

# FAST BREAK AND TRANSITION

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# Introduction

One of the best ways for any team to create easy baskets is to get out in transition and attack the defense before they have a time to get set, and since the success of the ‘Seven Seconds or Less’ offense of the Steve Nash and Mike D’Antoni Suns, we have seen more and more teams at all levels of basketball adopt this philosophy, or some variation of it.

And while having a secondary or transition offense can boost the quality of shot that you get on each transition opportunity, if your players don’t understand the basics of transition basketball – run your lanes and pass the ball ahead – then it won’t matter how great your offense is.

And that’s exactly what we focus on in this playbook. We’ll look at 12 drills, all designed to ingrain those concepts into your players, so that every time a defensive rebound or turnover is created, they’ll know which lanes to get out to run into, where to headman the ball, and how to attack the defense when they’ve got a numbers advantage on the break.

**Drill:** Three Line Drill

**Coach:** Stan Bengel, Head Coach

**School:** Ben Davis High School

**Description:** To be successful in transition you need to not only be able to create a numbers advantage for yourself, but to keep the pedal to the metal and take full advantage of the numbers edge every opportunity you have – and that’s precisely what were going to work on in this drill.

Setup three lines, a passing line on the left hash mark, a defensive line at the free throw line, and receiver line on the right hash mark.

To start the drill, the passer is going to lead his teammate up the court with the pass of his choice. As soon as the ball has left the passers hands, the defender and the other offensive player will begin a race to the hoop, with the defender trying to disrupt the pass if possible. From there we have a two on one, with the passer trailing behind the play.

The focus here is on speed – the offense is automatically kicked off the court if they slow the game down and start passing the ball back and forth. They should be playing as if there is another defender right on the passer’s heels and they need to get the shot up before the numbers even back out.

Depending on the age group of your team you may want to adjust the starting position of either or both offensive and defensive players if you feel that things are too or too easy for the offense.

### Ben Davis Practice Drills

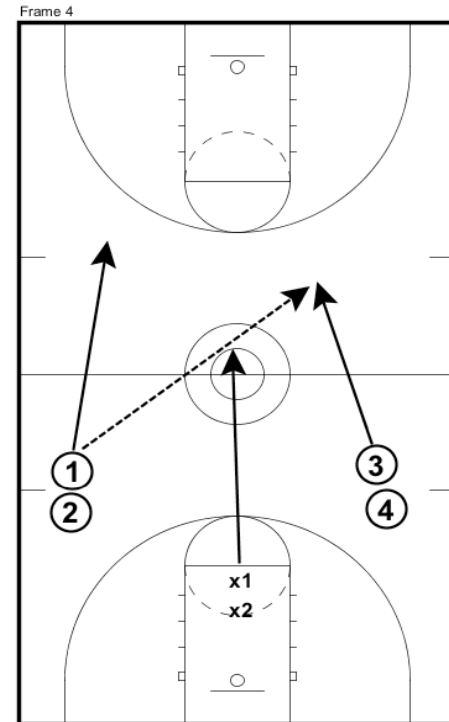


Diagram #4: Three Line Drill

**Drill:** Three Line Layups

**Coach:** Tom Kelsey, Head Coach

**School:** Belhaven University

**Description:** If you need a transition drill that will give your players a chance to work on their passing, finishing, and conditioning, this will be one of your favorites. Have the players form three lines spread out evenly across the baseline. The player underneath the hoop will start with the ball in hand.

To begin the drill, the player underneath the hoop – 1 in this situation, as seen in the diagrams to the right – will pass to the wing. Immediately after the pass is made, the player on the side opposite to where the ball was passed will begin a sprint to the hoop on the other side of the court. They must remember to take a wide angle, staying close to the sideline until halfcourt, where they can begin to open up and take a more direct path to the hoop. This will allow for an easier catch, preventing a situation where a football over the shoulder catch would be otherwise necessary had they just run in a straight line to the basket.

The wing player, the one who received the pass, will catch in stride and take one dribble downcourt. They will then throw a cross court pass to the opposite wing, deep enough that his teammate will be able to catch, take a dribble, and make a layup without travelling or being forced to take a second dribble.

The player who started the drill – number 1 in the diagram – will sprint fullcourt, filling in behind the wing player who is receiving the second pass. Number 1 will continue past the hoop, touching the baseline and staying on that side of the hoop, ready to continue the drill going down the other way.

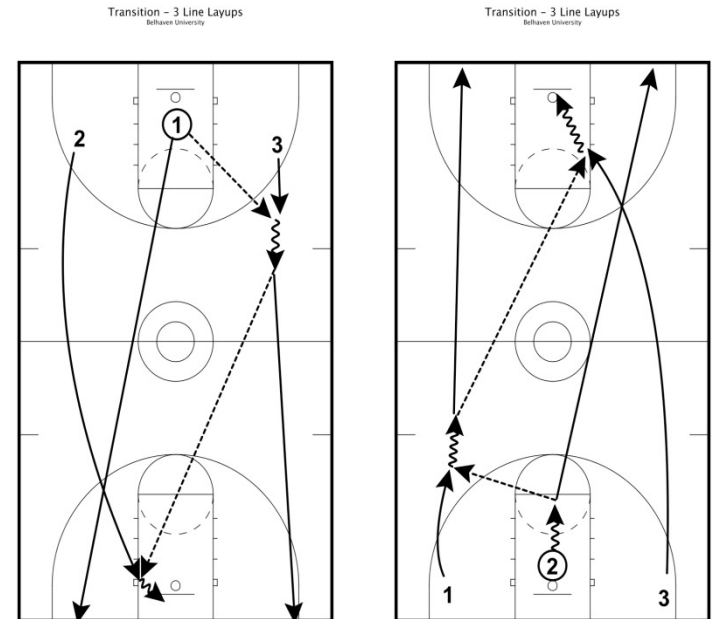
The player who made the second pass – number 3 in the diagram, will stay on the same side they started on, also sprinting full court and slapping the baseline.

