

THE 5 SECRETS *of All Great* NBA SHOOTERS

*Learn the drills, techniques, and mindset
that made these shooters great*



Quinn McDowell

ARETE HOOPS

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About the Author

My name is Quinn McDowell and I am a professional basketball player, aspiring writer, and founder of Arete Hoops. I completed a four-year liberal arts degree (in Religion and Economics) at the College of William and Mary while excelling on the court for the Tribe.

I finished my career scoring over 1500 points and grabbing 500 rebounds while being honored as the Colonial Athletic Association's only two-time winner of the Dean Ehlers Leadership Award.

One of my greatest strengths as a player is my ability to shoot the basketball. I have made "shooting" my craft. I have studied, practiced, and worked my way to becoming a great shooter. I learned great technique from my father when I was young and have continued to refine this ability throughout my career. Some of my shooting highlights include:



- **Shooting over 40% from the 3-point line for my 4-year career at William and Mary**
- **In my Junior season he was only 1 of 5 players nationally to shoot over 50% from the field, over 40% from three, and over 80% on free throws.**
- **Leading the Australian Professional League in 3-point shooting percentage in Australia for 2 consecutive years at 45% and 47% respectively.**
- **Shooting over 50% from the field in my 3 years as a pro**
- **Setting the CAA Conference Tournament scoring record (at the time) for one game with 35 points**

Since graduation basketball has taken me on a crazy journey. I played professionally for 2 years in Perth, Au, in the NBA-Development League, and in Spain's second division (Leb Oro). I believe basketball can change your life because I've seen how it has changed mine. I want to share these experiences with you as you continue on your journey.

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The Arete Hoop Mission

Put simply, Arete Hoops believes basketball can change your life because it has changed ours. We think basketball and sports have serious power: they have the ability to transform you, shape you, and mold you into a better basketball player and person.

Our Mission is Simple: We think the world can be changed through the game of basketball. We want to question the status quo. We want to think differently. We want to consider the traditional ideas of how to approach the game of basketball and take the path less traveled.

We think that anyone who participates in sports has the incredible opportunity to grow in character, influence, and maturity in ways that will profoundly affect the rest of their life. Arete Hoops is about more than basketball, at the heart of our mission we are passionate about helping coaches and players grow in their:

1. Discipline

2. Commitment to Excellence

3. Leadership

4. Influence

We hope you will take this journey with us as we try to make a positive impact in the lives of people we encounter everyday.

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Secret 1: Commitment to Excellence

BIG IDEA

No one ever becomes truly GREAT until they commit to living by a standard of excellence every day.

All great shooters are faced with a choice. This choice confronts you everyday of your life. When you wake up in the morning it is there, when the weekend rolls around it is there, when you step into the gym it is there. On holidays, at school dances, in the Summer, in the offseason, during practice, it never goes away. The choice to commit to excellence is always staring you in the face. This choice never takes a day off and is never satisfied. You can't hide from it, and you can't kill it, you can't appease it. Always present, always watching, always asking.

There are two options and two options alone. The two paths are laid out before you, the choices are clear. You have a decision to make. But this decision must be made over and over again. Will you find yourself

wandering down the crowded path of mediocrity or **sprinting** on the path of excellence? Because those are your two choices. Some people just wander into whatever circumstance life throws

their way, while people passionately sprint after their dreams. Don't allow yourself to wander away from what you want most in your life. Make the decision now to pursue excellence no matter the cost.



Will you stop the construction of your game because you believe your efforts haven't made a difference, or will you continue to invest because you know that eventually hard work pays off?

The choice is yours and the time to get started is now. You don't have any more time to waste, the road to excellence is long and the journey is difficult, and its time to start walking.

