do so. Be aggressive and take control of the situation. Don't wait for your man to make a move, go and get him before he has a chance to move.

Remember, to be a good rebounder or a good rebounding team doesn't necessarily mean you get every rebound, just be sure your opponent doesn't get it.

Defense

Tip #1 - Never lose your balance

If you lose balance for one second, YOU ARE BEAT!

The purpose of every offensive move is to get YOU off balance - because as soon as you lose balance, the offense can blow by you.

This means when you're guarding the ball, you must:

- Stay on your feet and do NOT go for shot fakes. When you go for fakes, you are beat!
- Do not lunge for the ball and get off balance.
- Stay in a WIDE stance. If your feet get too close together, you will lose balance.
- Stay in a LOW and athletic stance. If you stand upright, you will more easily lose balance.
- Take short steps when sliding. If your feet come too close together, you will lose balance.

Tip # 2 - If the ball is below the mid-section, put your hand above the ball.

This prevents the offensive player from putting it in shooting position.

Tip #3 - If the ball is in shooting position, put your hand on the ball.

This will stop the player from shooting and you NEVER have to leave your feet (which causes you to lose balance).

Tip #4 - If the ball is above the head, place your hands under the ball and flip up.

This keeps you out of foul trouble (because most refs only call fouls if you swing downward) and it also keeps the player from bringing the ball down to shooting position.

Tip #5 - Keep your head lower than the offensive player's head.

That way you're getting underneath the offensive player and will be in good position to slide your feet or take a charge.

Foul Shooting

See also elements of shooting. Free throw shooting is a very personal process and everyone has his own style. However, there should be some common elements, and, since shooting free throws is a repetitive process, each free throw should be the same, shot after shot.

The Court

In the event that you have not noticed, 99% of inlaid wood basketball courts have a dot right in the middle of the foul line. When installing the court, the baskets and painting the lines, you need to have a reference point upon which you can measure. The installer places a dot on the floor at 15', directly at the center of the rim. All the lines are laid out from that dot. If you look closely, you will find it.

What is the significance of that dot in regard to free throw shooting?

It's simple. The dot tells you where to stand. Some players like to stand with their shooting foot on the dot. Some players like to straddle the dot. Some players will stand 3 feet to the side of the dot. Use the dot so you stand in the same place every time.

Screening

Fundamentals of the Screener (Person setting the screen):

- Feet should be a little wider than shoulder-width apart. It's very important to have a wide, strong base.
- Hands should be crossed across your chest (girls) or protecting your groin area (boys)
- The screener needs to be stationary as the screen is set. Otherwise, the screener will be called for a offensive foul.
- Body should be vertical (should not be leaning forward or backwards).
- Square to the defender. The middle of the screener's chest should be in line with the defender's shoulder and hips.
- After the offensive player has ran off the screen, it is very important to open up to the basketball. Normally, you will pivot 180 degrees to the basketball. Sometimes, a cut to the basket or away from the basket may be open. Many times, the screener is the person who is open.

Fundamentals of the Person Receiving the Screen

- Set up the defender - It's very important for the offensive player to set up the screen. First of all, (s)he needs to wait until the screener is completely set. If (s)he leaves too early while the screener is moving, the screener will get called for an offensive player.

Second, it's very good to set up the screen by faking the opposite direction even if it's only a slight head fake. This will get the defender leaning in the wrong direction and when he explodes the other direction to catch up with you, he'll run hard into the screen.

- Shoulder to Shoulder - When running off the screen, you will need to run shoulder to shoulder. This will not give the defender any room to get around the screen. It will force him to either trail behind you or plow through the screener for a defensive foul.

- **EXPLODE!** It's very important for the offensive player to blast off of the screen. This will leave the defender in the dust and give you much more time to set up for a shot.

Basic Screens

- **Down Screen** - A player runs toward the baseline closest to their basketball goal to set a screen.
- **Ball Screen** - A ball screen is when an offensive player sets a screen for another offensive player who currently has the ball in possession. The only time you will want to set a ball screen is when the offensive player still has his or her dribble.
- **Back Screen** - A back pick occurs when the screener sets a screen away from the ball on the defender's back. It may also be called a "Blind Screen" as well. Legally, the screener is suppose to give the defender one step, otherwise, the screener may be called for an offensive foul.
- **Away Screen** - This is when a player sets a screen away from the ball. This happens when a player passes the ball to a player, then runs away from the ball to set a pick for another offensive player. This can also happen when a player is denied the ball, and he goes away from the ball to free up another offensive player.

