

CIRCLE MOTION

Circle motion, at its core, is a 5 out controlled motion offense with a lot of movement and passing and good spacing. It is designed to allow players freedom to use their natural talents within a structured offense.

PLAYERS NEEDED

Skilled, versatile players perform best in circle motion. Interchangeable positions allow the offense to be fluid and keep continuity. A balance of perimeter shooters and drivers make the offense unpredictable. An unskilled post player can be used primarily as a ball screener but a good post player (or players) can be a focal point of your offense.

POSITIVES OF CIRCLE MOTION

If a defense is allowed to stand, they are at an advantage over the offense. Circle motion forces the defense to move and adjust to basket cuts and ball screens. The basic pattern is easy to teach and benefits unselfish play. It spaces the floor and encourages ball reversals.

Every player on the floor gets to touch the ball and be a part of the offense. It can be an equal opportunity offense, or a coach can put restrictions on certain players. Circle motion is great at finding the ONE defender who is out of position or loses focus. Defenders cannot hide when you run Circle. This offense will find them and expose them if you're patient.

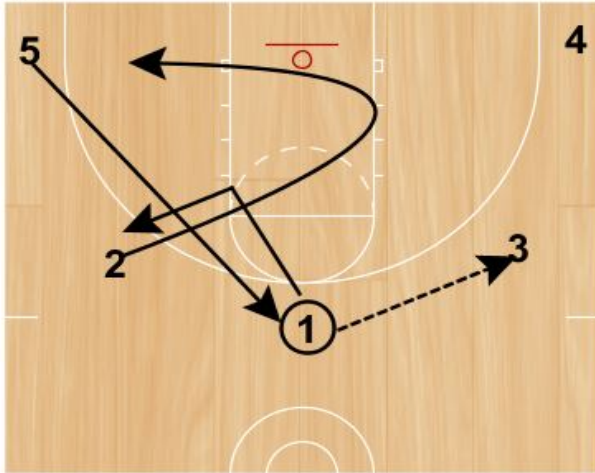
IMPORTANT: INSTALLING CIRCLE MOTION WITH YOUR TEAM

You do not need, and likely should not try, to use every option presented here. Inside the document you will find the core Circle Motion, various entries into the offense, plays for specific players, and an early/transition offense to flow into Circle. Pick what works for your team and fits your philosophy.

THE BASIC PATTERN (5 Out)

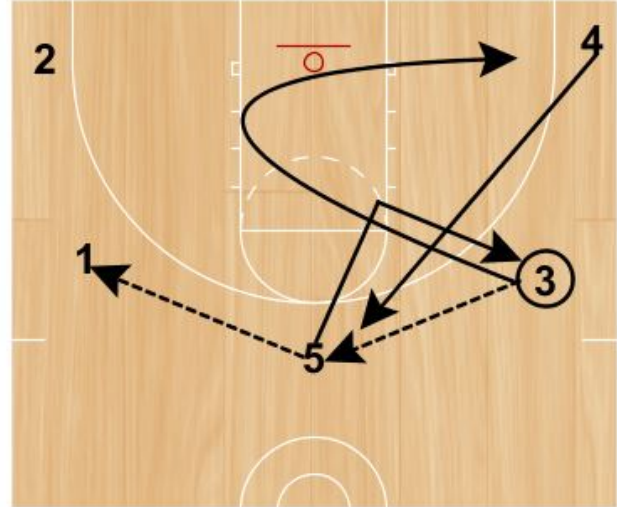
The 5-out set starts in an open post alignment. The floor is spaced with both corners filled and both wings *slightly above foul line extended* for optimal spacing. The point guard is in the middle of the floor and can initiate the offense to either side. Positions are interchangeable. The basic pattern and reversal action are shown in Frames 1 and 2. This is the primary action that has continuity and sets up all other actions.

Frame 1



Circle motion starts 5 out. The point guard is in the middle of the floor and can initiate the offense either side. Positions are interchangeable. Once the ball is passed to a wing from the top the action begins on the weak side with 3 different cuts.
Point: makes an "opposite elbow slash cut".
Wing: makes a "rub cut" off of 1 heels. They should almost touch one another.
Weakside Corner: makes a "long cut".

Frame 2



We can run this pattern over and over off a simple ball reversal at the top. Here the ball swings back to 5 who passes to 1 and the pattern runs in the opposite direction.

