



**YOUTH BASKETBALL
COACHING CURRICULUM
K – 3 INTRODUCTORY**

INTRODUCTION

League Philosophy

SLARA sponsored leagues and activities are formed and operated on the principles of good sportsmanship, fair play, courtesy to others, healthy activity, tolerance and inclusiveness, and all other policies pertaining to community understanding and development. SLARA reserves the right to make decisions which it feels are in the best interest of the league and community.

What to Expect?

SLARA basketball leagues aim to serve as introductions to the sport of basketball for the youth in the community. For many of the players in the league, this will serve as their first experiences with basketball as well as organized sport. It will be a learning process for all of them. Some will pick up the game and skills quicker than others. Be patient and keep the focus on fun! Players should play equal amounts of every game, receive equal instruction, and be provided with an environment suitable for skill development and recreation.

Role of the Youth Coach

SLARA thanks you for your decision to serve as a coach! SLARA coaches are vital to the implementation of all youth leagues. As a coach, your role is to serve as a communicator to parents and players alike, facilitate a learning environment, and provide supervision. It is not uncommon for youth players to view a coach as a role model, use this opportunity to teach fair play, sportsmanship, and a love for the game. Keep practices fun, yet instructional. Use gameplay as teaching moments for young players. Coaching youth sports can be a very rewarding experience, remember to have fun with this!

Purpose of this Curriculum

The focus of this curriculum is to lay out a week-by-week guide to serve as the foundation for your practice program. This curriculum will cover the skills and mechanics each player will need to learn to help grow their game. At the age and experience level most of your players will be at, basic skills are the focus. While this curriculum provides a starting point, additional lessons should be worked in when appropriate. The key to learning for many of these young players is confidence. It is your responsibility as a coach to create an environment that enable these young players to feel confident in their ability. Make sure you are mixing in games and other activities to keep kids focused and engaged. Through repetition, positive reinforcement, and fun, these young players can hope to see improvements in their game from week 1 to week 8!

START PRACTICE WITH A WARM UP

Stretching provides a great starting point for any practice. Stretching allows players to loosen up, prevent injury, and can be a solid team activity to start a practice. Stretching will add structure to the beginning of a practice and gives you a chance to brief the team on important announcements or upcoming practice goals. Try to incorporate stretching into your practice agenda.

Some ideas to get you started:

- Stand on toes, reach arms to the ceiling for 10 seconds
- Spread the legs, while standing, as far apart as possible without losing balance. Reach with both arms through the legs as far as you can for 10 seconds.
- Legs still spread, reach your left arm to your right foot. Repeat with right arm to left foot. Do each for 10 seconds.
- Sit down. Spread legs and reach as far forward between legs as possible for 10 seconds.
- Still sitting, bottoms of feet together, knees out, press down on inside of legs with elbows for 10 seconds.
- Stand up and rotate arms clock-wise and counter-clockwise. Do each for 10 seconds.
- Finish with 25 jumping jacks

WEEKS 1 THRU 2 – BALL HANDLING/DRIBBLING

Ball Handling is the most basic skill a young player needs to pick up on. Without proper ball handling mechanics, players will struggle to properly and effectively dribble the basketball up and down the court. The key here is repetition. Being confident dribbling the basketball down the floor will require confidence. The only way to become confident is through proper repetition of the mechanics. Ball handling and dribbling is the focus for the first couple weeks but should not be forgotten as the season progresses.

Coach Focus

Make sure your players are focusing on the following:

- Heads Up! Don't look at the ball while dribbling.
 - Use fingers to bounce the ball
- Keep the ball under control, don't let it go higher than your waist
 - Keep your knees bent
- Ball-You-Man: Keep yourself between the defender and the ball. If a player must go through you to get to the ball, chances are higher they will foul you.

*When teaching dribbling, be sure to stress that it is not a race. Relay races, while fun, can cause players to speed up past what they can handle and use poor mechanics. During drills, stress the use of proper mechanics, speed will come naturally with time. Explain and emphasize that players cannot double dribble.

Drills

Warm up

Players get in a circle, each with a basketball and practice using proper dribbling/ball handling mechanics. The goal of this drill is to get players used to a basketball in their hands and comfortable with proper mechanics.

Look For: Make sure each player is using proper techniques and not replicating bad habits

Basic Dribble

Have players line up on the baseline, each with a ball. Simply have them dribble up and down the court. After some practice, have them take a shot as they approach the opposite basket.

Look For: Proper dribbling technique

Figure 8

Place cones in a straight line, roughly 5 to 10 feet apart. Have players dribble a basketball in and out of the cones. Repeat several times and have players use both hands at least once.

Look For: Be sure players are using their fingers to control the ball and are dribbling with their head up. Make sure they have confidence in using both hands.

WEEKS 3 THRU 6 – PASSING/SHOOTING

Passing

A team that is able to move the ball well on the offensive side of the floor will be tough for any team to stop. Good ball movement is achieved through good passing between teammates. The focus for week 3 is passing, how to pass properly, when to pass, and what pass to use.