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Building your Skyscraper

Excellence is a process, not an instant solution. It grows slowly through long hours of training, habit forming, and consistency. It needs to be fed, watered, and cultivated daily. No one has ever become a great shooter without a dogged commitment to becoming excellent each and every day. One of the great classic philosophers Aristotle once said this on the topic of excellence:

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

If we take Aristotle at his word, we don't act excellently because we are virtuous athletes, **rather we become excellent athletes as a result of acting rightly.**

Think about the construction of a skyscraper as a metaphor for how the idea of committing to excellence will play out in your life.

Skyscrapers are magnificent structures when we see them from the outside. Yet there is so much more to these buildings than what meets the eye. If we were to take a tour into the inner workings of each skyscraper we would begin to understand the incredible complexity that is required to make each building functional. Unless you have worked construction before, you would be confronted with a new reality about what it takes to build such a structure.

Hundreds of hours of work must be accomplished before any construction starts. The beginning of the project is usually dirty and exhausting work. You have to work with an architect, get building permits, find a location, hire contractors, and find investors all before you see any visible results of your efforts.



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Before you build the structure, you have to dig the foundation, connect the plumbing, and pour the concrete, obtain the building codes, order the materials, and draw up the building plans. Before there is any resemblance of a finished product, hundreds of people will have worked thousands of hours, yet you still can't see any resemblance of what looks like a skyscraper.

Especially at the beginning, this process is difficult, tiring, and time-consuming. It can be easy to get discouraged because you may not see the results of your hard work.

Yet, as time goes on, little by little, a structure starts to rise out of the mess and begins to look like a building. After months or even years of planning, construction, and hard work, you start to see the culmination of your efforts.



Basketball is no different. At times it might feel like your effort is getting you nowhere, and you can't see any visible progress, you can't see your skyscraper.

Have patience! Believe that every time you make an investment to become a better basketball player/shooter, that is an investment in your skyscraper, your finished product.

Here's the key though: making a commitment to be excellent is **never a one-time decision**. Over the course of time when you consistently choose excellence over mediocrity, you create habits that start to shape you into a virtuous person.

Excellence evolves from a difficult choice to live your life differently than your default mode of operation. Over time, the tendencies of laziness or mediocrity slowly dissipate and are replaced with virtuous habits as your shining skyscraper of excellence rises from the chaos.

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Choosing Excellence

Excellence is a decision that you have to make over and over again. When you want to become a great shooter you have to build your skyscraper from the ground up. You have to start at the ground level by constructing your foundation with a dedication to the fundamentals. As you progress you start adding more complex pieces to your shot development, including:

- **Timing**
- **Rhythm**
- **Shot selection**
- **Consistency**
- **Range**

These are some of the building blocks that contribute to making your skyscraper grow, but your skyscraper won't grow without a commitment to excellence. To clarify: **excellence is never a single choice, but a series of decisions that build upon each other to form habits.**

Ultimately, all you have to fall back on as a shooter are the habits that you develop in practice and training. You will experience great shooting nights and shooting droughts. You will have games where you are the hero and you will have games where you want to run away and hide.

Yet, the stabilizing force, the thing you can revert back to through all of these ups and downs is your habits. This is your bread and butter, the bedrock of your game. The foundation you return to again and again regardless of the circumstances around you. Remember, that each day is another opportunity to build up or tear down your skyscraper.

The way you approach practice, training, workouts, film study, and strength training is now guided by your commitment to excellence. Basketball gives you the opportunity each and every day to decide what kind of approach you are going to take and what kind of shooter you want to become.