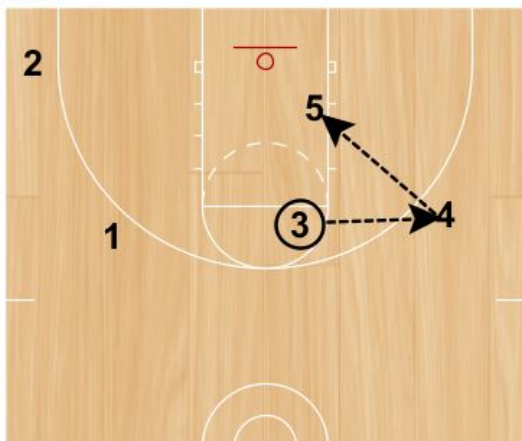
TEACHING KEYS TO THE BASIC PATTERN:

- In the Frame 1 example, the 2 is trying to "rub" her defender off on the 1 for a lay-up. This is NOT a screen. It's a *rub cut*.
- The "rub cutter" (the player running the circle pattern) must cut across the rim line before circling out to the corner. She may come open late at the rim. If the defender overplays this cut, she can go back door as well.
- The long cutter from the corner must **sprint** to the top of the key in order to be ready to reverse the ball.
- When the long cutter receives the pass this is a great opportunity to attack off the dribble.

SPRINT READS / DEFINITIONS

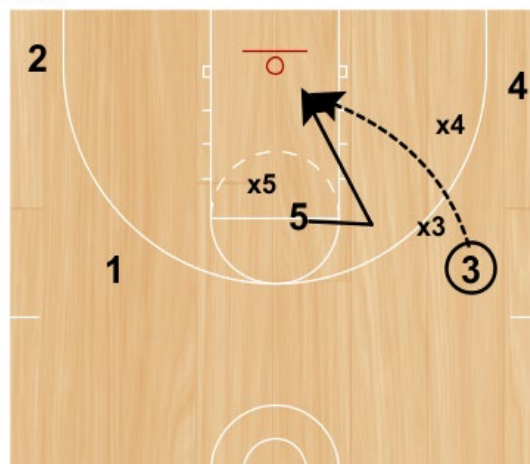
- **Throwback Player:** This is the ball side corner. Her job is to lift from corner to wing and be ready to shoot, drive or post feed. We use this option for a shooter but it's also a great way to feed the post on a leg whip. (See Frame 6).
- **Kick Player:** Weak side wing (1). She has her hands up ready for the kick out for the three point shot. She also can feed 5. The 5 is following the ball after she screens and rolls. If 3 passes to 1 the 5 will post up on the left block. (See Frame 3 below)
- **Ball handler:** Determines how defense is playing and makes appropriate read. Her FIRST thought is **score, then pass**.
- **Screener:** Head hunts the player guarding the ball and *rolls with fury* to down the lane line. She then locates the ball and posts up. She can also slip the screen if her defender is late or hedges early (Frame 7)
- **Note:** The ball could go from 3 to 1 to 2 in the corner and the 5 could get a post feed from there as well. She follows the ball. If not open 2 dribbles out, 1 cuts and 5 fills the corner and we continue the offense. (Frame 5)

Frame 6



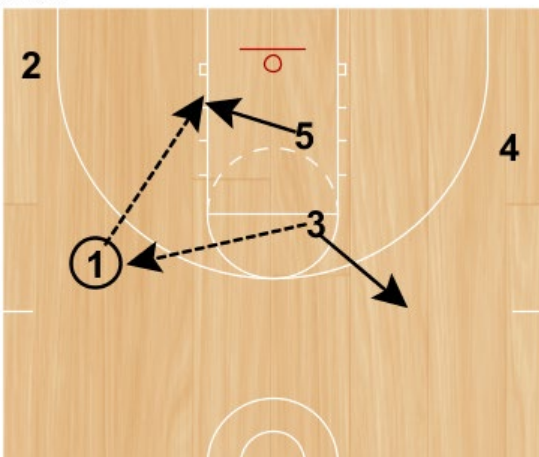
Going back to the initial pick and roll, another option is for the 3 to throwback to the 4. The 4 could be open for a shot but this is also another good angle to feed the post player.