Coach Focus

You should cover the following passes with your players:

- Chest pass
- Bounce pass

Chest and bounce passes are the most common passes used. Make sure your players are keeping two hands on the ball, stepping forward with their foot, extending their arms and keeping their palms out in the direction of their teammate's chest for a chest pass or the floor for a bounce pass.

Drills

Warm up

Create as many pairs as you can with your players. Have them line up across from one another with one basketball. Players should take turns passing the basketball back and forth. Have players alternate between chest and bounce passes.

Look For: Ensure players are using proper technique and keeping their passes on target.

Circle Passing

Have the team form a circle with two players being left in the middle. Players on the outside of the circle must make passes to other players on the outside of the circle. The two players will defend passes and attempt to steal the ball. If a ball is stolen, the passer switches roles with the player who stole the ball. Switch roles every so often so players are not stuck in the middle.

Look For: Effective and on-target passes, proper technique. Make sure the defending players are not fouling yet are playing aggressively.

Shooting

If a player wants to score, they are going to have to learn to shoot the basketball! Shooting can be very difficult for younger players since they do not have the strength necessary to use

proper form and reach the rim with the shot. It is still important to teach proper form, so that bad habits are not relied on later.

Coach Focus

Proper shooting technique can be described by viewing the basketball as a clock. For a right-handed shooter, the right hand should be at 6 o'clock and the left at 8 or 9 o'clock. The shooting elbow should be directly under the shooting hand and the wrist should bend to form a "C" with the forearm and elbow. The shooter will bend the knees and start the shot from the chest, coming off of the ground as the shot is released. On the follow-through, both hands and the body should face the basket.

Layups are a crucial part of shooting. For a right-handed shooter, the right foot should come off the ground and the ball should be shot for the top-right corner of the square on the backboard.

Drills

Technique Practice

Have players line up on the baseline with a ball. On the whistle, they should take 3 to 4 dribbles ahead, stop, and shoot the ball into the air, not far enough so that it is out of reach. The goal here is to practice proper mechanics without focusing on getting the ball to the hoop. Have them repeat this process all the way down the floor.

Look For: Shooting technique! Now is the time to correct players on shooting technique before it becomes habit.

Around the World

Players line up around the basket, as close in as you need to have them. Have players go around the line taking shots at the basket. See if all players can make a shot in the same cycle.

Look For: Proper mechanics

Lay-Ups/Close in Shots

Have players line up at the foul line. Give them a pass and let them move in on the basket and shoot. If they can make a lay-up, encourage them to do so however normal shots are fine too!

Look For: Strong shooting mechanics

WEEKS 7 THRU 8 – FLOOR PLAY/SCRIMMAGES

The skillsets covered in the first part of this curriculum serve as a good start to teaching any young player the game, but players will eventually need to know how to put those skillsets to use.

Coach Focus

Over the next few weeks, you will teach your players the importance of overall floor play. These include non-skill tasks like pivoting, rebounding, defense, and offensive positioning. While the mastery of basic skills is important, hard work, hustle, and awareness on the basketball court separate the good players from great players.

Pivoting

Pivoting can help a player to get away from defensive pressure, create better angles, and open up better passing lanes. Demonstrate to players how to successfully pivot and encourage them to use the technique to avoid tie ups in game situations.

Pivot Drill

Each player is given a ball. The coach should help players learn the basic mechanics of pivoting while holding the ball. Explain that once the ball is picked up, it cannot be dribbled again.

Look For: Pivoting using the whole foot and not the toe.

Rebounding

Rebounding is a very important aspect of both a good offense and good defense. When rebounding, it is crucial to keep yourself in between the player you are guarding and the basket. Don't be afraid of contact when battling for a rebound but be sure to avoid fouls.

Rebound Drill

The coach will shoot to miss and cause a rebound. Players will take turns getting the rebound and shooting a shot back at the basket. You may add in a defender to go for the rebound as well if you believe the kids can handle it.

Look For: Keeping an eye on the ball, putting the shot back up.

Defense

Defense is typically not a focus on the minds of young players, however it is very important to teach. Players should be taught to keep themselves between the player they are guarding and the basket. They should also be taught to guard the basket first, then pick up the player they

are guarding. Young players will follow the person they are supposed to guard around the entire court, and often times group up creating easy fast break opportunities. This should be avoided.

Shuffle Drill

Players assume the defensive position: Knees bent, heads up, hand extended-palms up, feet shoulder width apart. On the whistle, players shuffle to the pointed direction.

Look For: Players getting tired, proper form

Offense

Every young player's favorite part of the game, scoring a basket! However, scoring a basket takes hard work long before a shot is even taken. To keep an offense running effectively, teach your players these aspects of good offensive play:

- Keep the ball out of the corners. The sidelines make it easy to get trapped as they act as an extra defender.
- Keep everyone involved! Having every player on the floor involved creates more self confidence among your players and helps your offense beat the defense.
- Send one player to help a teammate in trouble. Often times young players will group up and all go for the ball when a player picks up their dribble. Designate a player to do this so other players remain options for passes.

Scrimmages

End each practice the final two weeks with scrimmages. Stay out of the way for the most part and let the kids play. It is important to make sure that they remember why they play the game... to have fun! Use obvious technique mistakes as teaching moments for the whole group, but do not place too much emphasis on positional play.