

2026-27 Coaches Guide & Curriculum

West Ottawa Basketball Association





About This Document

This document is meant to provide guidance to West Ottawa Basketball (WOBA) coaches in developing players at all ages, stages, and levels within the organization.

It has been created by a group of recreational and competitive coaches in WOBA and facilitated by Dave Malowski, a Master Learning Facilitator in Coaching Education with Canada Basketball.

Like a school curriculum, it is designed to create greater continuity (or “connective tissue”) from year to year for our players, so that they build upon their basketball skills, how they think the game, the basketball language they use, and their life lessons taken from this great game.

WOBA coaches are the essential foundation for success in our organization. We realize that helping support and grow our players is a big responsibility and requires a lot of effort. We hope that this document helps provide guidance and support to you in many aspects of your coaching journey.

Please feel free to contact Mark Emond, WOBA's VP of Player and Coach Development with feedback on this document or for any help you need with your team. Finally, a huge thank you for your efforts and for the impact you have on all the young people you are leading!

Curriculum Creators

A huge thanks to the following people who took part in a series of meetings in June 2021 to develop this coaching guide and curriculum:

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Thanks Coach!

A coach will impact more people in one year than the average person will in an entire lifetime.

Thank you for volunteering your time to coach basketball! While we all wear many hats in our life, this one will have a tremendous impact on the lives of the young people in your care.



Transactional vs Transformational Coaching

Transactional coaching is focused on actions. It's about performance/results.. It basically says, "You do this for me, I'll do that for you."

Transformational coaching is focused on the building the person. It communicates, "I am here as a coach to help you grow not just as an athlete but as a whole person."

In his powerful book InSideOut Coaching, author Joe Ehrmann poses four essential questions for coaches who desire to take the journey from the transactional to the transformational approach. They are called the Mindsight Questions:

1. **Why do you coach?** Do you have a clear statement for your coaching that acts as a filter for every decision?
2. **Why do you coach the way that you do?** What triggers your behavior? Is your coaching based on best practices or do you just coach the way you were coached?
3. **What does it feel like to be coached by you?** This may be the most valuable and overlooked question for coaches. What does it feel like to be on the other side of you?
4. **How do you define success?** If you are not crystal clear on this then the scoreboard determines the answer. (note: the answer to this question should be the fulfillment of the answer to question 1)

Transformational Coaching

At the core of our curriculum is transformational coaching (not transactional coaching).
Simply put, we believe that coaches have a key role to play in helping develop young people, not just young basketball players.

Transformational Coaching	Transactional Coaching
Process orientation	Results orientation (winning)
Person orientation	Performance orientation
Player-led	Coach-led
Focused on the whole person	Focused on athletic development
Focused on long-term development	Focused on short-term goals
Teaches players how to think	Teaches players how to act

Section 1

Player Development

Milestones



Skill Development Milestones

Skill Development Milestones

The following pages contain skill development milestones by age. To ensure continuity in development, we want our young athletes achieving these milestones within these prescribed age bands. You can find recommended drills for each skill and age group in our WOBA Practice Games and Drills document.



@jim.robinson.photo

Dribbling Skills | < 10 Years Old

Dribbling is one of the most fundamental and important skills for young players under 10 to learn. If they can make dribbling “automatic” at a young age they can then focus their attention on what’s happening around them: where their players are, and where defenders are on the court.

Here’s what we want players under 10 to learn and be able to achieve in terms of ball handling:

- [How to dribble](#): pound the ball, chest up, knees bent, [finger pads](#) (not palm)
- Dribble with both hands
- [Crossover dribble](#)
- Dribble with vision - eyes up
- Dribble vs Defence
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble in offensive half court

Dribbling Skills | 10-12 Years Old

At this age, we reinforce the fundamentals and add some additional dribbles to help players create space and move their defender. If they can make dribbling “automatic” at a young age they can then focus their attention on what’s happening around them: where their players are, and where defenders are on the court.

Players of this age should be able to execute what was taught in the previous age segment plus:

- [How to dribble](#): pound the ball, chest up, knees bent, [finger pads](#) (not palm)
- Dribble with both hands
- Dribble on a straight line to the basket (use change of speed and direction to move defenders off the line)
- Change dribble speed and height (shoulder pounds, waist pounds, knee pounds, ankles)
- [Between the legs dribble](#), [Pull-back dribble](#), [Retreat dribble](#), [In and Out dribble](#), [Speed dribble](#)
- Dribble with vision of secondary defender
- Dribble moves in full court
- Dribble with 1v1 pressure

Dribbling Skills | 13 > Years Old

At 13+ years old, we want to teach players how to use their dribbling to create separation and an advantage. Players at this stage should be able to dribble effectively with good court vision, seeing their players, their defender, and secondary defenders.

Players of this age should be able to execute what was taught in the previous age segment plus:

- Dribble with full court pressure
- How to maximize the time the ball is in your hand without carrying. Players should learn how to start with their hand on the side of the ball and then rotating it up to the top of the ball before pounding it into the floor.
- Creating separation
- Creating advantage
- Use counter dribbles when they don't have an advantage against their defender: Cross-over, [In and Out dribble](#), [Skate Dribble](#) Between the legs dribble, [Behind the back wrap dribble](#), [Between cross dribble](#),

Passing Skills | < 10 Years Old

Passing is at the heart of good team play in basketball. The quality of passing determines the quality of shots that a team has in a game. Teaching young players how to pass—and more importantly how to create space for passing—can really accelerate development.

Here's what we want players under 10 to learn and be able to achieve in terms of passing:

- Passing with two hands—[chest pass](#), [bounce pass](#), [overhead pass](#)
- Passing around your defender
- [Passing and cutting](#)
- Creating space and getting open for a pass when you don't have the ball, including [V-cuts and L-cuts](#)
- Catching a pass in [shot-ready position](#), with hands in the shooting pocket in front of you, feet set to shoot, and stepping towards the ball
- Passing in 3 v 3 situations

Passing Skills | 10-12 Years Old

At this stage, we want players to progress to the next level of passing, from simple chest and bounce passes to passes that are more commonly used in today's game.

Players of this age should be able to execute what was taught in the previous age segment plus:

- Passing with [one hand](#), including [off the dribble](#)
- [Kick pass](#)
- Passing around your defender (through "[windows](#)") and a secondary defender
- Passing in 4 v 4 and 5 v 5 situations

Passing Skills | 13 > Years Old

At this stage, players should be using more advanced [diagonal passes](#) to find open teammates off a dribble drive.