While this is happening, number 2 will have made his layup, grabbed the rebound, and started the drill going down to the opposite end of the floor.

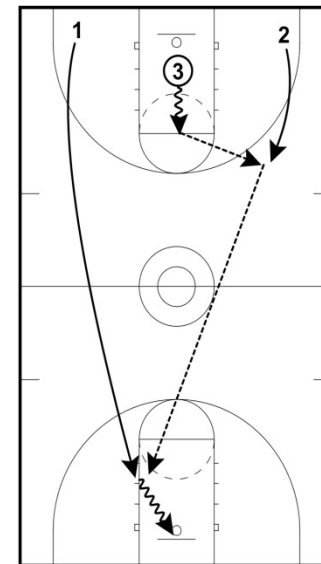
Whichever side the first pass was made to, left in this example, will be the side all outlet passes are made until each player has made a layup, finishing the drill.

Ideally, you would have an assistant or two helping you out here to keep an eye out for several things: making sure all passers slap the baseline each time down the court, that each player takes only the one dribble, that no passes bounce off the floor, and finally, that the ball doesn't touch the ground after it goes through the hoop.

Once your players have gotten better at the drill, you can eliminate the one dribble rule and force them to do the entire drill without the ball hitting the ground for a real challenge – and of course, don't forget to work both sides!



Transition - 3 Line Layups  
Belhaven University



## Drill: Four Line Full Court Layup Drill

**Coach:** Tom Kelsey, Head Coach

**School:** Belhaven University

**Description:** In this next drill, we're going to increase the difficulty a little bit. Have your players form four lines, one at each corner of the court, and then have one player stand underneath the hoop – they'll just be starting the drill off before going to the back of one of the lines.

The player underneath the hoop will start the drill by making a layup. As soon as the players in the two lines on the same side of the court see the ball go through the rim, they both break into a full sprint down the court along the sidelines. To start, we'll designate the left side the outlet pass side. Player starts the drill by making a basket. Players waiting on baseline do not start until the ball goes through the rim. This goes throughout the drill. Once the ball goes through the rim outlet man sprints up the sideline and calls for the ball. Opposite player is sprinting towards the basket.

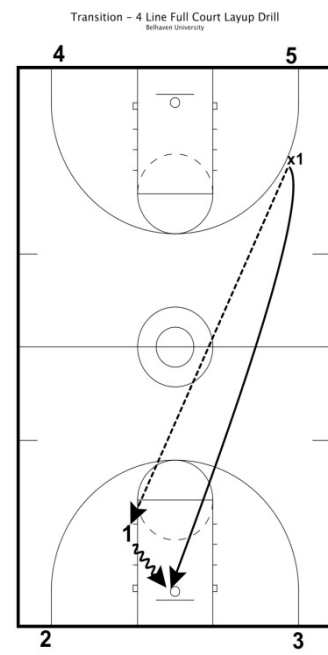
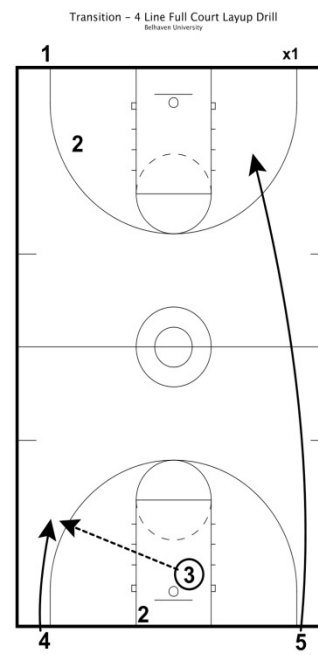
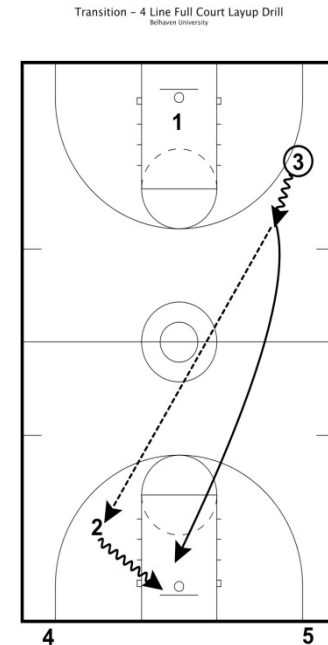
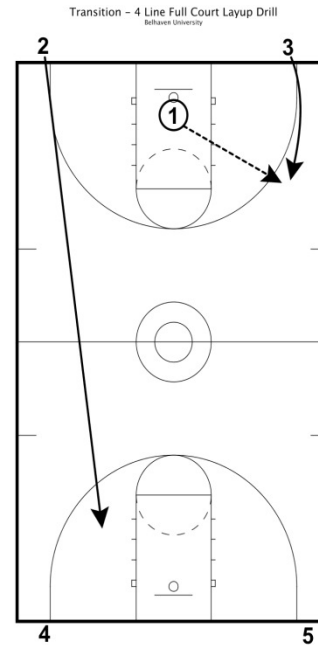
Players that catch outlet are allowed one dribble. Pass must be made in front of teammate so they can catch the ball on the run. Player that receives the pass is allowed one dribble. Player that made pass (3) must rebound the ball out of the nets before it hits the ground.