Lay-ups

Teaching lay-ups

When teaching new concepts of leg drive and follow-through while handling a basketball and trying to throw it through the basket, consider that it might be very difficult for young players to keep track of all the factors involved. You would be well advised to simplify the process by eliminating the ball at first.

Try these techniques **without a ball**.

- Line up your team in rows.
- On the command, "Set", have them stand with their left leg forward and their right leg extended straight back. Knees should be bent and hips low in an athletic posture.
- On the command, "Drive," have them step forward with their right leg, without taking their left foot off the floor, and drive their right knee in the air. The visualization phrase that I use is "Try to hit your nose with your knee."
- After driving the right knee, talk a little about the feeling they get when they drive the knee. They should feel their whole body lifting.
- Next, on the command "Drive," combine the knee lift with a jump off the left leg. It might take a few reps to co-ordinate the knee drive with the jump but it will come quickly.

- Next, give the command "Drive," and, at the appropriate time, add the command, "Shoot." Players then go into a right-handed shooting motion. Timing is important, as you want to shoot while the player is in the air. Emphasize holding the follow-through on the shot until after they return to the floor.
- Next, in cadence, call, "Set, Drive, Shoot." Explain that this, when done with proper timing, is the action involved in taking a lay-up.
- When you feel that the shooters are comfortable with the right hand, alter their stance and have them practice a left-handed lay-up motion.

Once you are comfortable with that action, go to the next step

- On the command, "Set", have them stand with their left leg forward and their right leg extended straight back. Knees should be bent and hips low in an athletic posture.
- On the command, "Step Back," players step back with their left foot so it is extended straight back and the right foot is forward.
- On the command, "Step," players step forward with their left leg. Follow the, "Step," command with, "Drive," and, "Shot," in cadence, to create the rhythm for taking an active lay-up.
- When you feel it is proper, switch to a left-handed lay-up.

Once you are comfortable with that action, go to the next step

- On the command, "Set", have them stand with their left leg forward and their right leg extended straight back. Knees should be bent and hips low in an athletic posture.
- On the command, "Step Back," players step back with their left foot so it is extended straight back and the right foot is forward.
- On the command, "Step Back," players step back with their right foot so it is extended straight back and the left foot is forward.
- On the command, "Step," step forward with the right foot.
- Add the command, "Dribble." Players will then imagine they are taking one dribble with their right hand. (This is a great opportunity to teach them about the rules concerning when the ball must be dribbled in order to move their pivot foot without traveling.)
- Follow the "Dribble" command with, "Step," "Drive," "Shoot."
- When said in the proper cadence and with proper timing; "Set," "Step Back," "Step Back," "Step," "Dribble," "Step," "Drive," "Shoot," will give players a basic feeling and rhythm for taking lay-ups, with and without a dribble

After they are good at taking lay-ups without a basket, move to a basket; teach them the proper angle to approach the basket; and go through the same sequences shooting right-handed and left-handed.

Once they are comfortable at the basket, give the players a ball and go through the same sequences.

Teaching Points

- You make lay-ups with your eyes.
- Shooting is about rhythm
- The power to get the ball to the basket comes from your drive leg. Try to touch your nose with our knee.
- Early in the process, success has to be defined in terms of correct form rather than made baskets.
- Focus on the process, not the results. Younger kids may have problems with balance and strength. Don't sacrifice form for made baskets

Cutting and moving without the ball

1. Set your man up before using the screen. In other words, before rubbing off a screen, take a step away from the screen and fake like you're going the other direction. Then you can rub off the screen. This will get your defender off balance and give you more space.
2. Run off screens shoulder to shoulder. There should be no space between you and the person setting the screen. This makes it difficult for the defense to "slip" through and take away your shot.
3. Read the defense! One of the best skills you can learn as a player is how to read the defense. If your defender cheats over the screen, then you can flare the other direction so the defender gets stuck behind the screen. If the defender denies you the ball and overplays the passing lane, then back door them cutting hard to the basket. These are just a few examples. Learn the different ways you can read the defense. This will make you a better player!
4. When cutting, vary your speed. In other words, you might want to take a few steps one direction at half speed, then quickly change direction sprinting off a screen. This keeps the defense guessing and off balance.
5. Know where your teammates are at. This comes with experience and game awareness. The better you know your teammates and your offense, the easier it will be for you to find them and use their screens.
6. Never stand still for more than two seconds. If you're a great shooter, keep moving. Don't stand in one spot for more than two seconds.