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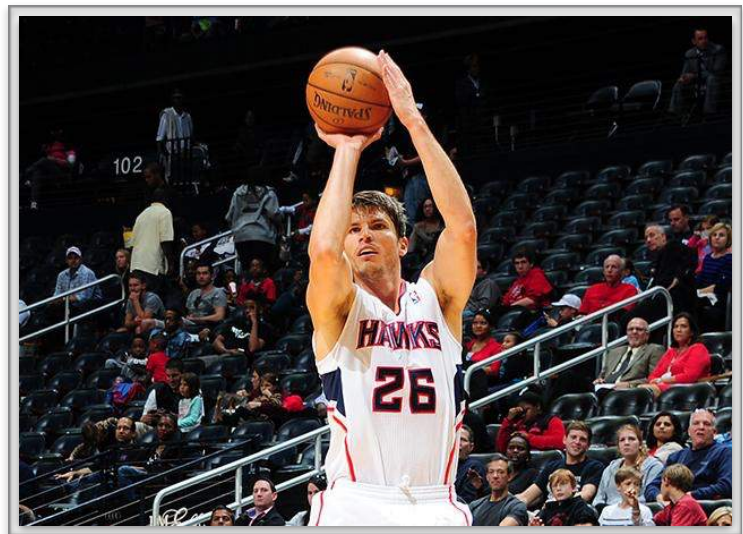
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A Case Study in Excellence: Kyle Korver

There are no shortcuts on the road to becoming a great shooter. As with anything else, mastering a skill takes time, hard work, and consistent effort. You have to make a decision about how good you want to be.

Ask yourself these questions: *Are you are willing to sacrifice to become an elite shooter? Am I making a choice today to strive towards excellence or accept mediocrity? What kind of basketball player do I want to become? How will you be remembered after you leave your high school, college, or professional team?*

Kyle Korver is one player that has consistently made this sacrifice throughout his career. In the first half of the 2014-2015 NBA season his team the Atlanta Hawks had the best record in the NBA and he was on pace to be the first player to ever shoot 50% from three, 50% from the field, and 90% from the free-throw line. He was on pace to set an historic precedent. The year before Korver set a record in the 2013-2014 season with 127 consecutive games with a three-pointer made. How did Kyle reach



such historic levels of performance so late in his career (in the 2014-15 season he was 33 years old)? In short, his commitment to excellence throughout the years has slowly built a magnificent skyscraper of shooting excellence. Here's how he did it.

Attention to Detail

Korver commitment to excellence is expressed through his attention to detail. He meticulously combs through every aspect of his shot to make sure that he is shooting the same exact shot each and every time. In an [interview](#) with Andrew Kulp he outlines how his pursuit of perfection has lead him to construct a 20-point shooting that he has in the back of him mind at all times. Korver had this to say:

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“As I’m shooting, I have this list in the back of my head, and I know I’m not doing one or two of them. Once I feel I get all 20 of them clicking, then I’m going to have a natural rhythm in my shot.”

- Kyle Korver

Kyle’s checklist covers every part of his shooting mechanics from his foundation, release, posture, feet, fingers, and feeling when he releases the ball. His attention to detail is exhausting. Check out Korver’s list below.

1. Wide stance.
2. Exaggerated legs.
3. Drop through heels.
4. Engage core.
5. Slight bend at waist.
6. Up strong.
7. Elbow straight.
8. One hand.
9. Fingers spread.
10. Slight pause.
11. Elbow up.
12. Land forward.
13. See the top of the rim.
14. Ball on fingertips.
15. Strong shot.
16. Shoulders forward and relaxed.

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17. Ball and arm risen straight.
18. Hold the follow through.
19. Keep the release point high.
20. On turns, square shoulders.

To be clear, just because you sacrifice to improve yourself as a basketball player **does not guarantee success**. There is no guarantee that assures success in life or the game the basketball. There are hundreds of factors outside your control that can interfere with your athletic success. Injuries, coaching decisions, school politics, other players, are a few examples of the factors outside of your control.

BUT the key is to concentrate **on the aspects of your game you are able to control**. Shooting is one of the skills in basketball that you have an immense amount of control over. Korver's shooting checklist is a prime example of this.

Instead of focusing on the things outside of his control, he makes sure to concentrate on those things he can control, including; **his effort, attitude, routine, technique, repetition, and habits**.

Gaining an Edge

You are faced with choices every day. You can choose to get in extra shooting sessions, you can choose to break down film of your shot, you can choose to work on your technique while teammates are practicing trick shots, you can choose to stay in the gym until you've made 10 consecutive jumpers. Hard work doesn't guarantee success, but it does increase your chance to be successful. Not everyone who works hard is successful, but no there are no successful people who haven't worked hard.