Once ball goes through the rim next group takes off. Rebounder passes to outlet man. Outlet man must call for the ball. Teammate is sprinting up the sideline. On receiving the ball make players catch and then put the ball on the floor. Eliminate the habit some players that want to hit or bat the ball down before catching the ball.

You can vary the drill by putting a coach in the middle of the floor to try and intercept passes. There are variations of the drill to make it productive for your team:

\*Do the drill for a period of time. \*Make an amount of layups in a row.

\*Cannot have a certain number of turnovers or missed layups.



**Drill:** Olympic Shooting

**Coach:** Bill Lewitt, Head Coach

**School:** Cecil College

**Description:** Being able to measure improvement over the course of the season can be difficult in some drills, but not so in Olympic shooting. This is a great transition drill that will allow you to hold your players accountable and force them to strive to do better each and every practice.

The goal here is for the team to accumulate 150 points over a 4 minute period. They get one point for a layup, two points for a mid range shot, and three points for shots from behind the arc.

Your players will form three lines at each end of the court, with the player in the middle on one side starting with a ball. The second players in the outside lines will also have basketballs, as well as the players at the front of the line on the opposite end of the court.

To begin the drill, this player will push the ball up court aggressively, as if they were attacking the middle on a fast break. After crossing halfcourt and before crossing the three point arc, the ballhandler will pass to one of the two wings, who will catch the pass and finish with a layup at the hoop.

The passer will fill in behind the player he just passed to, receiving the pass from the corresponding line on the baseline. The player on the opposite wing who did not receive the pass will also catch a pass from the baseline. From here, they have the choice to take a three point or mid-range shot, while the passers will take off downcourt as the drill continues.

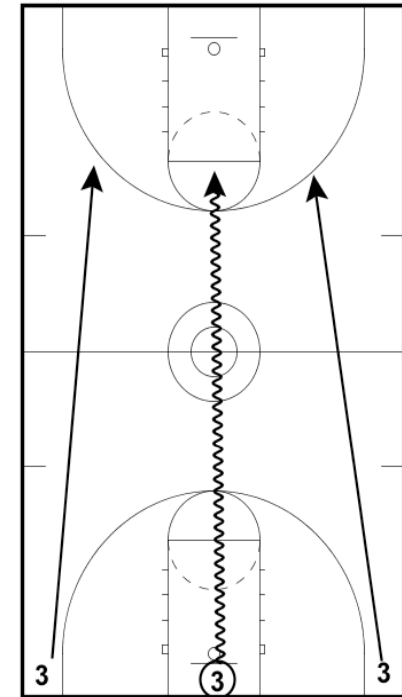
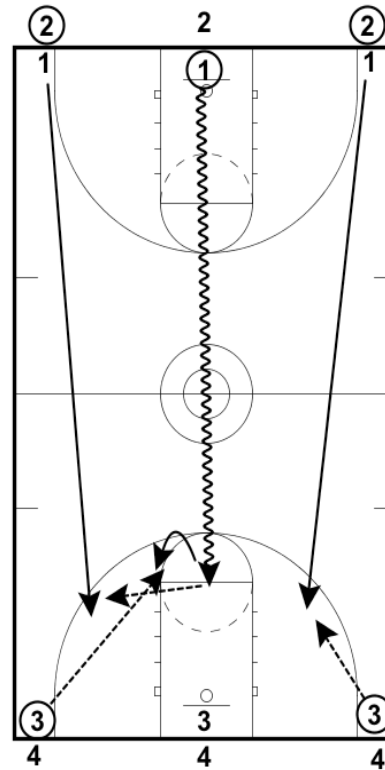
The player who took the layup will then grab his own rebound and push the ball immediately up to the other hoop, again passing to either wing and then taking his shot.

A good starting goal for the team is 150 points, and generally we have the players run sprints for every point they're short of the goal. You should keep note of the final result each time you finish the drill and adjust the goal accordingly as to keep your players engaged and motivated to improve. It's also a good idea to have the whole team count out each basket made, keeping everyone aware of the total.

Practice Drill: Olympic Shooting Practice Drill: Olympic Shooting

Cecil College

Cecil College



**Drill:** Prairie Fire

**Coach:** Randi Peterson, Head Coach

**School:** Coe College

**Description:** Here's another full court shooting drill, but with an emphasis on pushing the ball via the pass rather than the dribble. Have the players form six lines – two on the baseline and one at the right hash mark at each end of the court.

Have a coach stand underneath the hoop at one end with a ball to start the drill off. The second players in both baseline lines will also start with a basketball, as well as the players at the front of the baseline lines at the opposite end of the court.

