

BASKETBALL SHOOTING LEAD-UP DRILLS

By Dr. Hal Wissel

Shooting Drill 1. Strong-Hand Warm-Up

One-hand shooting, using either the strong hand or the weak hand, is an excellent way to develop your ability to start and complete a shot with your shooting hand facing the front of the rim. This helps eliminate side rotation. It also fosters lifting the ball to the basket rather than throwing the ball. This drill is particularly beneficial if your non-shooting hand tends to interfere with your shot (for example, if you thumb the ball with your non-shooting hand). The one-hand shooting drill allows you to focus on having the shooting hand in the correct position facing the front of the rim. Keep your shooting elbow in. When your shooting elbow is in, the ball is aligned with the basket. Some players do not have the flexibility to keep the shooting hand facing the front of the rim while keeping the elbow in. In this case, first put your shooting hand facing the front of the rim, and then move the elbow in as far as your flexibility allows. Start about nine feet from the basket with your shooting hand facing the front of the rim while keeping your elbow in as far as your flexibility allows. Your shooting hand is above your shoulder between your ear and shoulder. Use your non-shooting hand to place the ball in your shooting hand. Do not reach for the ball with your shooting hand. Now lower your non-shooting hand to your side. Balance the ball in your shooting hand with your index finger at the ball's midpoint. Check that your forearm is at a right angle to the floor and that it forms an L with your upper arm. This position helps you lift the ball to the basket rather than throw it. Use your personalized key words in rhythm with your shot or when you are correcting your shot. If you tend to bring the ball back and throw it rather than lift it to the basket emphasize the key word *Front!* If your shot misses to your strong-hand side of the rim, because your elbow is out, consider using the key word *In!* Record the number of strong-hand shots made out of 10 attempts. Record the good shots made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots. After making five consecutive shots from 9 feet, increase the distance to 12 feet. After making five consecutive shots from 12 feet, move back to the foul line (15 feet from the backboard).

Shooting Drill 2. Weak-Hand Warm-Up

Perform the drill in the same way as the Strong Hand Warm-up, but use your weak hand. When using your weak hand, you may have a tendency to shove the ball and miss toward the opposite side of the rim. Emphasize the down-and-up movement of your legs, which will help your range and ability to lift the ball straight to the basket. Consider using the key words *down and up!* Record the number of weak-hand shots made out of 10 attempts. Record the good shots made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots. After making five consecutive shots from 9 feet, increase the distance to 12 feet. After making five consecutive shots from 12 feet, move back to the foul line (15 feet from the backboard).

Shooting Drill 3. Three Finger Warm-Up

You will use only three fingers in this drill – the pinky and ring finger of your non-shooting hand to balance the ball and the index finger of your shooting hand to shoot the ball. This drill enables you to focus on shooting the ball off the pads of your index finger with a soft touch. Start about nine feet from the basket with your shooting hand facing the front of the rim while keeping your elbow in as far as your flexibility allows. Place your shooting hand is above your shoulder between your ear and shoulder. Check that your shooting hand forearm is at a right angle to the floor and that it forms an L with your upper arm. This position helps you lift the ball to the basket rather than throw it. Balance the ball with your non-shooting hand under the ball. Keep the elbow of your non-shooting hand out. Bring the ball to your shooting hand. Now balance the ball using only the pinky and ring finger of your non-shooting hand. The other fingers of your non-shooting hand should be off the ball. Place the pads of the index finger of your shooting hand behind the ball at the ball's midpoint. Lift the ball to the basket and release the ball off the pads of your index finger with a soft touch emphasizing the key word *Point!* Follow through by fully extending your shooting arm and pointing your index finger over the front of the rim. Record the number of three finger shots made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive shots using only three fingers.

Shooting Drill 4. Jump Shot Warm-Up

The objectives of this drill are to develop confidence, form, rhythm, and range for making jump shots. Start in a balanced stance about nine feet in front of the basket. Perform jump shots from that distance, using correct form for each shot. For a jump shot, the ball is held higher than for a one-hand set shot. The height of your jump depends on the range. When close to the basket, you should release the ball at the top of your jump, with your arm, wrist, and fingers providing most of the force. On long-range outside jump shots, you don't need to jump as high, allowing you to use more force from your legs for the shot. Strive for a balanced jump so you can follow through until the ball hits the floor. Say your three personalized words in rhythm from the start of your shot to the release of the ball. Record the number of jump shots made out of 10 attempts. Record the good shots made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots. After making five consecutive shots 9 feet from the backboard, take a giant step back until you are 12 feet from the backboard. After making five consecutive shots from 12 feet, take a giant step back until you are 15 feet from the backboard.

Shooting Drill 5. Front of Board

The front of board shooting drill focuses on the fundamentals: shooting hand behind the ball, elbow-in alignment, release off the index finger, follow-through, and catching the ball in position to shoot. Face the backboard. Pick a spot near the top corner of the front of the board to serve as your target. A spot on the front of the backboard is excellent for fostering a straight shot. Begin with the ball in shooting position above your shooting shoulder. Place your shooting hand behind the ball with your index finger at the ball's midpoint. Check for elbow-in alignment. Using a complete follow-through (full elbow extension), shoot the ball to your target on the front of the board, making it return to your shooting position so you don't have to move your hands on the catch. Say your personalized key words in rhythm from the start of your shot to the release of the ball. If the ball does not return to your starting position, jump behind the ball and catch it in position to shoot. After a missed shot, visualize a successful shot in good form, again saying your key words. Use feedback from the feel and direction of the ball. For example, if the miss was caused by your arm going to the side, add the key word *straight*. Use *point* if the ball went off the wrong finger, creating sidespin. Use *hands* if you caught the ball with your hands on the side. Count it as a good shot when you hit your target on the front of the board, then catch the ball in shooting position without having to move your hands. Count it as a good shot when you hit your target on the front of the board, then catch the ball in shooting position without having to move your hands. Record the good shots, with good catches made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots with good catches.

