

Coaching Youth Basketball: Focusing on the Fundamentals

- By [Jeff Haefner](#)

The fundamentals of basketball are the foundation for every individual play, offensive or defensive strategy, and every move that your players make. The best players have perfected the basics of the game. Learning and mastering these basics make the rest of the game much easier!

My number one recommendation when coaching youth basketball is to focus on the fundamentals!

Spend at least 75% of each practice on them.

Do NOT teach your youth team how to do a full court press!

First teach them how execute offense and defense in the half court. Even if you think they know how to execute in the half court, I guarantee they don't...

Do all your players know how to read screens? Do they slip the screen when the defense hedges on the pick and roll? Do they set screens shoulder to shoulder? Do they block out after every shot? Do they always see their man and the ball when they're on defense?

If they don't know how to do these things, why in the world would you teach them how to do a full court press?

In 20 years of watching basketball, I've NEVER seen a youth team that was ready to press and had all the fundamentals down pact!

If you make teaching your players the fundamentals your number one goal, your players will enjoy practice, they will appreciate their improvement, and they will be grateful down the road.

Like any sport, no matter what your age -- whether you're a professional athlete or a youth player just getting started -- you need strong fundamentals to be successful!

Unfortunately, most people don't really understand what that means.

So what are the fundamentals?

The fundamentals include working on the little things that will make you better -- no matter what team or coach you play for -- or what offense or defense you are running.

For example, by working on the [fundamentals of shooting](#), you will get better no matter what offense you run. The fundamentals of shooting include proper foot alignment, leg bend, hand position, arm angle, follow through, and so on. These are some of the little things that make a difference. Learn them!

The same goes for lays ups, foot work, post play, passing, jab steps, jump stops, pivoting, blocking out, and so on.

For youth players, we suggest that you focus on teaching the proper technique and fundamentals for:

- [Lay ups](#)
- [Shooting](#)
- [Foul Shooting](#)
- [Passing](#)
- [Dribbling and ballhandling](#)
- [Jump stops](#)
- [Triple threat position](#) and pivoting
- [Jab steps](#)
- Basic [screening](#) and cutting
- [Defense](#)
- [Rebounding](#)
- [Basic post moves](#)

These are all critical fundamentals to master because they'll make you and your team better, no matter what age level or situation you might be in.