Frame 7



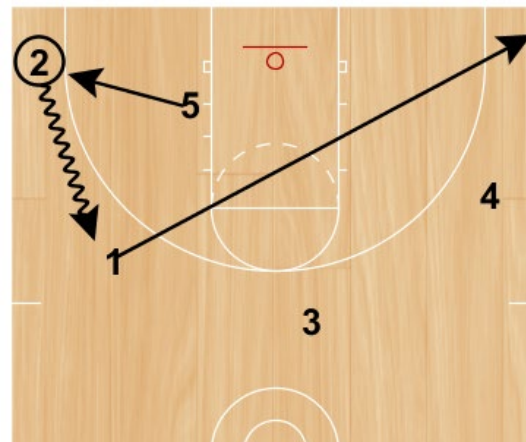
Here the post slips the screen for an easy layup

Frame 3



If 3 passes to 1, 1 looks to pass to 5 on the deep roll/post up. This is a very good angle for the roller to receive the pass. 3 pops back to the top.

Frame 5



TEACHING KEYS TO “SPRINT” BALLSCREENS

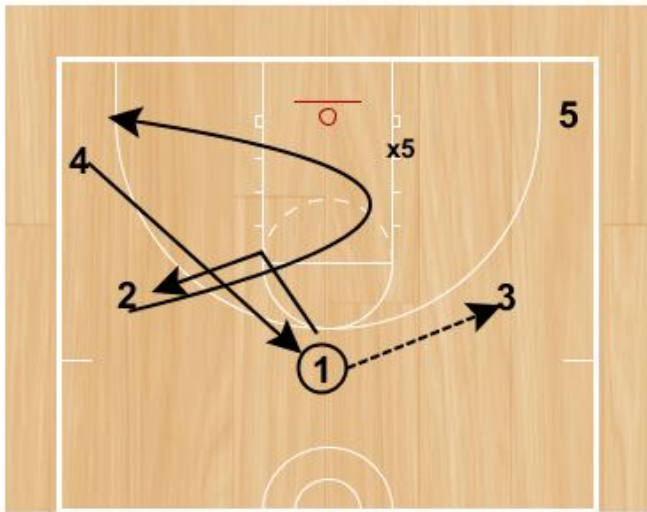
- Do not forget the circle cutter; even though we are ball screening, that initial cut still might be open.
- The post must jump stop on all picks. Perimeter players must not move early; the jump stop by the post signals the action.
- The wing has a tendency to dribble early (ours do anyway) so the post must be ready to stop short to screen to avoid a foul.
- Post must stay alert after rolling and follow the ball as she may get the ball on the kick out pass.
- Teach the post to read her defender and slip the screen if her defender hedges too soon or is late.
- The throwback action is a great way to feed your post player if the post defender hedges the screen.
- Take the time to teach the proper way for the ball handler to come off the screen. (Shoulder to hip)
- Teach the ball handler that she is trying to drive to score – get to the elbow and make a decision.

THE STEP UP BALL SCREEN

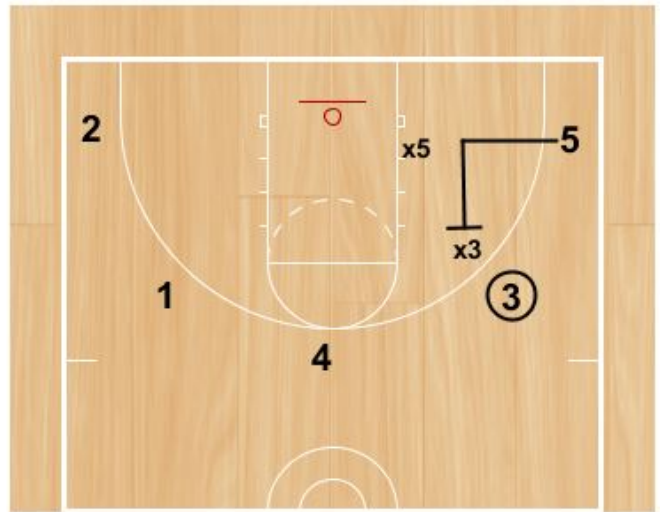
Call for the Step Up screen when the defense starts to sag heavily to defend the basic circle cut. This can also happen when the defense does not respect the corner player's jumper. When the ball is passed to the post side wing (3), the circle pattern is run as normal (Frame 1), but if the cut is not open due to X5 sagging to the block, the 5 sets a screen with her back to baseline. (Frame 2). This forces X5 to move and defend.

Frame 3 shows the action: 3 comes off screen with hard dribble looking to score, the 4 acts as a safety by rotating ball side wing, replacing the driver; 2 holds in the corner for a baseline pass, 1 rotates to the point. 5 rolls to the tip of the rim to provide spacing for the drive.