Players of this age should be able to execute what was taught in the previous age segment plus:

- Passing under pressure 5 v 5
- Full court passing—[baseball](#), football, off dribble
- [Twist pass](#) (outside the body pass)
- [Shovel pass](#), [pocket pass](#), [hook pass](#)

Shooting and Finishing Skills | < 10 Years Old

A key to teaching children under 10 to shoot is having them shoot on lower rims (8' ideally). Whenever possible, lower the rim from 10'. They should also be using a size 27.5" or size 5 ball.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Use their legs to generate power by driving their legs down and then up on release
- Attempt to shoot with one hand with a guide hand on the side of the ball that does not push or flick the ball on release. Two hand shooting is okay if they don't have enough power with one hand.
- Looking at the rim when they shoot
- Shoot from about 10' and in
- Shoot off the catch primarily
- Execute classic layups with outside hand, taking off on inside foot
- Execute a [power layup](#) off of two feet

Shooting and Finishing Skills | 10-12 Years Old

At this stage, we want players to really start displaying the [core fundamentals of shooting form](#).

Players of this age should be able to:

- Shoot with their feet [turned slightly](#) (this encourages better arm alignment with the basket and greater range)
- Dip the ball [slightly](#) on the catch to create rhythm with their shot
- Ensure the [middle of their hand is on the middle of the ball](#)
- Ensure the hand is under the ball when it's at its set point (in front of your face), like a platter
- Hold the finish with your wrist in a "hands in the cookie jar" position
- Shoot from about 15' and in
- Shoot off the catch and the dribble
- Read the defence to make the decision to shoot, pass, or attack with a dribble drive
- Execute classic layups, [power layups](#), [underhand layups](#)

Shooting Skills | 13 > Years Old

At this stage, players should be refining all of the fundamentals learned at the 10-12 age group, while increasing their range and increasingly reading the defence to understand when they get their shot off.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Shoot contested shots
- Shoot out of offensive concepts
- Shooting off spacing
- Read the defence to make the decision to shoot, pass, or attack with a dribble drive
- Shooting off game actions
- Shoot from 3-point range
- Execute classic layups, [power layups](#), [underhand layups](#), [finger roll layups](#), [inside hand layups](#), and [reverse layups](#)
- Post moves: [drop-step](#), [turn and face](#), [jump hook](#)

Off-Ball Movement | < 10 Years Old

In a typical game, even the players with the most touches only have the ball for approximately 2 minutes on average. Teaching players how to move and space away from the ball is essential to developing them as players.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Understand the [key spots on the floor](#) and their names
- Practice creating space on the floor
- Understand basic cuts like [V-cuts](#), [L-cuts](#), [front cuts](#), [back cuts](#), and [basket cuts](#)
- [How to cut](#)—slower into the cut and explode coming out of it with precision
- Give and go, and pass and go get
- Understand and execute [pass, cut, and fill](#)

Off-Ball Movement | 10-12 Years Old

In this age group, we want players to start to read and react to where their players and the Defence are positioned. More advanced cuts and the introduction of some basic screens are also important.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Understand dribble spacing concepts: your player dribbles at you > push away; your player dribbles away from you > fill in behind
- Execute [dribble handoffs \(DHO\)](#)
- Execute intermediate-level cuts like [curl cuts](#)
- [Create gaps](#) for your players to drive through, such as a double gap or a triple gap
- [Seal](#) their defender (front, back, and side seal) to create a passing opportunity

Off-Ball Movement | 13 > Years Old

In this age group, players should be quite competent in creating advantages using spacing, on and off-ball screens, and more advanced cuts.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Understand and execute post spacing—both [posting up on the strong-side](#) (or side of the court the ball is in) and in the [short corner](#) (on the weak-side or side of the court the ball is not in)
- Understand the [proper screening technique](#) and be able to execute introductory screens such as a [down screen and an away screen](#) (or screen away)
- Execute more advanced cuts like [flex cuts](#), [flare cuts](#), [UCLA cut](#), [ghost cuts](#) and [flash cuts](#)
- Execute more advanced screens such as [on-ball screens](#), [back screens](#), and [away screens and pin downs](#)

Playing with the Ball | < 10 Years Old

At this age, we really want to get players comfortable playing with the ball. The more confidence they have as individuals playing with the ball, the better they will be as teammates.

In addition to the ball-handling skills we covered earlier, players of this age should be able to:

- Execute a [jab step](#) and a [crossover step](#)
- Attempt to change direction and speed to beat a defender 1v1
- Execute a [forward or front pivot](#) with the ball
- Execute a [reverse pivot](#) with the ball
- Execute a [jump stop](#) off the dribble or catch
- Execute a [1-2 step](#) off the catch

Playing with the Ball | 10-12 Years Old

In this age group, we want players to play off the catch, to start to read and attack gaps in the defence, to start executing dribble handoffs and gets.

Players of this age should be able to:

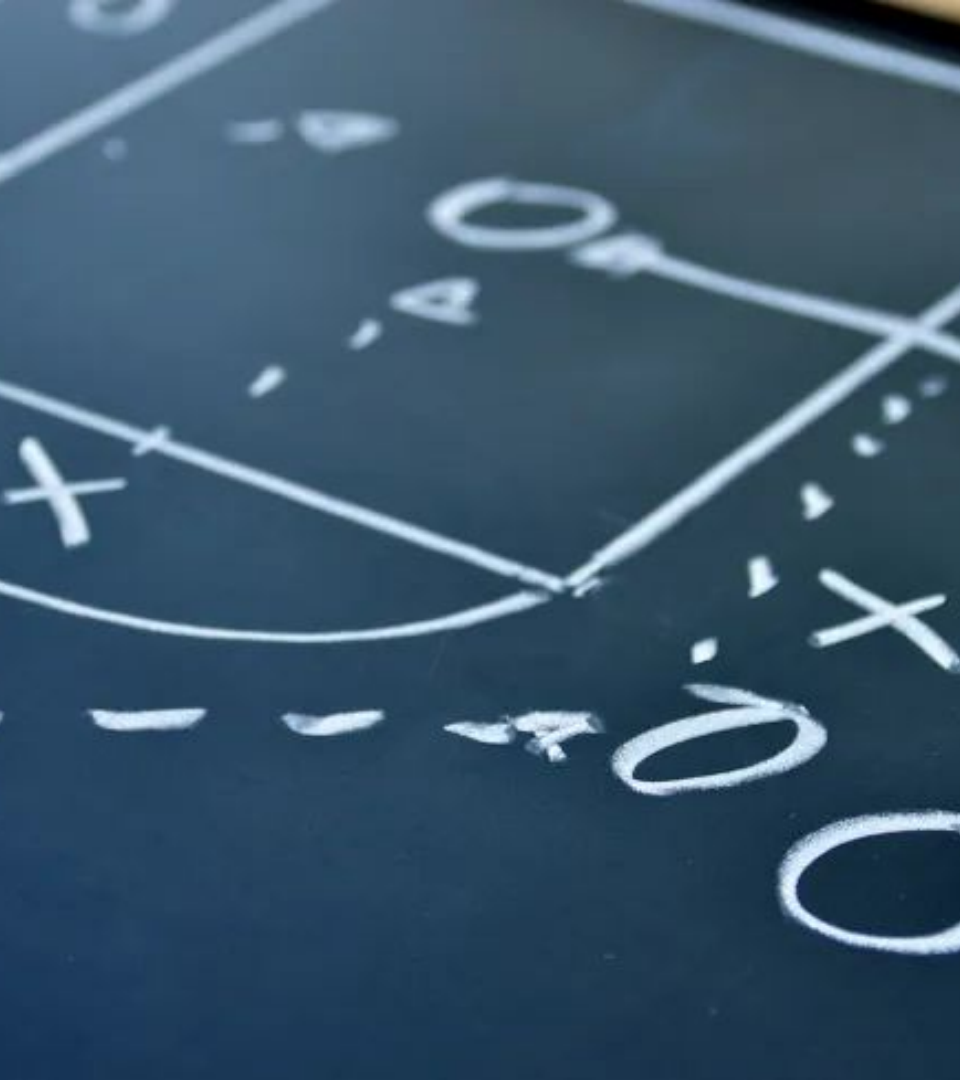
- Understand and execute [good footwork on a catch](#)
- Play off the catch, reading their defender and deciding whether to shoot (defender sags), attack (can get shoulder past defender and drive into a double gap), or pass (neither is available)
- Make a [proper read off a jab step](#): 1) shoot (defender sags), 2) drive (defender doesn't move and you are already halfway by them), 3) crossover (defender goes for jab fake)
- Execute a [dribble hand-off](#) and a get (hand-off where the receiver comes and "gets" without the ball handler moving).
- [Recognizing gaps](#)—when to drive off a double or triple gap
- Use the following cuts and screens to get the ball in an advantage situation: [away screen](#), [down screen](#)

Playing with the Ball | 13 > Years Old

In this age group, players should be quite competent in creating advantages using spacing, on and off-ball screens, and more advanced cuts.

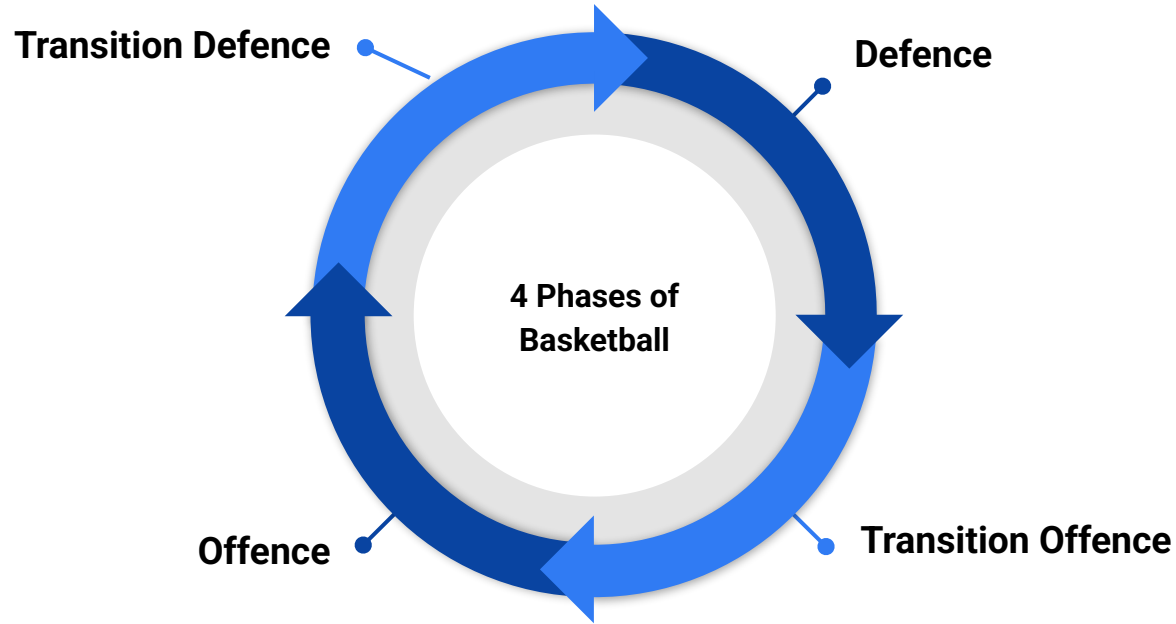
Players of this age should be able to:

- Use the following cuts and screens to get the ball in an advantage situation: [ball screen](#), [flex cut](#), [flare cut](#), [back screen](#), [down screen](#), and [flash cuts](#)
- Reading and using an off-ball and on ball screen situation
- Execute a [pro hop](#)



Phases of the Game

The Four Phases of Basketball



Defence Skills and Concepts | < 10 Years Old

Young players need to understand and be able to “guard their yard”, executing the basics of guarding their player and defending 1v1.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Understand and execute the basics of a good [defensive stance](#): feet hip width apart, knees bent (your head should be below the head of your check when they have the ball), hips are down, chest up, low hands on a dribble, [tracing](#) the ball when in your defenders hands
- Arms length away from your check when they have the ball (too close and they will go around you; too far and they will shoot or make a good pass)
- Execute a [slide or push step](#) to keep your player in front of you when they have the ball and to push them out to the corners
- Understand and execute how to [deny a pass](#)
- Understand and execute the [basics of rebounding](#)

Defence Skills and Concepts | 10-12 Years Old

In this age group, players start to learn the core concepts of team defence, including switching, help, and gap coverage.