Shooting Drill 6. Side of Board

The side of board shooting drill is the same as the front-of-board drill except you use the side of the board. This drill puts more emphasis on a straight shot and good catch. On a shot that is slightly off, the rebound will go to the side. This enables you to practice jumping behind the ball to catch it in position to shoot. Face the side of the backboard. Pick a spot near the top of the side of the board to serve as your target. A spot on the side of the backboard is excellent for fostering a straight shot. Using a complete follow-through (full elbow extension), shoot the ball to your target on the side of the board, making it return to your shooting position so you don't have to move your hands on the catch. Catch the ball in position to shoot. Jump behind the ball on shots that rebound to your left or right side. Count it as a good shot when you hit your target on the side of the board, then catch the ball in shooting position without having to move your hands. Record the good shots, with good catches made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots with good catches.

Shooting Drill 7. Point of Board

The point-of-board shooting drill is the same as the front-of-board and side-of-board drills except your target is the point of the board between the front and side of the board. This drill is obviously more difficult than the side-of-board shooting drill. It puts more emphasis on focusing and releasing the ball off your index finger. It also provides a greater challenge for jumping behind the ball in position to shoot. On shots that are off, the rebound may go farther to the side than in the side-of-board shooting drill. This enables you to practice jumping behind the ball to catch it in position to shoot. Face the point of the backboard. Pick a spot near the top of the point of the board to serve as your target. Focus on your target on the point of the board and shoot the ball, emphasizing the release of the ball off your index finger. Catch the ball in position to shoot. Jump behind the ball on shots that rebound to your left or right side. Count it as a good shot when you hit your target on point of the board, then catch the ball in shooting position without having to jump to the right of left and without having to move your hands. Record the good shots, with good catches made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots with good catches.

Shooting Drill 8. Chair Drill

Shooting from a chair fosters consistency in lifting the ball to the basket and extending the elbow completely on the follow-through. This drill develops shooting range and helps a player who has the tendency to throw the ball. Shooting while sitting in a chair requires you to use your back, shoulders, and full arm extension to generate force for the shot. Set the chair nine feet in front of the basket. Sit on the front edge of the chair with your shoulders front, your feet aligned with the legs of the chair and your toes straight. Center yourself both mentally and physically. When you are physically centered, you are in a state of readiness; your muscles relax and you breathe a little deeper and more slowly than usual. Being physically centered also involves balancing your weight evenly for the skill you will be performing, which is particularly helpful for gaining power. When you are physically centered it helps you become mentally centered. When you are centered you are more alert, focused and confident. Centering allows you to raise your center of gravity and transfer your force from back to shoulders to generate full power for the shot. Start about nine feet from the basket with your shooting hand facing the front of the rim while keeping your elbow in as far as your flexibility allows. Your shooting hand is above your shoulder between your ear and shoulder. Use your non-shooting hand to place the ball in your shooting hand. Do not reach for the ball with your shooting hand. The index finger of your shooting hand should be at the ball's midpoint. Check that your forearm is at a right angle to the floor and that it forms an L with your upper arm. This position helps you lift the ball to the basket rather than throw it. Use your personalized key words in rhythm with your shot or when you are correcting your shot. If you tend to bring the ball back and throw it rather than lift it to the basket emphasize the key word *Front!* If your shot misses to your strong-hand side of the rim, because your elbow is out, consider using the key word *In!* Work for the sequential build-up of force from your back, shoulders, arm, wrist, and fingers as you shoot. Say your personalized key words in the rhythm of your shot from the start of the shot to the release of the ball. Visualize a successful shot with good form. Use feedback from the feel of the shot and its distance, direction, and reaction on the rim. If the shot was short, emphasize the key word *through!* To increase distance, use a sequential buildup of force using the key words *back-shoulder-through!* Record the good shots made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots. After making five consecutive shots 9 feet from the backboard, move the chair back until you are 12 feet from the backboard. After making five consecutive shots from 12 feet, move the chair back until you are 15 feet from the backboard (free throw distance).

Shooting Drill 9. Toss to Left Elbow Jump Shot

One objective of this drill is to develop your ability to catch and shoot in one motion with a quick release. Another objective is to develop your ability to start a jump shot in a balanced stance while facing the basket and land in balance after the shot. Start with the ball at the left box outside the lane, your back to the basket. Pass to yourself by tossing the ball high so it bounces high at the left elbow of the court. Run outside the lane to the left elbow and quickly jump behind the ball, turning your body in to face the basket. Land in balance with a jump stop. Have your hands and feet ready with your hands above your shoulders and your knees slightly flexed. Catch the ball with your shooting hand high and facing the front of the rim. Catch and shoot in one motion. Your knees should lower just before the catch and extend upward on the catch in a quick rhythmical down-and-up motion. Shoot 10 shots from the left elbow. Record the good shots made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots.

Shooting Drill 10. Toss to Right Elbow Jump Shot

Perform the same drill starting at the right box and tossing the ball to the right elbow. Shoot 10 shots from the right elbow. Record the good shots made out of 10 attempts. Your goal is to make 10 consecutive good shots.

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