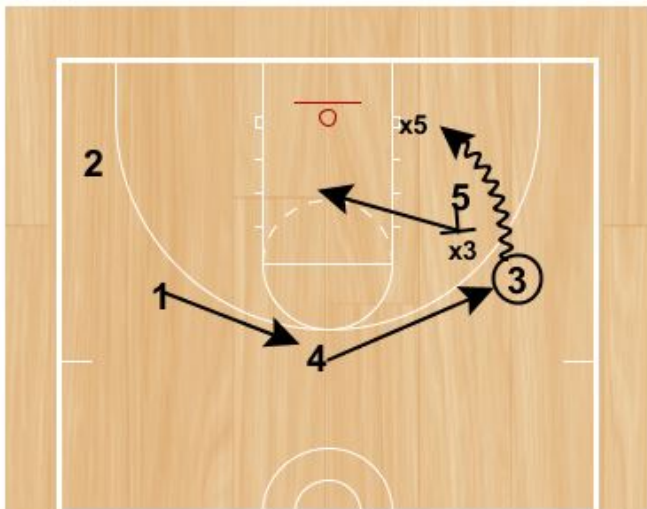
Frame 1



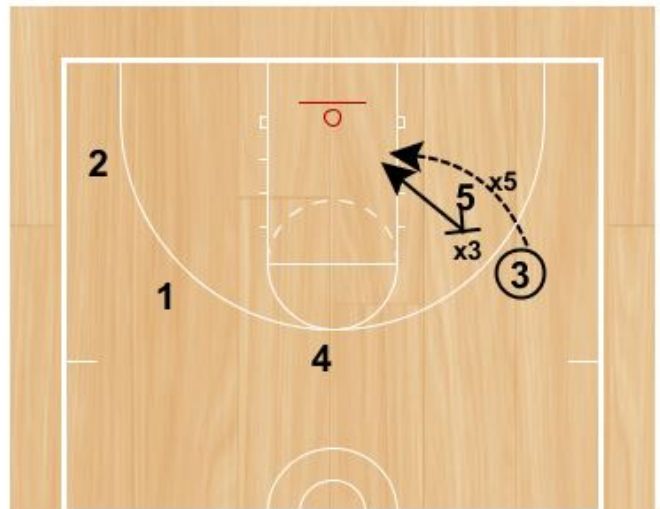
Frame 2



Frame 3



Frame 4



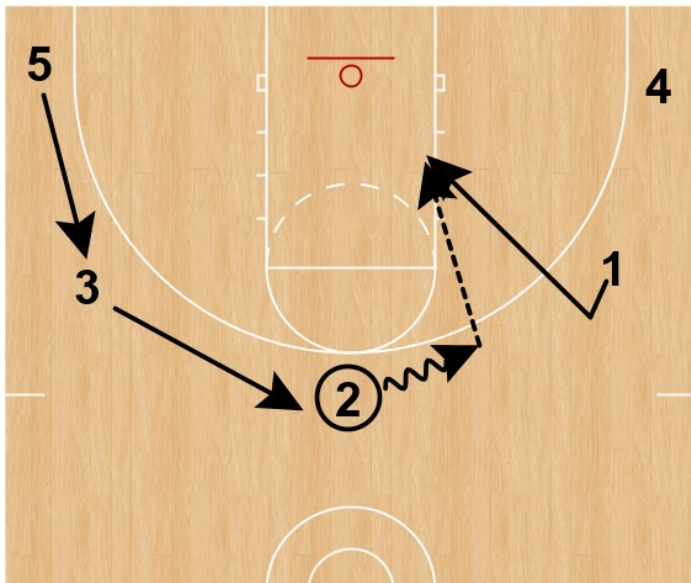
TEACHING KEYS TO “STEP UP”

- The post should step toward the block then step up to screen the player on the ball with her back to the baseline. This is a FLAT angle screen.
- This screen is very effective as it basically makes the defense play 5 on 4.
- 5 must open up and slide toward *tip of the rim* for spacing and to give the driver a chance to score. She will not “roll” as it collapses spacing with ball handler.
- Every player has an assigned spot to rotate so the ball handler knows where every teammate is located
- The safety is almost always open for a shot. Do not forget about her. You can instruct the safety to shoot, drive, or it’s another chance to feed the post player.
- Teach your post player to recognize if her player steps out to hedge – she should slip. This is a layup. (See Frame 4)
- It is most effective if the post can learn to do this automatically when she sees her defender sagging to the block without the coach having to call it out.

PRESSURE RELEASES

We counter overly aggressive defenses by using a dribble-at action. Any “Dribble-At” triggers a basket cut. In addition, any overplay one pass away also triggers a back cut. If the cutter is not open players rotate and fill and Circle continues as normal. You can also use this action to send a post player on the wing into the post.