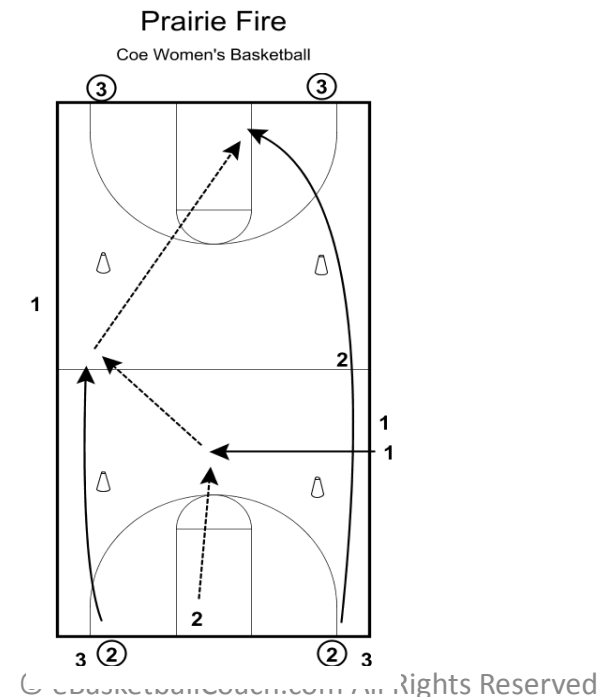
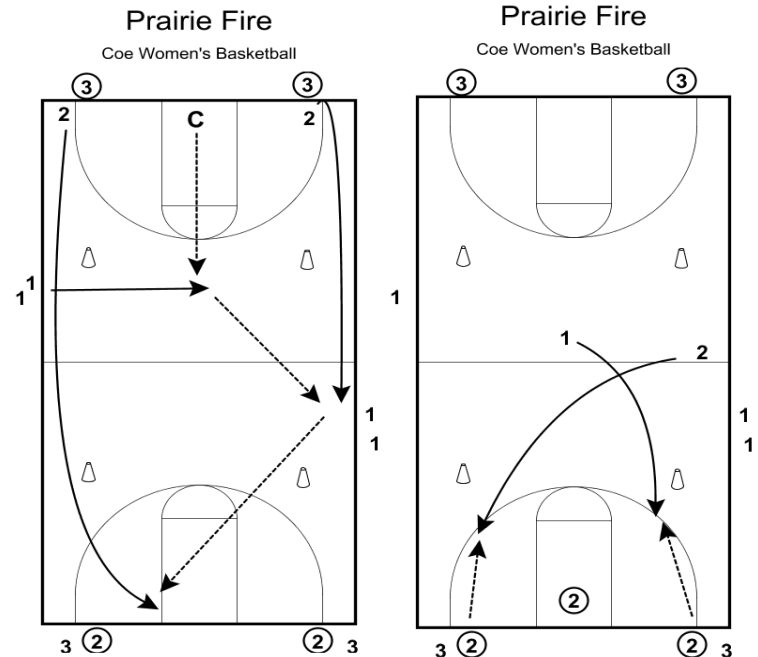
Next, a player will cut into the middle of the court from the line at the right hash mark. This is a rough approximation of where we want our primary ball handlers to be calling for outlet passes, and it's important that they come back to the ball and communicate their position loudly to the passer underneath the hoop.

The coach will fire off this pass, and instantly both wings will take off down the court, with the second pass being made to the player on the left wing. This player will then make a pass to the opposite wing as they cut into the hoop for the layup. The two passers will follow their passes, with the first passer filling the left side lane, and the second passer filling in in the right side lane, where they will both receive passes from the corresponding lines on the baseline. They will then take either a three pointer or a mid range jumpshot depending on their shooting range. The passers from the baseline will then both begin to sprint up the sideline to the other end of the court.

The player who just made the layup will corral their own rebound and immediately fire off an outlet pass to the player at the hash mark, who will again be cutting into the middle of the court for an outlet pass, and then hitting the player streaking up the left sideline, continuing the drill.

The challenging part of the drill is that players may not let the ball touch the ground in any situation other than after having attempted a mid range or three point jumpshot. In this one situation we allow a single bounce to grab the rebound, but anymore than that is unacceptable.

The goal here is to have a perfect minute, in which no balls touch the ground, no layups are missed, and no travels or other errors are made. Once they've done that, you can upgrade to two minutes ideally working your way up eventually to five minutes without an error.





**Drill:** 3:33 Drill

**Coach:** Randi Peterson, Head Coach

**School:** Coe College

**Description:** This next drill is similar to the last, except we've eliminated the jumpshot portion of the drill completely, focusing completely on passing and finishing in transition.

Your players will form three lines at one end of the court, with the player at the front of the middle line starting with a basketball. On the coach's whistle, both wings will immediately begin sprinting up the court. The player in the middle will pass to one of the sides and also begin sprinting, straight up the middle of the court. As soon as the catch is made, the player who received the pass will fire it right back to the player in the middle, who will then hit the other wing player in stride for a layup.

He will then follow his pass, slapping the baseline before taking off back down the court in the same lane the player he just passed to was previously in.

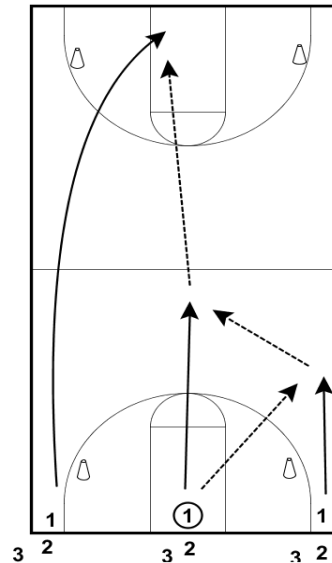
The player who received the outlet pass to begin the drill will sprint downcourt after passing back to the player in the middle, collecting the rebound from the made layup before the ball can hit the floor. The player who made the layup will continue running, filling in the wing on the other side of the court.