Players of this age should be able to:

- [Switch](#) players on a screen or other situation as required
- Understand that the most important player is the player with the ball
- Understand and execute [help](#) defence
- Understand and execute [jumping](#) to the ball to close gaps
- [Communicate](#) on defence: “ball”, “deny”, “gap”, “help”, “shot”
- Execute good [low post defence concepts](#): $\frac{3}{4}$ and full deny
- Execute a [closeout](#) successfully

Remember to teach your players that rebounding is 90% will and 10% skill.

Defence Skills and Concepts | 13 > Years Old

In this age group, players should be able to execute more advanced defensive concepts.

Players of this age should be able to:

- [Stunt and recover](#)
- [Help the helper](#)
- Use their body position to [dictate the action](#) they want their ball handler to take (e.g., force left)
- [Prevent middle drives](#) by using their body position and through gap support
- Guard actions such as [DHOs](#), gets, and different [cuts](#)
- Understand some basic [ball screen defensive techniques](#) such as switching and trapping.
Older and more advanced players can learn concepts such as icing and downing.

Transition Offence | < 10 Years Old

At this age we really want to focus on proper spacing in our transition offence. Instead of “beehiving” around the ball, we want to teach players to space, sprint, and support the ball.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Find the sideline and sprint hard if they are not the rebounder
- If you are the rebounder, can you be your own outlet? Immediate push.
- Fill the corners, then the middle

Transition Offence | 10-12 Years Old

In this age group coaches should reinforce the concepts learned in U10. Players at this age still struggle often to find their positioning in transition offence.

At this age, players should be able to:

- Understand if they should rebound, outlet (point guard), lane run or rim run based on their spot on the floor at the time of the rebound. Remember that we want our players playing positionless basketball, so practice players filling all transition spots in practice.
- Understand where the outlet person should be positioned (back to the sideline on the wing, close enough to the rebounder to minimize the risk of a turnover), and how to seal their defender, or cut to get open. They should communicate “outlet” LOUD. The outlet should also know how to execute a C cut in the backcourt when they catch the ball and start to transition.
- Recognize and execute opportunities to advance the ball out of the backcourt via a pass instead of a dribble. Practice proper spacing of the three players running the floor so they are available for a pass.
- Handle full court pressure, with 1-2 other players supporting the ball handler in the backcourt and the players who have advanced into the frontcourt making themselves available with quick cuts back to midcourt.

Transition Offence | 13 > Years Old

In this age group, players should be able to execute more advanced transition offence concepts.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Pitch ahead to the same side or the opposite side of the court in transition
- Attack the rim
- Catch and play when advancing the ball with a pass with proper spacing principles, including diving to the opposite wing if there is no rim runner
- Execute a [two side fast break](#)

Competitive coaches for this age group should check out [Bethel Basketball's transition series video](#) for more advanced transition actions.

All coaches should consider watching this great [Transition Offence clinic](#) hosted by Basketball Manitoba.

Offence | < 10 Years Old

At this age, we want players to be effective in playing 1v1 against their defender, in creating space when they don't have the ball, and in recognizing when and where to pass the ball.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Practice keeping their dribble alive under pressure
- Practice 1 on 1 against a defender
- Create space when they don't have the ball
- Play on the catch—triple threat (attack/shoot/pass)
- Use V-cuts and L-cuts to get open
- Understand the concept and be able to execute [pass, cut, fill](#)

Offence | 10-12 Years Old

In this age group coaches should reinforce the concepts learned in U10. Players at this age still struggle often with the U10 concepts (especially creating space). Additionally, players should learn some basic motion offense and dribble drive motion concepts, since they [teach players how to play the game](#) (we don't want to teach them plays, except for some simple baseline out of bounds and sideline out of bounds plays).

At this age, players should be able to:

- Understand and execute [basic motion offense concepts](#) such as creating space, pass/cut/fill, and using introductory cuts and screens to get the ball in an advantage situation: [away screen](#), [down screen](#), [basket cuts](#), front cuts, back cuts.
- Understand [basic dribble drive motion offense concepts](#) such as [creating double and triple gaps](#), and kick outs
- Read and react to their defender in a 1 on 1 situation: shoot (defender sags), attack (can get shoulder past defender and drive into a double gap), or pass (neither is available)

Offence | 13 > Years Old

In this age group, players should be able to execute more advanced half-court offensive concepts.

In this age group, players should be quite competent in creating advantages using spacing, on and off-ball screens, and more advanced cuts.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Use the following cuts and screens to get the ball in an advantage situation: [ball screen](#), [flare cut](#), [back screen](#), [down screen](#), and [flash cuts](#)
- Reading and using an off-ball and on ball screen situation

Transition Defence | < 10 Years Old

In this age group, transition defence is about teaching your players to get back as fast as possible into their half-court defence.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Sprint back as fast as possible into their back court (while looking back at the ball often). They should do a crossover step, turn, and sprint, not run backwards.
- Identify and guard their check when they get back into the backcourt.

Transition Defence | 10-12 Years Old

Similar to the U10 age group, transition defence for the 10-12 age group is primarily about getting back into an effective half-court defence. U12 recreational rules typically prevent full-court defence (confirm with your referees or WOBA's VP of Recreational Programs). Competitive players and U14 Recreational can play full court defence in most competitions, unless they are leading by a significant amount.

At this age, players should be able to:

- Sprint back as fast as possible into their back court (while looking back at the ball often). They should do a crossover step, turn, and sprint, not run backwards.
- Identify and guard their check when they get back into the backcourt.
- Prevent fast breaks on a defensive rebound by having a "safety" playing or filling in the slot or top on an offensive position.
- Communicate and cover key transition defence positions—"goalie" who protects the basket in the post; "interceptor" who guards the first pass around mid court; and a "jammer" who pressures the ball handler on a defensive rebound or inbound.

Transition Defence | 13 > Years Old

In this age group, we should teach our players how to force the offence to transition poorly—inbounding into a corner, keeping them along a sideline, making it hard for them to cross the timeline, and preventing fastbreaks and transition scoring opportunities.

Players of this age should be able to:

- Keep the ball handler along the sideline
- Support the dribble—no middle attacks by the ballhandler
- Make it difficult for the offence to cross the midcourt timeline within the required 8 seconds
- Get in the “line of ball”, which means being between the ball handler and your defender to prevent a pass
- Load to the ball side or strong side for help
- Deny a ball side forward pass
- Communicate—“Goalie”, “Interceptor”, “Jammer”

Section 2

Coaching Best Practices

Coaching Best Practices

Research has helped significantly evolve how we should coach and teach the game from when we were kids. Gone are the days when we should be using endless amounts of repetitive drills that don't involve decisions or mimic the conditions of games. Likewise for practices that are run with a military-like focus on perfection without an emphasis on fun.