Frame 3



Any “Dribble at” action forces the player to back cut. The cutter should step to the ball then cut hard

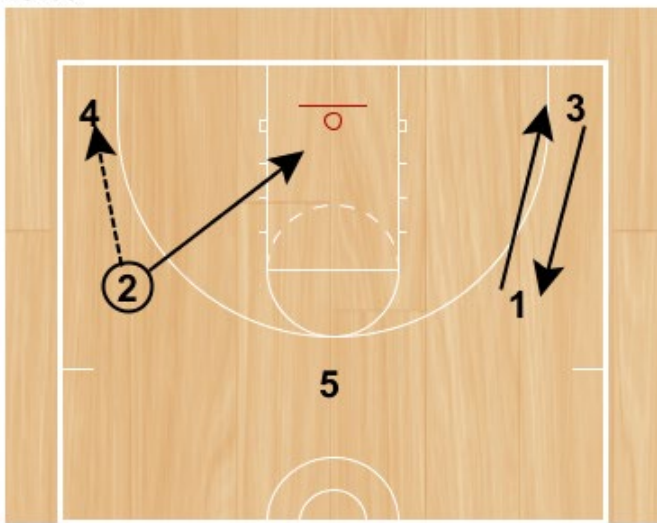
THE CORNER OPTIONS

Note: Less experienced teams should keep this simple. Do not try to add a lot of these options early. START WITH THE BASKET CUT. What you do when the ball is passed to the corner is the coach's decision. We use the system designed by Villanova's Harry Perretta of numbered cuts. You can try to teach all actions or limit it to 1 or 2 actions. You can make it as simple or as complex as you want. The various corner options add a layer of complexity to Circle Motion but also make it more difficult to defend. Pick the cut or cuts that fit your philosophy, personnel and your team's basketball IQ. Regardless of the cuts you use, you must drill it regularly so that it becomes habit. However, even if a player forgets the cut, Circle motion is hard to screw up. Tell your kids: when in doubt – CUT.

Basket Cut:

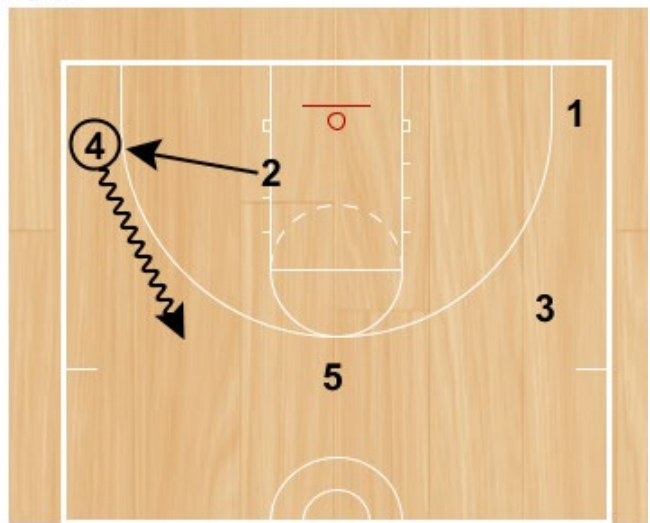
Basic action that is easiest to teach. Allow a brief post up after the cut especially if the match-up is right.

Frame 3



The first cut is a simple basket cut. This is a great time for your opposite wing and corner to interchange, although this is not required.

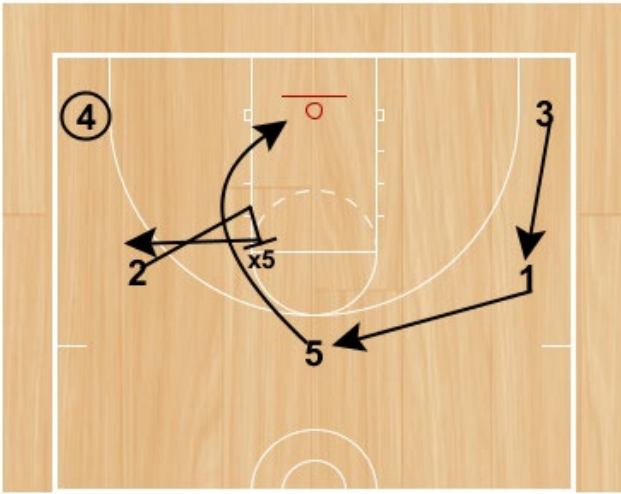
Frame 4



On the basket cut we allow the cutter a moment to post up, then the player in the corner dribbles out to the wing and we continue to run circle.