More importantly, one of the greatest sign of a commitment to excellence is the desire to find an edge over your competition. About two years ago, Korver was trying to find something that would rejuvenate his career and extend his days in the NBA. This search for an edge led him to discover the idea of ***misogi***.

When Korver started working with Harvard trained sports scientist Marcus Elliot (who runs the Peak Performance Project in Santa Barbara¹) he stumbled on the

¹ <http://www.p3.md>

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ancient Japanese idea of pushing your body beyond its perceived physical limits to the point of failure in order to expand your sense of what is possible. Partakers of this ancient ritual embark on insanely difficult physical adventures that push them beyond their perceived capabilities. Here's what Elliot had to say² about Korver's enthusiasm to push himself in unthinkable ways:

“He has a search for truth, fearlessness, honor. He's warrior-like and has an adventurous spirit. But especially because he's always trying to be better.”

- Marcus Elliot

Korver's first *Misogi* was a 25 mile stand-up paddleboard trip across the open ocean. Korver had never set foot on a paddleboard before. 9 hours later the group reached their destination bleeding, sunburnt, and narrowly escaping the shark infested waters³. After the thrill of his first *misogi* experience, Korver was eager for more, and Elliot wouldn't disappoint. After having gone through a few of these rituals, Korver had this to say about the unforeseen benefits *misogi* has had on his mindset during the season.

The *misogis* have turned into my grind activator, and when I need it, I can imagine myself stroking across the Pacific Ocean. Or picking and running that rock.

- Kyle Korver

² <http://www.outsideonline.com/fitness/mental-conditioning/The-One-Day-a-Year-Fitness-Plan-Misogi.html>

³ <http://www.outsideonline.com/fitness/mental-conditioning/The-One-Day-a-Year-Fitness-Plan-Misogi.html>

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Since his first *misogi* Korver became hooked on the idea, so before the start of the 2014 NBA season Elliot proposed their group of daredevils carry rocks underwater for *distance*. A 5k of lung-tearing, leg shredding hell awaited Korver and his band of comrades.

So one morning during the Summer of 2014, Korver and his group set out for a California beach at 5am to complete their task. After nearly five hours of descending to the depths of the ocean and lugging a 85lb rock along the ocean floor (for stints that lasted as long as their lungs and legs would permit) the group had finished their second *Misogi*. Korver found that going through that kind of sustained pain and discomfort eventually forces you to adopt an etherial sort of concentration and focus - otherworldly and divine. Korver has used these experiences to fuel him during the gruelling demands of an NBA season.

Korver's quest to give himself an edge took him to a place where many athletes are unwilling to go. A place of pain and discomfort, a place that begs for you to give in and take the easy path home. But a commitment to excellence is not the result of success, it sets the parameters of it. A commitment to excellence infiltrates every nook and cranny of your life and won't leave you alone. It precipitates your thoughts and actions and refuses to let you take shortcuts. It holds you to a higher standard, a modus operandi that may seems strange to outsiders. It questions your limitations and refuses to let you settle for '**just good enough**'.



This commitment is what sets Kyle apart from other players in the NBA. He was taken late in the second round of the NBA draft and wasn't expected to make much of a splash in the NBA. Korver admits that his physical gifts are somewhat limited compared to many of the other guys in the league.

"I've never been the fastest guy," and "I've never been the tallest guy. But I know how to keep going, to grind. It's probably not one of the sexier gifts you can get, but it works."

