

Basketball Fundamentals - When you don't have the ball...

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What do you do when you are on offense but you don't have the ball?

Think about it! Most of the time you will not have possession of the ball. Half of the time you will be on defense. Of the remaining half when your team has the ball, 80% of that time you personally will not have the ball, as one of your teammates will have it. So what do you do when you don't have the ball? Do you simply stand still and wait for someone to pass to you? That's not what wins games. There are things to do when you don't have the ball.

1. Try to get open for an easy pass and shot. Keep moving, not aimlessly, but with a purpose. Be savvy and cut into an open spot on the floor, especially if the defense is in a zone. If the defense is in man-to-man, set screens for other teammates (and not just the person with the ball). Setting picks will free up teammates for easy shots, and oftentimes the screener is the one who gets open for the shot (see [Setting Screens](#) and [Cutting and Faking](#)).
2. The low post players should constantly be trying to get into a post position, in order to get the pass from the guards. Post players can screen for each other to get free.
3. Maintain spacing on the floor...don't get bunched up. Poor spacing results in bad passes, turnovers and the defense stealing the ball.
4. Never take your eye off the ball. Be smart. Look for a chance to time a cut through the paint, or go "back-door", for a quick pass from a teammate, and a lay-up.
5. Be alert and position yourself for a rebound (see the [Rebounding Tips](#)). Assume your teammate will miss the shot, and get into position for a rebound. You'll get extra shots and points this way.
6. Be ready to jump in after loose balls.
7. Guards be aware of the other team trying to slip a guard down floor for an easy lay-up. Be ready to get back and cover this.
8. Be alert to help a teammate if he/she stops the dribble or is in trouble.
9. When the shot goes up, each defensive player must know instantly what his/her assignment is and move quickly for the offensive rebound, and the outlet pass. The offensive players must know who should be attacking for the rebound and who should be "staying back" to prevent the opponent's fast break.

Remember, usually it is not the person initially with the ball who scores. Instead a good pass to you cutting, or coming off a screen, is where the score comes. So work hard on offense when you don't actually have the ball...never loaf!