Curl Cut:

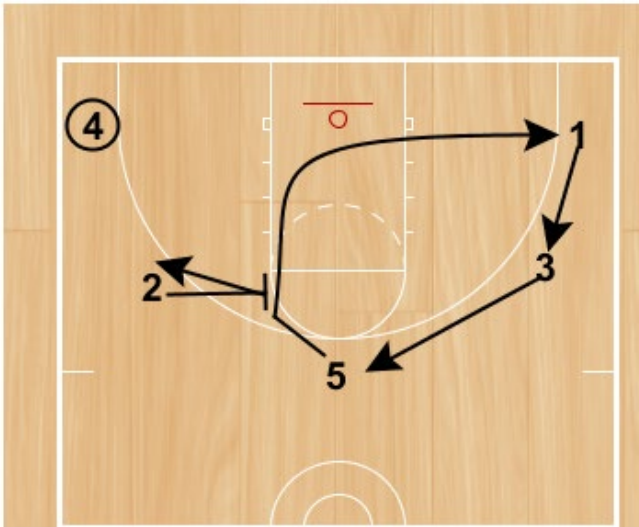
The angle of the screen is critical as is the timing. The screener replaces herself and is often open for a shot.



The 2nd cut is a curl cut. Here the 2 passed to 4 and would execute a screen away action for the top player who curls to the basket. The 2 must quickly replace herself. (This player is sometimes open for a shot)

Back Cut

Very good if combined with the curl cut. 5 jabs like she's going over the screen then cuts behind. Again the screener replaces herself on the wing.

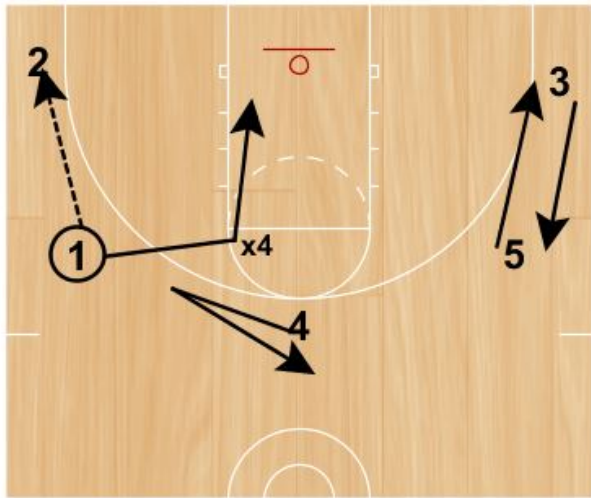


The 3rd cut is a back cut. Here the 5 sets up like a curl but then cuts face cuts the screener.

The Slip

This is a great option especially against switching defenses. The key teaching point is to wait until 4 crosses 1's body before she slips. She must sell it like it's a regular curl or screen away action.

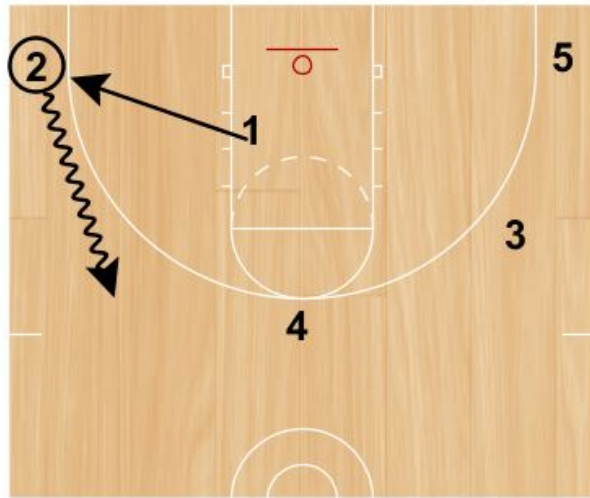
Frame 3



When the ball is passed to the corner we run a slip. The passer makes a cut toward the top defender and then cuts hard to the rim. The top player fakes using the screen and replaces herself.

Advanced teams can also have the weakside players interchange on this action.

