Footwork
Basic Skills & Drills

Things to Remember

Proper footwork promotes balance, quickness, and readiness to make something happen on the court. Being proficient at this skill will improve a player’s performance both offensively and defensively. The following list of teaching points should be emphasized at every practice.

Footwork Teaching Points:
· Proper balance
· Foot positioning – feet shoulder-width apart and slightly staggered
· Knees bent – weight in center of body
· Low center of gravity
· Head up – see the court
· Ready to move

Quick Pivots

When you want to make quick pivots or fast cuts and keep your balance at the same time, it is important to stay on the balls of your feet. Since you have to be on the balls of your feet to move anyway, by playing on them, you will make your move more quickly.

How to Pivot

The pivot is a fundamental skill that can get a player relief from pressure defense, and can be a great skill to have to begin an offensive move. To pivot, turn on the ball of your foot. Once you choose your pivot foot, it must maintain contact with the ground until you dribble, shoot or pass. (You can go airborne to shoot or pass) If your pivot foot moves and you do not dribble, shoot or pass, it is a violation called traveling, and the ball is awarded to the other team. A reverse or back pivot is when you turn backwards and when you turn forwards it is called a forward or front pivot.

Balance

Balance is one of the most important things to remember in the game of basketball. To have good physical balance you should have a wide base of support by keeping your feet at least shoulder width apart. A good bend at the knees and the waist will also help. Now, try to keep
your head just above the midpoint between both feet. In this position you have the most physical balance possible.

**L-Cut**

When executing an "L-Cut" you start at the block on the edge of the free throw lane and walk your defender up the side of the lane. When your teammate is ready to deliver the pass: you step into the defender, make contact, and change speeds quickly by pushing off of your inside foot to pop out to the wing.

**The V-cut**

The easiest way to get open is to use what's called a "V-cut". Basically, a V-cut is a hard fake toward the rim, followed by a sharp cut back out toward the ball. If viewed from above or drawn on a diagram, the cut looks like a giant V, hence the name. The key is to sell the cut to the basket and as the defender turns his hips, that's when you plant and "explode" back out toward the ball. This is a very effective off the ball move.

**Positive Footwork**

Once you have received a pass and faced the basket, you have probably established a pivot foot. That foot may no longer move until the ball leaves your hand when you dribble. POSITIVE FOOTWORK is a term that describes your "free" foot. Regardless of the manner in which you square up, your free foot should remain slightly in front of your pivot foot. This allows the offensive player to remain in charge and gives the ability to attack the defender. A player should not allow the free foot to end up in a position BEHIND the pivot foot, as this will give the defender an opportunity to apply pressure and "belly up" to the ball-handler, putting the ball-handler on his back foot and retreating from the basket.

Once a foot is free, that is the only foot that the player can fake or step with. "The foot that moves is the foot that goes!"

**Triple threat position skill**

- Provides a player the option to pass, shoot, or dribble
- Position the basketball in the “shooting pocket” with shooting elbow over knee
- Have “strong hands” with possession of the basketball so that defenders cannot easily knock the ball away

**Jump stop position skill**

- Allows a player to establish a pivot with either foot off a dribble or pass
- Leap/jump should be low to the floor (like sitting in a chair), not a high jump
- Both feet hit floor at the same time – good balance
· Land on floor in triple threat position
· Use when catching a pass; teach “ball in air/feet in air” concept

**Front Pivot and Reverse Pivot Position Skill**
· Lift heel, protect ball, stay low, and lead with elbow
· Allows a player to pivot in one or more directions by keeping one foot planted on the ground
· Allows an offensive player to move away from defenders, while protecting the basketball
· Skill is also important for setting screens and rebounding

**Footwork Line Drills**
**Description:**
· Players form lines on baseline or sideline – two players deep
· Use cones or mark the court for starting/stopping spots – minimum 3 spots
· No basketball necessary – players dribble and hold imaginary basketball
· Players will start/stop on voice command or whistle
· Players should stop at each spot with jump stop and land in triple threat position
· Pause between stops starts to check for proper balance
· Second player in line starts as the preceding player leaves first spot

**Rotate the following footwork line drills:**
· Jump Stop/Triple Threat
· Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Right Front Pivot
· Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Left Front Pivot
· Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Right Reverse Pivot
· Jump Stop/Triple Threat/Left Reverse Pivot

Have each player raise his or her hand in the air that coincides with the desired pivot direction. This will help each player pivot in the correct direction.

*Variation: Add basketballs after your players understand the above concepts. Allow them to practice the above skills after picking up their dribble and receiving passes.*

**Pivot Drill**

**Ball Requirements:** no basketball required

**Description:**
· Players should spread out in your practice area – no basketball necessary
- Players start in triple threat position, protecting an imaginary basketball
- Instruct players to establish a pivot foot
- Practice half-turns and front/reverse pivots
- Repeat with opposite foot established as the pivot

Variation: Add basketballs and defenders after your players understand the above concepts. Allow them to practice the above skills after picking up their dribble and receiving passes.