The following pages identify some critical teaching and coaching strategies that enhance learning and development.

Create a Safe Learning Environment

A core foundation of learning is an environment where everyone can thrive—physically, psychologically, and socially. Coaches need to ensure that all games, practices, and off-court activities are:

- Safe
- Inclusive
- Fun
- Free of abuse, harassment, or maltreatment
- Empowering
- Positive
- Equitable
- Health-focused, ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of our young people, including coaches being full up-to-date on [concussion training and protocol](#) (including Rowan's Law).

[SafeSport Training](#) | [Commit to Kids](#) | [Safe Sport](#)



Create a Safe Learning Environment

Checklist for coaches. Does this occur in my learning and competitive environment? No longer does psychological safety need to be just a buzzword.

Mike McKay
Canada Basketball

Psychological safety is a condition in which you feel (1) included, (2) safe to learn, (3) safe to contribute, and (4) safe to challenge the status quo—all without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished in some way.

Timothy R. Clark

The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation

[#kindlequotes](#)

Foster a Growth Mindset

Individuals with a [growth mindset](#) embrace failure as a key means of growth and development. It's how Let your players fail, learn, and grow. Like riding a bike for the first time or [learning to walk](#).

Don't try to seek perfection in practices. Games are messy, chaotic, and unchoreographed. Your practices should reflect this reality.

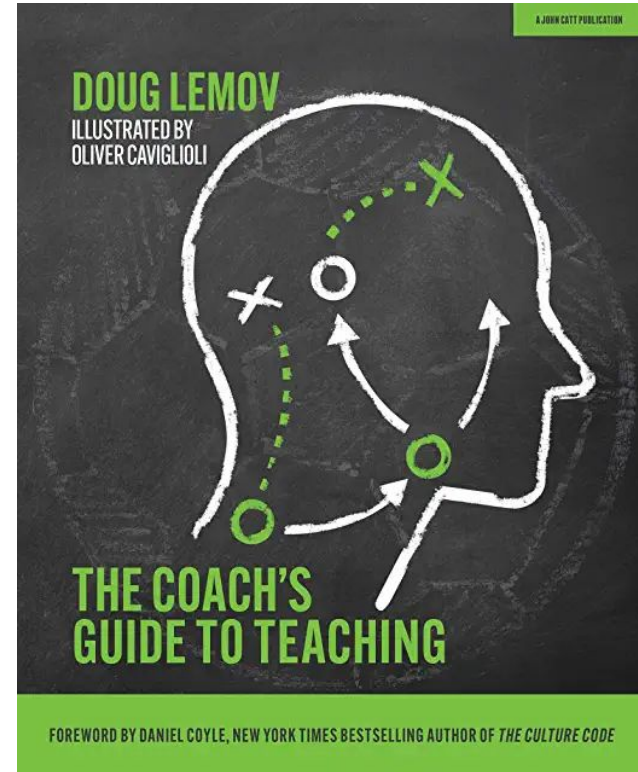
"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

Michael Jordan

Allow for Forgetting

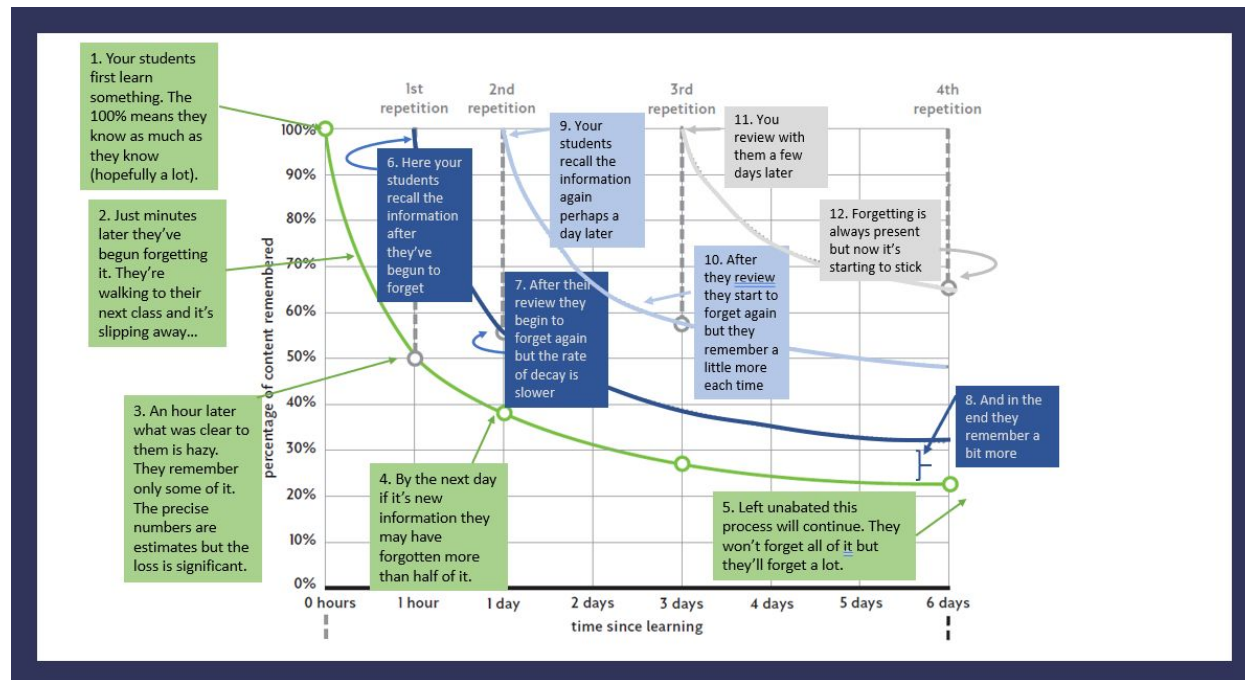
In his brilliant book, [The Coach's Guide to Teaching](#), Doug Lemov shares outstanding insights in how we transfer learning from our working memory to long-term memory.

Our working memory (what we are consciously thinking about it) has very little capacity (one thing at a time). So, we need to transfer learning from working memory to long-term memory, where we don't have to consciously think about an action. When we first learn to shoot a basketball, we have not encoded the learnings in long-term memory. After thousands of reps, our form is now encoded (it becomes muscle memory).