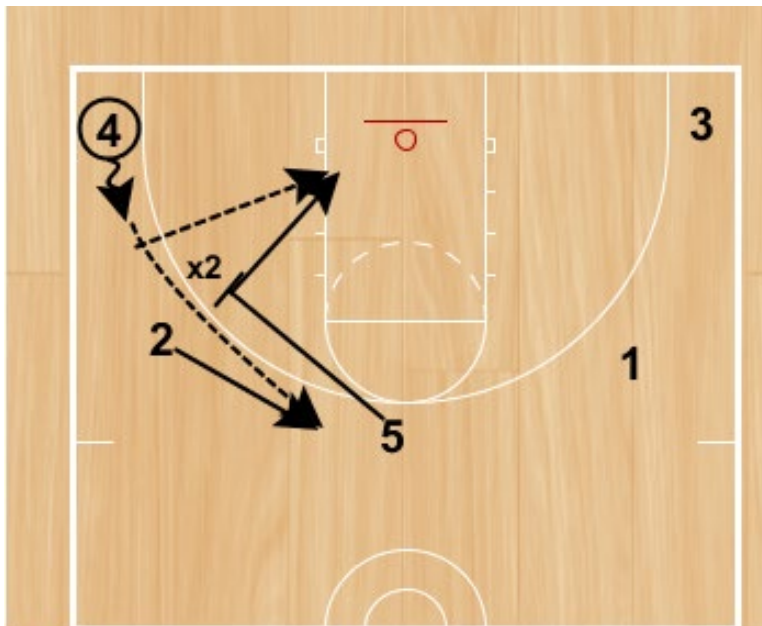
Frame 4



If the cutter is not open the corner player dribbles to the open wing and the cutter replaces in the corner and the circle pattern continues.

The Flare/Slip Combo

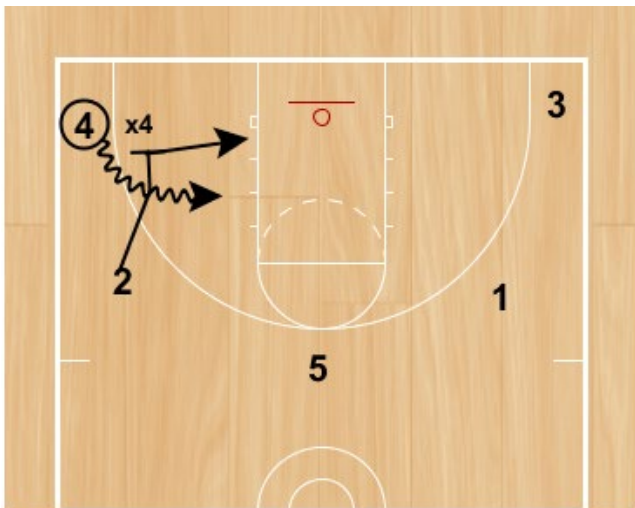
Perhaps the single most effective action but also takes the longest to learn. This requires the top player to set a flare screen and then slip to the basket. If you have kids that can do it this is a very hard action to guard.



The 5th cut is a flare combined with a slip. This is an advanced action that takes time to perfect but is extremely hard to defend. Note the 1 does NOT fill the top here.

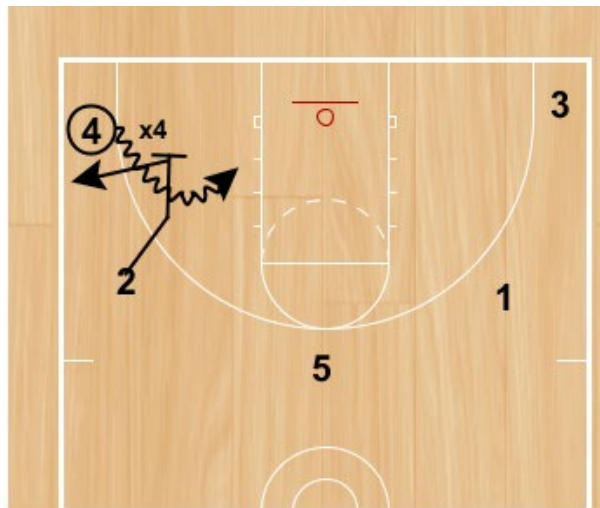
Pick and Roll/Pop

A good option for teams that like to attack the basket. Never run this with a post in the corner unless she can drive. The angle of this pick and roll is unique and hard to defend.



The 6th cut is the pick and roll or the pick and pop. A corner pick and roll is a strange angle and many teams struggle to defend it. Whether the player rolls or pops is a coach's decision. Players can be designated an action or every player can do the same action.

Note: We never want to execute this action with a weak ball handling post in the corner.