Pivoting with a Defender Drill

Ball Requirements: one or two basketballs required

Description:
This drill teaches players to evaluate shooting, passing, or dribbling options before automatically dribbling upon receiving a pass:

- Players should form two lines on the baseline: offensive and defensive
- Offensive player starts near the block area and takes two to three steps toward middle of lane area to set up his or her defender before a strong V-cut to the wing area to receive a pass
- Defensive player allows offensive player to receive the pass
- Offensive player receives the pass and “squares up” to the basket in triple threat position
- Offensive player should pivot against soft defense and keep the basketball away from the defensive player; do not allow dribbling
- Offensive player should hold the ball no longer than four seconds (to teach the five-second violation)
- Offensive player passes the basketball back to the coach when instructed
- Players return to the back of the lines and rotate offensive/defensive positions

Variation: If your team has two coaches, work two players on each side of the basketball goal. This allows your team more repetitions.

How to Quickly Improve Your Players Balance, Footwork, and Overall Basketball Skills

If you’re not using this drill, you should start right away...

You might find this hard to believe, but if done properly, the Jump Stop Drill can make a huge difference in your players performance, both young and old.

This is an absolutely critical drill to player development. My old high school coach (who is a now a very successful college coach) made us do a variation of the jump stop drill every single day.
The drill will lower the number of times your players travel, improve their balance, improve their confidence, and improve their ability to pivot and create space.

I personally attest to this drill improving my basketball ability more than any other drill.

It's amazingly simple, yet very important and effective.

Here are the drill instructions and tricks to make it work:

**Jump Stop Drill**

*Drill Purpose*

This is a very important drill that all coaches should use. It will improve your players balance, reduce travels, improve pivoting skills to create space, and improve confidence.

Instructions

Line your players up on the baseline. If you have more than 10 players or a small court, you'll need to divide them into two groups because they won't have enough space.

Have each player spread out with about 5 feet between them, so they have enough room for pivoting.

When you blow the whistle, all players should start running at 3/4 speed.
At various intervals, blow the whistle and yell out their pivot instructions. Your choices are: front pivot left foot, front pivot right foot, back pivot left foot, back pivot right foot.

When the whistle blows, the sequence for the player consists of: jump stop (both feet should hit the floor at the same time), pause for a second, do a full 180 degree pivot, pause for a second, do a full pivot back to starting position, and stay in triple threat position until whistle blows again.

Watch every player to make sure they did the jump stop and pivot properly. If anyone traveled or if they're goofing off, make them start over again, back at the baseline.

If everyone did it correctly, blow the whistle again. All players should start running.

At various intervals, blow the whistle and yell out their pivot instructions. Your choices are: front pivot left foot, front pivot right foot, back pivot left foot, back pivot right foot.

When all players reach the end of the court, start over again. You can blow the whistle anywhere between 1 and 5 times during their trip down the court.

You should run this drill so players run down the court at least 5 times.

**Points of Emphasis**

Continually tell your players...

- Don't travel!
- Stay low when pivoting. Keep your knees bent and butt down, in a good triple threat stance.
- Don't get out of your triple threat stance until you hear the whistle. You always want to stay low, so you can take off quicker.

**Motivation / Teaching Tips**

**Tip #1** - The motivation aspect of this drill is simple. If they do it wrong, they all have to go back to baseline and start over again.

**Tip #2** - It's important to always mix things up and keep your players guessing. You should mix up the number of times and locations that you blow the whistle. You might want to let them run all the way down without blowing the whistle once. And next time blow the whistle 5 times.

**Tip #3** - Vary the speed that your players run. Start out with half speed, then progress all the way to full speed. Again, mix things up.

**Tip #4** - Add a ball. Generally, you should use a ball for this drill and have them dribble while they are running. However, you might want to start without a ball, especially when first teaching younger players how to run this drill. Or if you don't happen to have enough basketball balls, they will still get benefit without it.
**Tip #5** - Make sure ALL players pivot properly. Their butt should be down, knees bent, with feet shoulder width or wider. The pivot should be a full 180 degree turn, and then back again. Some players will have trouble with this at first or just do partial pivots. But keep on them to do it right. It's an important skill to master!

**Tip #6** - You might want to use this as a combo warm up drill every day. For me, it worked great as the warm up at the beginning of every practice. This saved time because they worked on important skills and warmed up at the same time.

**Tip #7** - You really should run this almost every day, especially if you have players at the high school level or younger. At the minimum, run the drill every other day.

**How to Improve and Teach Footwork Skills Properly**

As you've probably heard a hundred times, great footwork is arguably the most important skill for players to learn. Tim Duncan, Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan, and countless superstar players all have ONE THING in common -- superb footwork. Yet few coaches know how to teach footwork properly.

Read more: [http://www.breakthroughbasketball.com/drills/jumpstops.html#ixzz2AQC9s6tf](http://www.breakthroughbasketball.com/drills/jumpstops.html#ixzz2AQC9s6tf)