The drill will now continue back to where the players began, with them heading down and back one more time for a total of two times, then heading to the back of the line as the next group of three executes the drill.

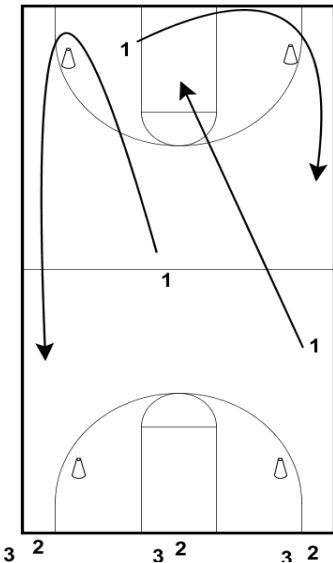
The goal here is for the players to go 3:33 without making any mistakes. This includes everything from no missed layups, the ball not touching the floor and no one hand passes or catches. If any mistakes are made, the clock is reset and the players must go the entire 3:33 from the start again.

This drill requires timing, deliberate passes, the ability to handle pressure, and communicate among many other things, making it one of my personal favorites.

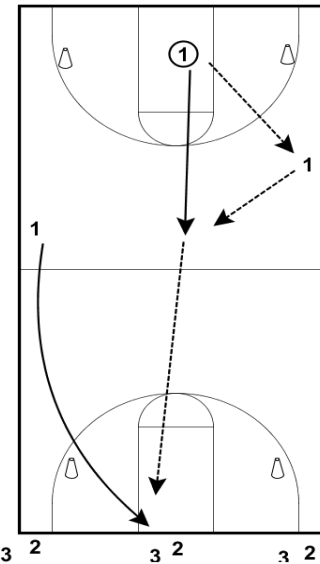
3:33 Drill  
Coe Women's Basketball



3:33 Drill  
Coe Women's Basketball



3:33 Drill  
Coe Women's Basketball



**Drill:** 5 in 3 Free Throws

**Coach:** Randi Peterson, Head Coach

**School:** Coe College

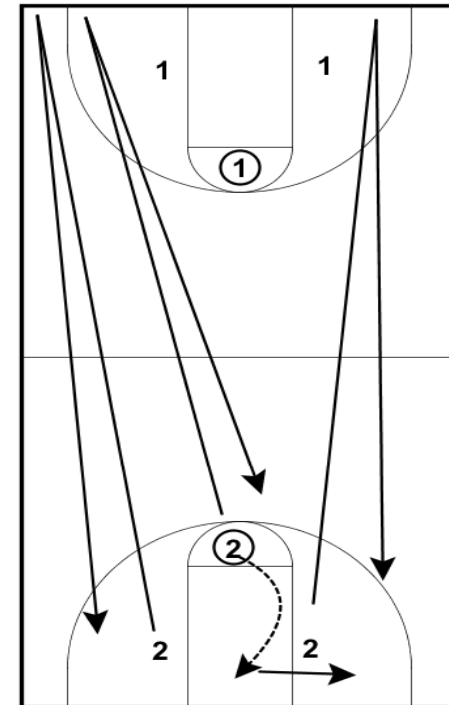
**Description:** After working a couple of high intensity drills, like the previous two, is a perfect time to put some work in on free throws. It's important to try and simulate a game situation, so that when your players are exhausted at the end of the fourth in crunch time, they've already been there, and have the focus and concentration necessary to make them when they count.

Each player will take a turn shooting a one and one bonus situation. If the player misses the first, the entire group of three has to do a full court sprint down and back before moving onto the next shooter. If they make the first, they get to take the second – however there's no sprint on the line for the second.

The goal is for the players to make five in a row in the 3:00 on the clock that will be the duration of the drill. Now if you only have two hoops, you'll have to adjust the number of free throws made and time on the clock, but the basic structure of the drill should stay the same whether you have one hoop or six.

**5 in 3 Free Throws**

Coe Women's Basketball



**Drill:** Full Court Transition Drill

**Coach:** Paul Culpo, Head Coach

**School:** Castleton State College

**Description:** Any team who pushes the ball a lot in transition is going to find themselves in a lot of situations where they have a numbers advantage. The catch, is that as a result you'll also find yourself in a numbers disadvantage more often as well.

So for it to be worth for your team to push the tempo, you need to be good at taking advantage of the numbers situation when you have it, and defending against it when you don't.