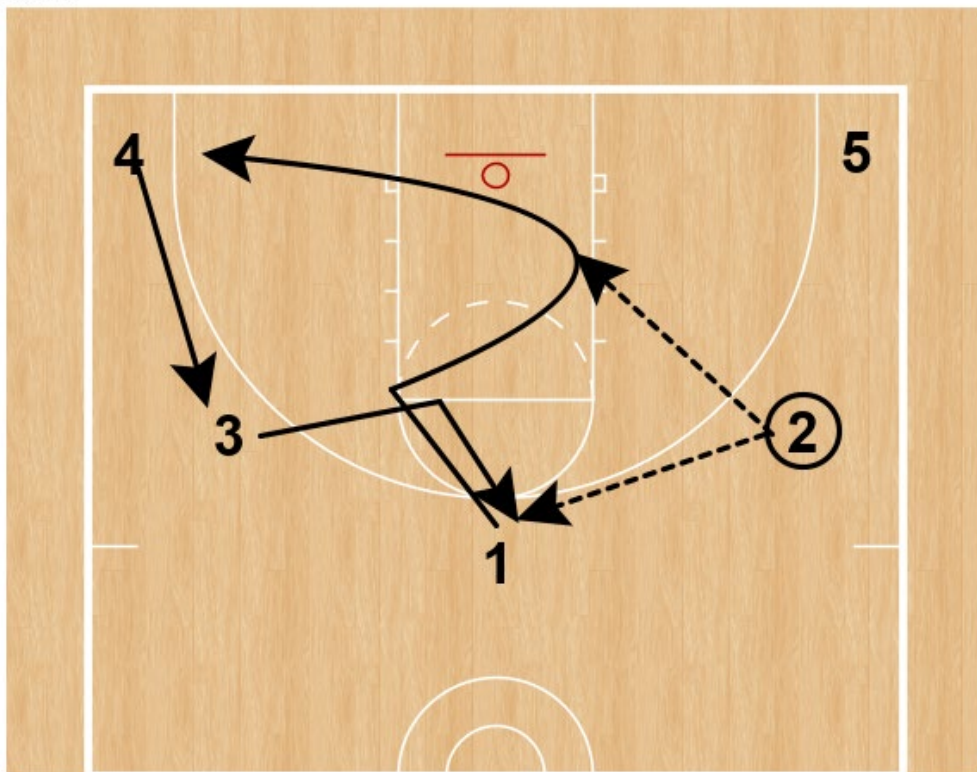


The pick and pop

THE POP COUNTER

A great option to add to the offense is the “pop” action. Teams will start to sag to take away the initial circle cut. To counter this, have the circle cutter “pop” out and the slash cutter slips, as diagrammed below. This can be a call or a read. The player popping is open for a top of the key 3 on a regular basis when the defense thinks you’re running base circle.

Frame 1



Use this as a counter to the basic circle pattern when teams start switching or sagging to defend the circle cut.

Instead of the passer slash cutting and popping, the slasher becomes the primary pass receiver as they cut to the elbow and then slip to the basket. The player that “pops” can get a great look at the top of the key if they are a shooter.

FINAL TEACHING POINTS

- If a defense is allowed to stand, they win. Make them move and even good defenses will break down.
- Have a rebounding philosophy. Crash boards on shots from any positions you wish. It's harder to box out a player coming from the 3 point line.
- Teach your team that driving lanes are open when you are 5 out or when you are on a wing with the corner open.
- A great time to drive is right after the cutter makes her circle cut. Help is still in recovery mode.
- Teach your team the timing of the initial rub cut/circle pattern. It is critical to the success of the offense.
- Drill the wing pass to the rub/circle cutter every day for at least 3 to 5 minutes. This basic pattern will get you layups, but they must learn to LOOK for it. The pass receiver should work on not dribbling, just go up and score.
- Various ball screen drills should be a **daily part of your practice plan**. Both sprint screens and step ups. The ball handlers must understand the reads: Throwback, Kick Out, Refuse Screen, and Drive/Shoot.
- The Step Up screen is incredibly effective at freeing up shooters as the defense collapses to help
- Emphasize that this offense is incredibly hard to defend if you use quick, decisive passes and you move at game speed.
- Too much dribbling kills this offense. Only dribble to drive, get out of trouble, or to create a passing angle. Dribble with a purpose!
- Find a corner pass option that works best for you and drill it until it's second nature. The corner option takes the longest to learn so new teams should start with a simple basket cut. You can always add other options later.
- When running sprint, the roller must roll HARD to the basket. "Roll with FURY"
- Post players must be able to score 1 on 1 after they seal. Drill post moves as well as kick outs and reposts.
- When in doubt – CUT.