

THOUGHTS AND SKILLS

1ST-3RD GRADE - FOUNDATIONAL STAGE



THOUGHTS FOR GRADES 1-3

-Constraints: The capabilities of players are very much affected by personal constraints (strength, power, limb length, coordination, etc.). Shooting is the skill most drastically affected. Ball handling is the only skill unaffected. Use age appropriate goal heights as much as possible, and attempt to always fit in ball handling development.

-Purpose: This age group should be about learning and having fun. Don't lose sight of having fun to emphasize winning - in practice or games. Try to teach basketball through games as much as possible, and less through instruction and drills. Emphasize life skills through basketball and promote proper conduct/behaviors.

-Movement Patterns: Help build proper fundamental movement patterns (balancing, running, jumping, skipping, pivoting, etc.) through dynamic warmups and games. At this age, developing movement patterns has more value than complexity in teaching tactics & strategy like man offenses, zone defenses, etc.

-Playing Time: All players should get to participate and playing time should be distributed evenly. Do not make players feel less than others in this stage of development.

-Skill Development: Teach "positionless" basketball, meaning all players learn all skills. There should be no breakdown drills separating guards and posts.

-Practice Considerations: Attention spans are very short. Keep everyone involved as much as possible in practice. Limit time spent waiting in lines, for games to finish, for instruction to end, etc. Be prepared to manage limited practice resources carefully - space, jerseys, balls, etc.

-Small Sides Games (SSG): Use Small Sides Games and 3v3 as much as possible. This allows more players to handle the ball and make decisions. DO NOT keep score. Very little 5 on 5 should be played at this stage of development.

SKILLS FOR GRADES 1-3

Rules and Terminology: Don't assume players know the rules. Use common language to describe positions, places, equipment. Take the time to explain basic court markings and rules.

Ball Handling: Familiarize players with the ball. Make them use both hands.

Passing/Catching: Introduce basic chest, bounce, and over head passes. Make players catch on two feet, with two hands, and with two eyes.

Pivoting: Teach power jump stops, and front and reverse pivots. Teach players to avoid "Turtling" - turning your back to the defense to avoid pressure.

Shooting: Teach "Ready, Up, In" technique. Talk about BEEF (Balance-Elbow-Eyes-Follow Through). Use age appropriate goals and smaller balls if possible to minimize constraints.

Layups: Introduce basic layup technique from both sides - 1 foot and power. Shoot LOTS and LOTS of layups with both hands.

Team Offense: Have some basic organization. Talk about spacing/cutting. Emphasize distance between players (10-12 feet) for spacing, and discourage off the ball players from crowding the ball. Get players moving and not standing. DO NOT build an extensive playbook.

Team Defense: Teach players to match up to an opposing player and stay with them through offensive movement. Emphasize staying between the man and basket. Do not teach zone defense.

Individual Defense: Teach proper defensive stance and slides.



GAMES FOR GRADES 1-3

Dribble Tag

Teaches protect dribbles (Body between ball and defense), evading defenders, and dribbling with head up.

Red Light, Green Light

Develops agility, acceleration, deceleration and ball handling.

Ultimate Basketball

Teaches cutting, passing, pivoting and catching.

DRILLS FOR GRADES 1-3

Dynamic Warmup

5 minutes each practice to develop movement patterns and balance.

Layup Progression

Teaches basic layup technique, footwork and teaching points.

Form Shooting

Familiarizes players with the mechanics of their shot.

Stationary Ball Handling (1 Ball)

Familiarize players with the ball in the simplest drills possible.

Full Court Dribbling (1 Ball)

Teaches basic speed dribble ball handling.

2v2 and 3v3 Transition

Teaches communication, transition offense and defense, as well as advantage and disadvantage situations.