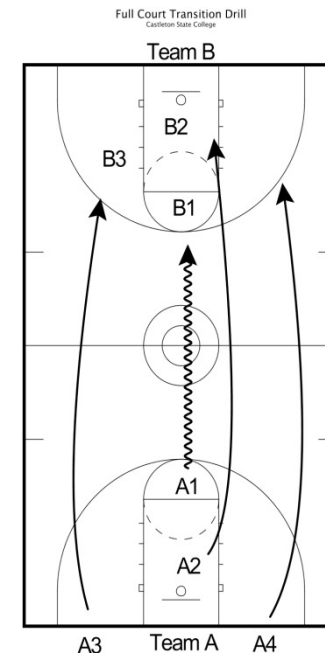
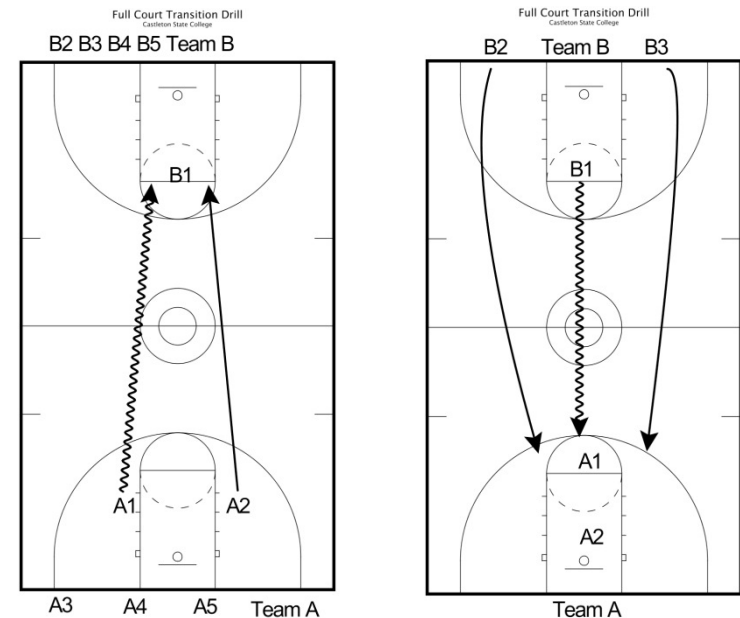
In the following drill we get a chance to work on both of those situations in a game like situation, and up improving in transition on both sides of the ball as a result.

To start, separate your team into two teams of five and send a team to each end of the court. The drill will start with two players from one team, we'll call them team A, and just one player from the other, who we'll be calling team B. Team A will start with the ball, attacking the lone defender in a 2 on 1 situation. On the shot, two members of team B will join the original defender in attacking team A in a 3 on 2 break. On the next shot, two more players from team A will join the drill, now attacking team B in a 4 on 3. We will then see a 5 on 4, finally culminating in a 5 on 5 matchup that will continue until one of the two teams scores.

Once that has finished we restart the drill, this time with team A starting on defense. Once we've gone through the second time, we add up the scores and declare a winning team, with the other having to run sprints.

You can have the scoring system be as simple or as complex as you like, from simply counting made baskets, to assigning points for drawn charges and offensive rebounds or even taking away points for turnovers.

One thing you will want to emphasize is that this is a transition drill – we don't want teams working the ball around the horn in the halfcourt when they have a numbers advantage.



**Drill:** Davenport 2 on 0

**Coach:** Mark Youngs, Head Coach

**School:** Davenport University

**Description:** In this drill we're working on your early offense, or secondary break. You'll have four players run the drill at a time, breaking off into two sets of partners. Before starting place a cone or designate a line on the left wing at roughly foul line extended at both ends of the court. The first set of partners will be at the top of the arc, each one aligned with a foul lane line and holding a basketball.

The second set will be on the side opposite the court, one on the wing, and one down low on the block. They'll execute the screen action of your choice – backscreen, downscreen, whatever you like to have your team run in the secondary break.

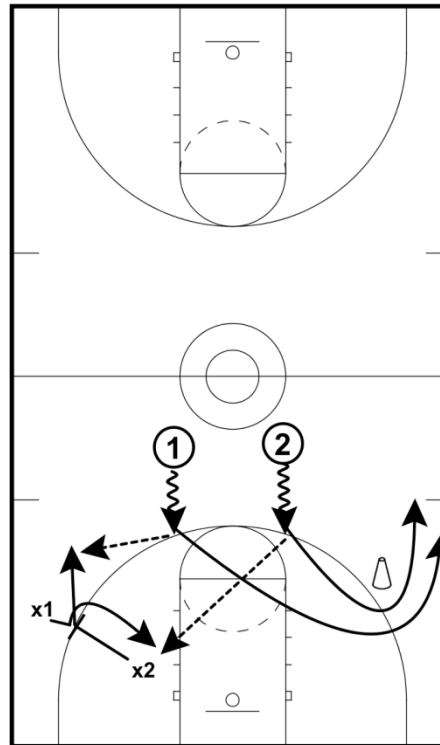
The passers at the top of the arc will communicate, with one hitting the screener, and the other hitting the player receiving the screen, who will both then take and make their shot.

On the pass, the two passers will immediately sprint around the cone and up court to the wing, ready to execute that same action once the players who just shot have grabbed their rebounds and pushed the ball up court as well.

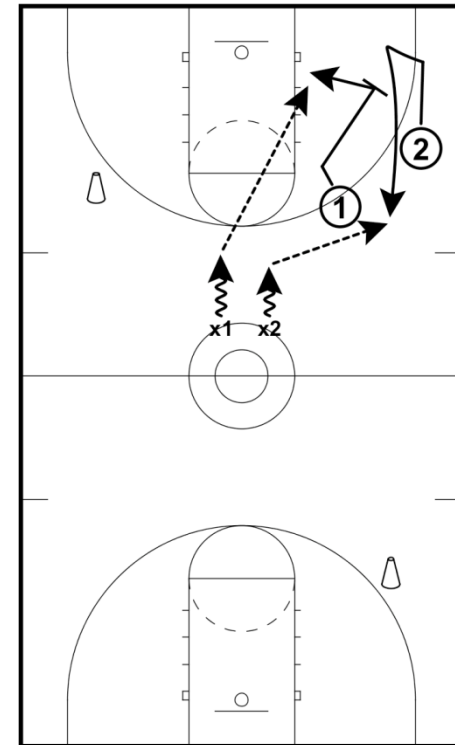
From there the drill will continue for 40 seconds, with the goal being for them to make eight baskets in that time frame.