Allow for Forgetting (Cont.)

Repetition is critical to encoding learning in our long-term memory, and more importantly, being able to retrieve the learning (physical and cognitive) in the split-second an athlete has to make a decision in a game.



Decision Training is Essential to Development

Every single action a player takes in a game involves a physical element (running, cutting, shooting...) and a cognitive one (Am I open enough to shoot? Is there enough space for me to dribble?).

Games and drills in practice should involve as much [decision training](#) as possible. Limit the amount of blocked, repetitive drills where players don't have to think (e.g., repetitive shots from the wing without a defender) and incorporate ones where there is a physical AND cognitive element (e.g., players have to shoot or drive to the basket based on reading their defenders body position).

The more we enable 1 on 1 and small-sided games (2v2, 3v3, 4v4) play in practice over repetitive drills, the more their learning will transfer into games.

WHY BDT?

- **Learning opportunities will help your players to improve their decision-making skills, not just their technical skills.**
- **Using random and variable learning opportunities better simulates competitive conditions.**
- **Improves long term retention of skills and tactics.**
- **Increases player satisfaction as training is more engaging.**
- **Players become better error detectors and error correctors (They know their mistakes and how to correct them).**
- **Removing guidance from a coach/parent/teammate leads to more experiential learning, and a more free performance.**



basketballimmersion.com

Decision Training Examples

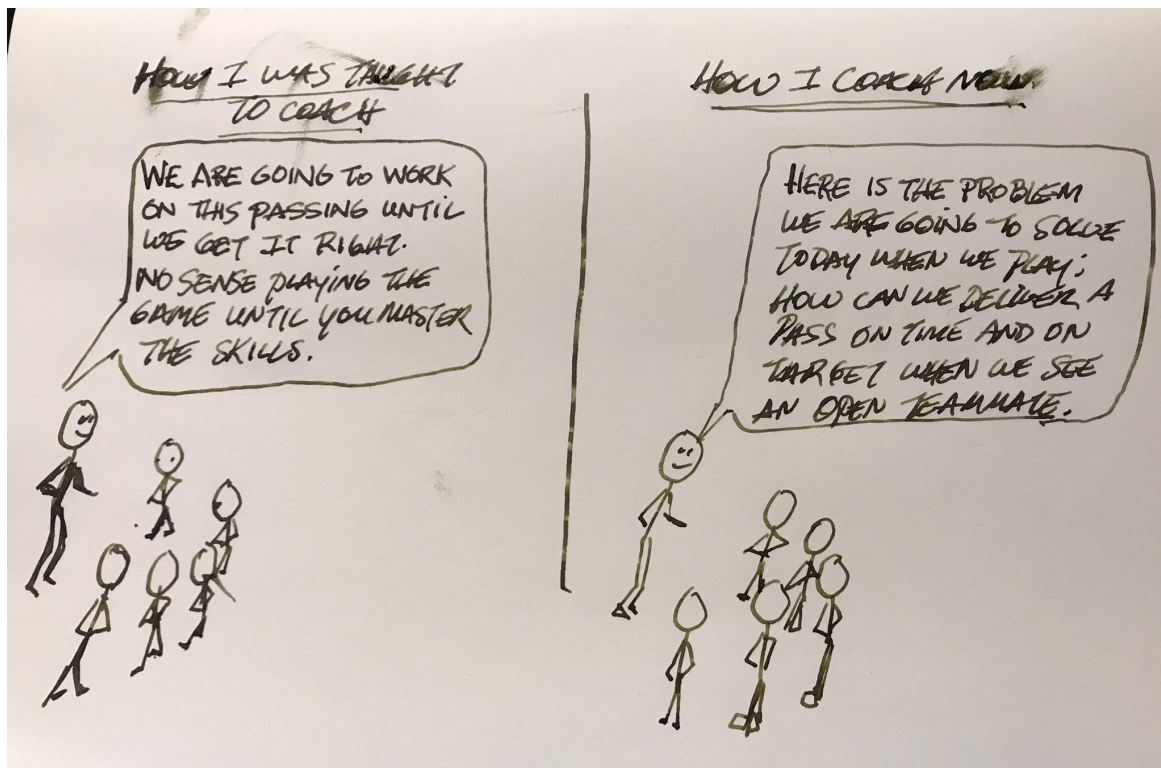
Here are some examples of specific decision training games or drills that you can do. They have been created or popularized by Canadian Chris Oliver, the former Head Coach of the University of Windsor Lancers, and the creator of the popular [Basketball Immersion](#) coaching website.

- [Shooting, Ball handling, and Passing](#)
- [Build Up Shooting Drills](#)



A Modern Approach to Coaching

[Mike McKay, Canada Basketball](#)



Create a Player-Led Environment

In a player-led environment, coaches are sharing leadership responsibilities with their players. Why? It enhances learning and development (athletic, cognitive, and leadership skills), creates a more empowering environment, improves team culture, and increases enjoyment for players.

How can you create a player-led environment:

1. **Ask questions instead of telling:** Empower your players to think and problem solve.
2. **Let them speak first:** Let your team offer thoughts and analysis before you do, during practice, after they come off the floor, at half-time, or after the game.
3. **Let them lead:** Allow players to run a game, drill, or even an entire practice.
4. **Enable player timeouts in practice:** Empower players to call a player-only timeout to improve effort, focus, or knowledge.

Player-Led From Overpowering to Empowering

Speaking first
when you hold
positional power
softly censors your
team.

Timothy R. Clark

*The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to
Inclusion and Innovation*

[#kindlequotes](#)

Positionless Basketball

One of the most important philosophies we embrace as an association is positionless basketball. Instead of making Jimmy at 5'2" your point guard and Jacob at 5'10" your low post player, all players should have the opportunity to fill all spots in your offence and defence. Why?

- Your players will have more fun if they have an opportunity to learn and grow a more diverse set of skills
- They will develop better as basketball players
- Jacob may have hit puberty earlier and has stopped growing. Jimmy may turn out to be 6'7". We need to develop all skills with a primary focus on player development and fun, not winning (remember, transformational coaching)
- The modern game is positionless. Your team will be much more effective if you develop versatile players with more of a motion offence approach.

Quiet Please. No Coaching During Play.

Imagine if someone stood over your shoulder and shouted instructions at you as you worked on an important project on your computer at work. Would you be able to focus and concentrate? What we know about working memory tells us that we cannot.