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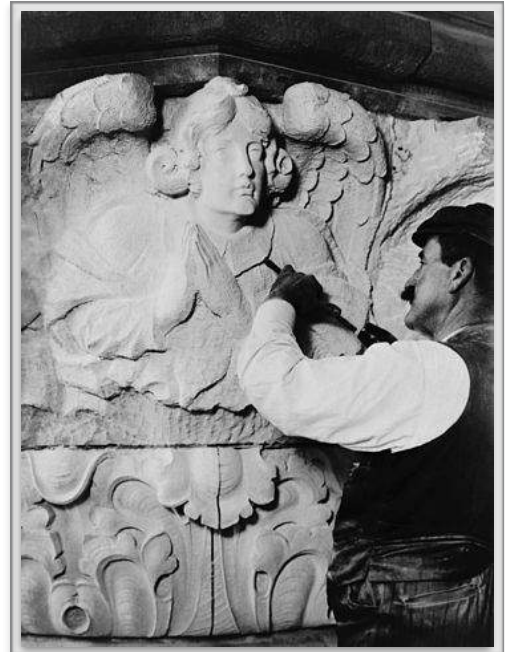
Korver is a great example of what can be accomplished with a firm commitment to excellence, but once you make that commitment your behavior will start to change. Let's look at some of the practical steps you can take as a shooter to actively live out this commitment.

Craft your Game

Great shooters work at perfecting their craft and those who practice habits of excellence give themselves a chance at greatness. Greatness in basketball is never achieved by choosing the best drills or most clever training regiment. Rather, you give yourself a chance at greatness by the habits you choose to cultivate.

There is an endless obsession – particularly in the world of sports - with using the **most innovative training** equipment or learning the flashiest drills **hoping these things will make you a great basketball player**. Of course there is amazing potential for creativity in basketball training, *BUT excellence is always a product of creating the right habits NOT a product of picking the right drills*. Here are some practical steps to forming excellent habits as a shooter.

1. Get in the habit of counting **makes** during your workouts not just '**number of shots**'. Anyone can get in the gym and 'get a bunch of shots up', but who cares how many shots you get up if they don't go in. Challenge yourself during a workout to make a certain number of the type of shots you get in the game (ex. if you take a lot of 3's don't leave until you've made 100 threes off the dribble and 100 stationary threes)
2. Take shots at **game-speed** and in **game situations**. Kyle Korver recently talked about this in an interview⁴ with USA today. He said that he rarely takes more than 150 shots at a time because "**You can't shoot 500 shots at the exact speed and exact intensity that you're going to in a game.**"



⁴ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nba/hawks/2015/02/02/kyle-korver-vs-perfection-atlanta-three-point-shot/22693565/>

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3. Make a **shooting checklist** and use it to analyse and perfect your shot. Korver made a 20 point list with all of the things that he knows he needs to do well in order to make shots. Your list might be different than his, and THATS OK. Take your list into the gym with you and review before and after a shooting workout. Have a coach or teammate take some film of you shooting the ball and watch the video with your checklist and see how you measure up. Also, notice that Korver said he could **feel** when one specific part of his shot is off. Work on recognizing the feeling when a part of your shot is off and then quickly correct it.
4. Avoid a **consumers mentality**. Consumers believe that external products will give them an advantage over their competition, don't fall for this trap. The problem with consumers is that as soon as a training technique, product, or service goes out of style, they immediately look to switch to the newest trend. **Great shooters are not made by machines, apps, or gadgets but by habits, hard work, and dedication.** Discipline your body and ingrain habits that teach you consistency and a pursuit of perfection.

“You can't shoot 500 shots at the exact speed and exact intensity you're going to in a game.”

- Kyle Korver

A craftsman (i.e. all great shooters) understands that his/her habits are of the highest priority in the pursuit of becoming excellent. A craftsman's greatest achievement lays in their ability to form virtuous habits that shape their entire person. In athletic terms, a virtuous athlete must train their bodies to repeatedly practice their skills and hone their talents. Craftsmen hold themselves to a higher standard because their craft has immense meaning in their life. **How important is becoming a great shooter to you?**

Below are a few shooting drills that will help you develop a commitment to excellence. They are challenging, but are effective at helping you develop virtuous habits that will carry over in to game situations.