It's also a good idea to work on a variety of actions regardless of what your early offense may be just to give your players a variety of looks to practice.

Davenport 2 on 0 Transition Drill  
Davenport University



Davenport 2 on 0 Transition Drill  
Davenport University



**Drill:** Continuous Deep Passes Drill

**Coach:** Chris Kielsmeier, Head Coach

**School:** Howard Payne University

**Description:** Next up, we have this continuous transition drill, with a focus on making accurate deep passes. Five players will run the drill at a time, with a new five coming every minute and continuing the drill.

At the far end of the court, our four man will be lined up at the free throw line, with the three man in the soft corner on the left wing.

At the near side, where we'll start the drill, the two man will also be lined up on the free throw line, with the one on the left wing and the five man underneath the hoop with a ball in hand.

The five will start the drill by throwing the ball off the backboard and grabbing the rebound. The one will call for the outlet, with the five pivoting and firing the pass off.

Once the ball has been thrown off the backboard, the two will take off down the sideline. The point will take one dribble and hit the two with a lead pass, who will then take their shot and collect the rebound.

The one will follow his pass, coming down to the wing, where he'll receive the outlet pass from the rebounder. This time the four is going to take off down court, receiving the deep pass from the point after they take their one dribble.

The one will again sprint to the other side of the court, receiving the outlet pass from the four man after they make their layup and grab the rebound.

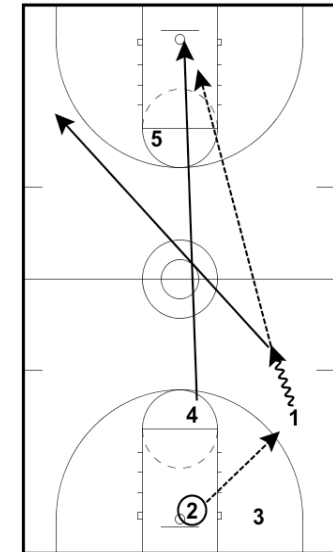
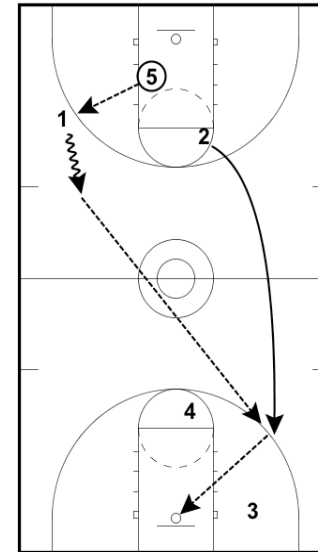
This time the five is going to be streaking up the court, and the point will again throw the lead pass and sprint into outlet position. After making the layup and corralling the rebound, the five will pass to the point guard one last time, who will in turn take one dribble and hit the three man streaking up the right side of the court for their shot.

This is one cycle of the drill, and you can either have the new five rotate in immediately after this, or have the players continue for the full minute before making the substitution.

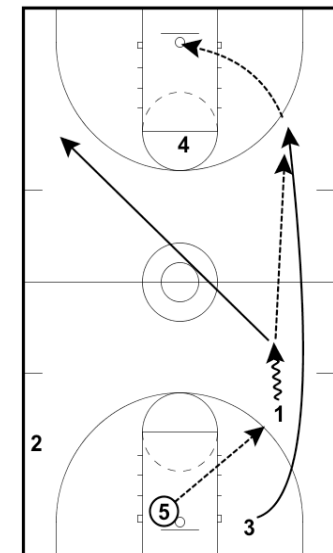
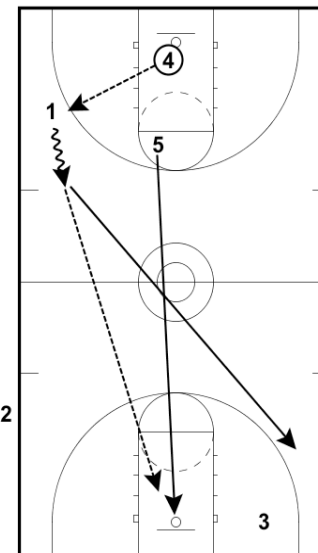
The only time the ball should ever hit the ground is when the point guard takes that dribble before making the deep pass, or if the wings are taking jump shots in transition.

The players who aren't participating in the drill should be doing something productive, like two ball passing or some other ball handling drill - even free throws or the mikan drill if you have two full courts in your gym - so that they aren't wasting any of the precious little practice time you get each week.

Practice Drill: Continuous Deep Passes  
Wayne State College



Practice Drill: Continuous Deep Passes  
Wayne State College



**Drill:** 35 Second Transition Drill – Part 1

**Coach:** Pam Gohl, Head Coach

**School:** Minnesota State University

**Description:** This next drill is similar to the last one in that we'll be getting shots for all five players and working on point guard's ability to make deep accurate passes, with the main difference being that all five players will be making the trip down the court each time.

To start, we want all five players in an arc around the key, facing the hoop. The three and four men will be on the right side, with the two and five on the left, and the point guard at the free throw line.