It's the same when our players are in a game. They cannot focus on dribbling through traffic if you (or their parents) are shouting instructions at them. Do not talk to your players on the floor during play.

Your time to teach them is at practice. At games you can coach what you have already taught (in practice) when they come off the floor, during a timeout, or during half-time.

If they are not executing what you have worked on a practice, the likelihood is that you need to spend more time on the working memory to long-term memory encoding (i.e., more game-like practice with appropriate learning and forgetting repetitions).



A Modern Approach to Coaching

Research tells us that more modern approaches to coaching and teaching involve consideration of the following practice concepts:

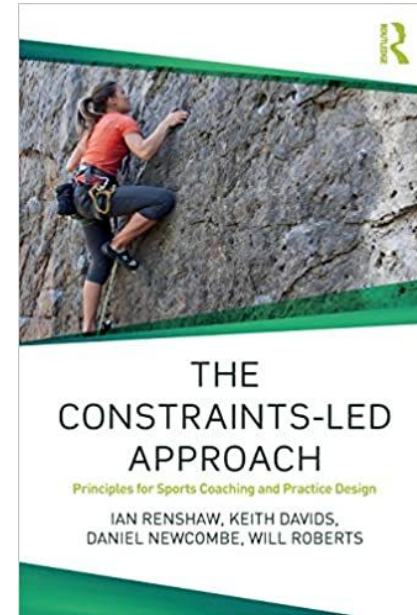
Blocked	↔	Random	Video
Constant	↔	Variable	Video
Distributed	↔	Massed	Video
Simple	↔	Complex	Article
Drills Approach	↔	Games Approach	Article
Internal Focus	↔	External Focus	Info

Rep it without Repetition

Games-based learning (with constraints to promote specific skills development) optimizes learning because it mimics the randomness and variability of games, enabling easier retrieval of skills in game conditions.

Use constraints to create repetition in learning a specific skill in a fun, games-based environment.

[Podcast: The constraints-led approach to coaching.](#)



Small-Sided Games Approach

Small-sided games enable you to teach the game through the decision or the challenges the game presents in all phases.

Don't just play a game—it must have a purpose (what are you working on), it should have constraints, and you should coach the Points of Emphasis that you are focusing on through constraints.

Your game should be in the context that the player will experience in the game—the challenge or decision faced with should be similar to the game.

The athlete should have to determine what the visual cues are to be able to execute the skill or make the decision related to the game. We can guide towards these but should not state them.



Small-Sided Game Examples

- 1v1 and a player can only score on a step-back jump shot
- 3v3 and the first shot can only take place after two ball reversals
- 4v4 with a designated shooter on each team
- 2v2 and the defending team cannot allow a paint touch
- 4v4 and the defending team cannot allow a backdoor cut
- 1v1 that starts in the corner
- 2v2 that starts with a ball screen

Giving Feedback | Focus is Essential

One of the biggest challenges that coaches have in giving feedback is that they focus on too many things. Learners learn best when we identify one to two things we want them to work on and we give them feedback only on those one to two things.

For example, if I am teaching a player better shooting mechanics there is a lot I COULD focus on (feet position, athletic lower body stance, finger position on the ball, shooting arm tuck/dip etc.). Instead I only want to focus on 1 or 2 things today. Let's say I am going to have them shooting off the catch and I am only going to teach them to correctly step into the shot with a 1-2 step and with their feet slightly turned instead of 10 toes to the rim.

I am only going to give them feedback on these two elements. They may or may not be shooting with any rhythm. Their hand might be behind the ball instead of under it at their set point, creating a flat shot. Their release point may not be optimal. I am going to worry about all of those things another day. Today, I am only giving feedback on the 1-2 step and the feet turn. Because of the limitations in our working memory, that type of focus will enable the player to learn more effectively.

Not sure how focused you are in your feedback? Record yourself at practice and listen afterwards.

Giving Feedback | Focus is Essential

HARD TO CHASE 5 RABBITS AT THE SAME TIME.



THINK OF RABBITS AS YOUR POINT OF EMPHASIS (POE)
IN A DRILL. IF YOU TRY TO CAPTURE
TOO MANY AT ONE TIME, YOU END UP
CATCHING NONE.

BEGINNING OF A DRILL BE CLEAR ON THE "RABBIT" YOU
ARE CHASING. AT THE END OF THE DRILL ASK YOUR
PLAYERS AND YOURSELF; "DID WE CATCH OUR RABBIT?"

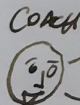
BEFORE DRILL



OUR POE
OF EMPHASIS
IS NO MIDDLE
PENETRATION

RABBIT 1

DURING DRILL



WE NEED
BETTER SHOTS. RABBIT 2
FOCUS ON
YOUR PASSING RABBIT 3
YOU NOT
TALKING RABBIT 4
HURRY RABBIT 5

END OF DRILL
TO ASSISTANTS.



WE STILL
GIVE UP TOO
MANY
MIDDLE
PENETRATION!

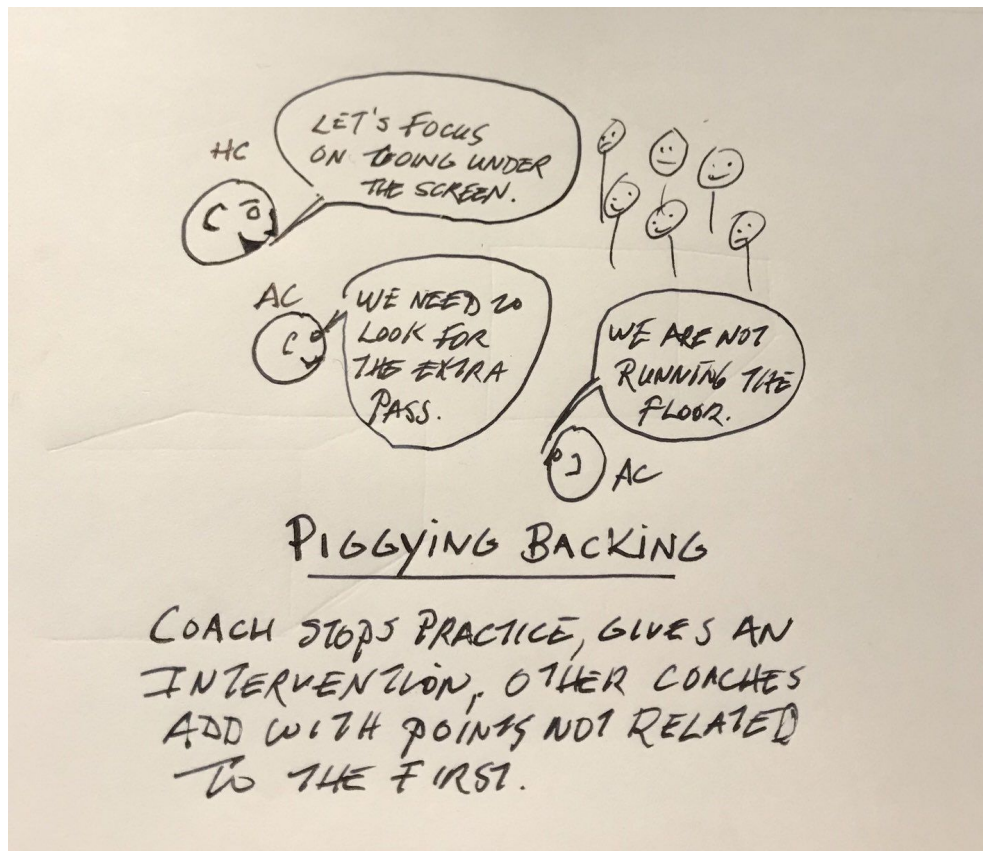
DID NOT
CATCH
THE
RABBIT!!