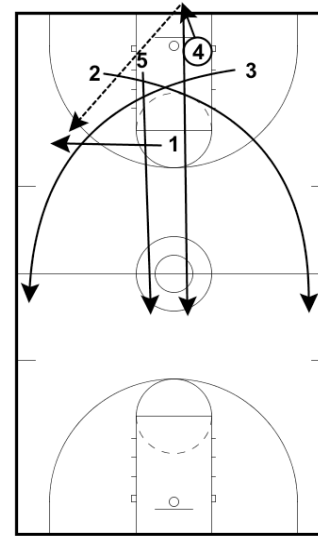
The power forward will start with the ball, with the timer going off as soon as they take a layup. Once the ball is up, the wings will take off, crossing through the key to the opposite wing and sprinting down the court along the sideline. The five man will also take off, executing a 'rim run', where he will go directly from one hoop to the other.

The four will grab his rebound and step out of bounds, pivoting and hitting the point guard as he cuts out to the right side of the court, looking to receive the outlet pass.

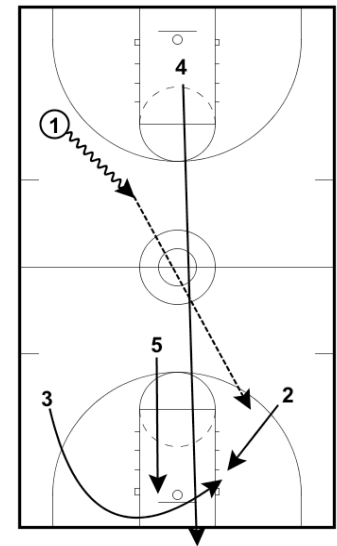
The point guard will take one dribble, then hit the two as they cross the arc, catching in stride for the layup. The one and four will sprint up court, following the basketball, with the one filling out to the outlet spot again, and the four grabbing the rebound and again stepping out to inbound the ball.

Once the two has taken his layup, he will continue, crossing underneath the hoop to the other wing and sprinting up that sideline. In the meantime, the three is also going to cross, filling in on the sideline the two man had previously occupied, also sprinting up the sideline. The five will sprint right down the middle, again executing a rim run.

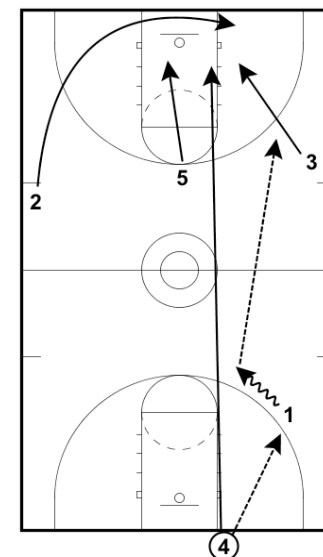
Practice Drill: 35 Second Transition  
Minnesota State University – Mankato



Practice Drill: 35 Second Transition  
Minnesota State University – Mankato



Practice Drill: 35 Second Transition  
Minnesota State University – Mankato



**Drill:** 35 Second Transition Drill – Part 2

**Coach:** Pam Gohl, Head Coach

**School:** Minnesota State University

**Description:** Now, upon receiving the inbounds pass from the four man, the point guard will again take one dribble, this time however hitting the three man in stride for a layup.

Again, the wings will cross, exchanging sides, the four will grab the rebound, and the one will get into position to receive the outlet pass.

The drill will continue like this, going through all five players – first the two, then the three, then the five, then the four, and finally, with the point guard taking the ball all the way to the hoop for the last shot.

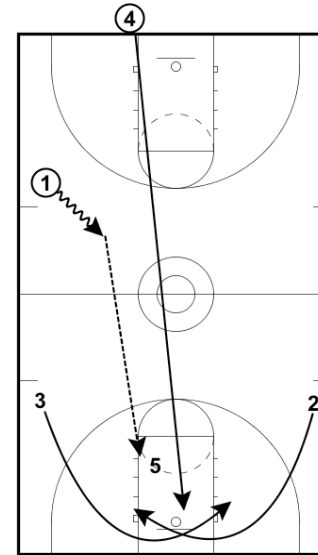
The goal is for the players to complete the entire cycle in 35 seconds, without any extra dribbles or missed layups. This drill is especially tough on the four, as they have to make a full court sprint for each shot.

Eventually, once your players have gotten better at the drill, you can eliminate the one dribble rule for the point guard, and not allowing any balls to hit the floor – even on rebounds.

If you want to run as a team, this is a fantastic drill, teaching players how to get out into transition with the added bonus of being absolutely incredible for their conditioning.

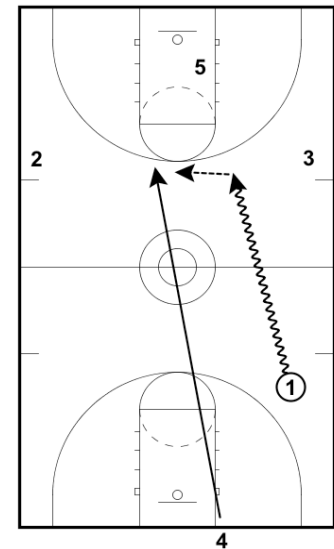
**Practice Drill: 35 Second Transition**

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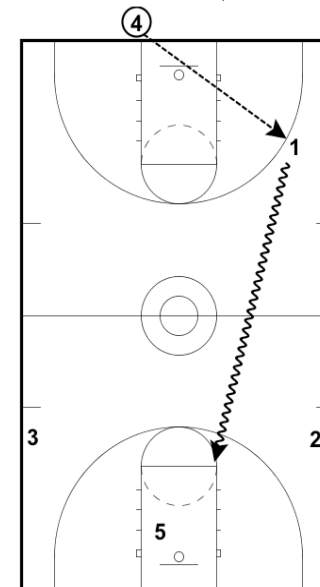
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