Giving Feedback | Focus is Essential

All Coaches have to be on the same page in giving feedback on the PoEs only:

When we give too many points of emphasis we fill up the players working memory. Which point is the most important, which point is remembered? Not about everyone's voice being heard. Keep the focus on the right thing at the right time.

Mike McKay
Canada Basketball



Giving Feedback | Specificity is Critical

PUTTING YOUR ATTENTION ON THE RIGHT THING AT THE RIGHT TIME. THE DETAIL MATTERS.

1. WE NEED TO PLAY BETTER!

2. OUR DEFENCE NEEDS TO IMPROVE

3. I NEED YOU TO FOCUS ON OUR BALL SCREEN DEFENCE

4. JOHN, ON THE SIDE BALL SCREEN, GET OVER THE PICK.

WE ARE NOT COMMUNICATING!

WE NEED TALK ON DEFENCE!

LET THEM KNOW THE SCREEN IS COMING!

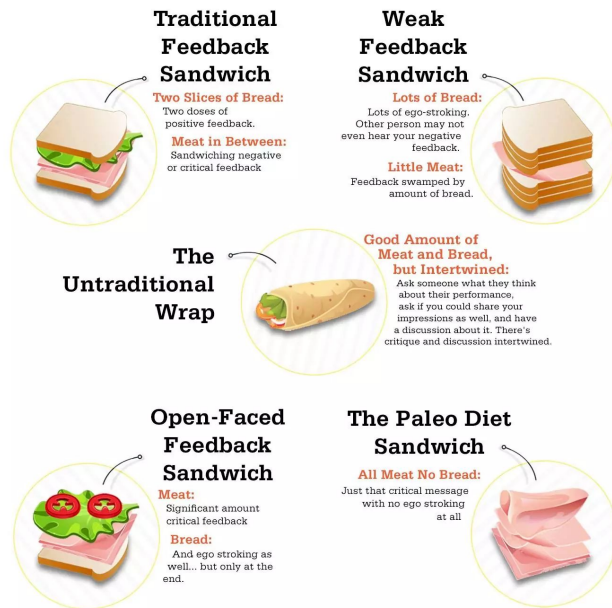
JOHN, REMIND SAM, EARLY AND OFTEN WHEN THE SIDE PICK IS BEING SET.

MOVING FROM GENERAL
TO SPECIFIC

Giving Feedback | Reinventing the Feedback Sandwich

Try the open faced sandwich so that the constructive focus is not lost.

Reinventing the Feedback Sandwich



9 Keys to Running Effective Practices

1. **Develop your terminology:** [Shared vocabulary](#) is so important to running effective and efficient practices where everyone is on the same page.
2. **3:10:30:** Maximum of 3 points of emphasis that you are focusing on in each drill. Maximum of 10 minutes per drill. Maximum of 30 seconds of instruction (keep your instructions SHORT!).
3. **Points of Emphasis:** Be super clear on the PoEs for each game or drill. Coach those only and ensure all of your assistant coaches are doing the same.
4. **Maximize player engagement:** Small sided games, no lines, no sitting, lots of repetitions. Teach the skill, not the drill (meaning, it is good to repeat drills in multiple practices. It cuts down on instruction time. Spice them up with new constraints or challenges (time, score, etc.).
5. **Focus on [Fundamental Movement Skills](#):** Incorporate FMS' like running, jumping, catching, and balance into your warm-ups. It will really help your athletes develop their critical gross motor skills.

9 Keys to Running Effective Practices

6. **Teach them how to play, not plays:** Are we teaching players to perform a skill or are they learning something that will transfer to the game and allow them to solve problems within the game? Focus on actions that they can use when reading and reacting to the other team (e.g., DHOs, down screens, backdoor cuts, etc.)
7. **Manage transition times:** Transitions from one practice element to the next should be very short. How? Precise planning ahead of time. Shared vocabulary. Reuse of drills across practices. And short instructions (no more than 30 seconds).
8. **Debrief:** What we did well, what can we improve upon—can be team or individual. ABCD - Agree, Build, Challenge, Deeper.
9. **Keep it fun:** It's the greatest game there is. Make it fun and keep them coming back.

Section 3

More Information

More Information

We hope you have found this document to be helpful in assisting you in coaching and teaching our young people. Thank you so much for your time, your efforts, and your responsibility in being a role model and a teacher!

A reminder that this document is a companion document to our WOBA Practice Games and Drills document that will assist you in building your practice plans in alignment with our player development milestones.

For more information or for help in practice planning, coaching resources, or player development, please contact Mark Emond (wobacompetitive@gmail.com, 613.858.0058), West Ottawa Basketball's VP of Player and Coach Development.

Coach Hoops | Your WOBA Coaching Website

[Coachhoops.ca](https://coachhoops.ca) is your website, designed specifically for West Ottawa Basketball coaches.

It includes a drills portal, practice planning templates, links to coaching resources, FIBA rules, information on coaching certification and long-term athlete development, blog posts from West Ottawa coaches, and contact information for coaching development and player development support.