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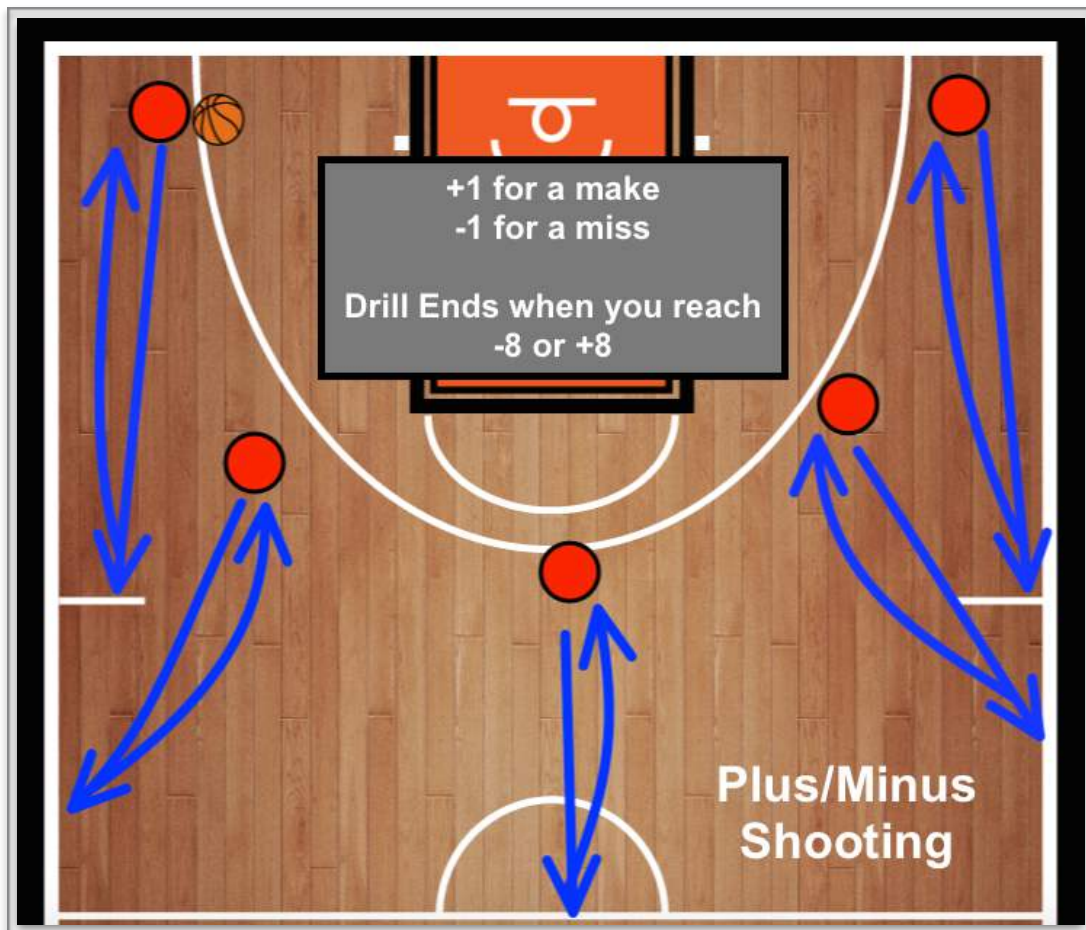
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Plus/Minus Shooting

Goal: Put pressure on yourself to make shots when you are fatigued

- Plus minus shooting assigns a point value for each shot that you make or miss. The traditional way to run these drills is you **get +1** for a make and **-1 for a miss**. You continue shooting until you reach a cumulative score of +8 or -8 at each spot (you can adjust this number depending on how hard you want to make the drill).
- If you want to increase the difficulty, you can penalise yourself -2 or -3 for a miss. Or, you can make it so the spot ends when you reach a high positive number (ex. +15) and a low negative number (ex. -4)
- This type of shooting can be used to practice any shot on the court and is a great way to ensure high levels of concentration and intensity during shooting.



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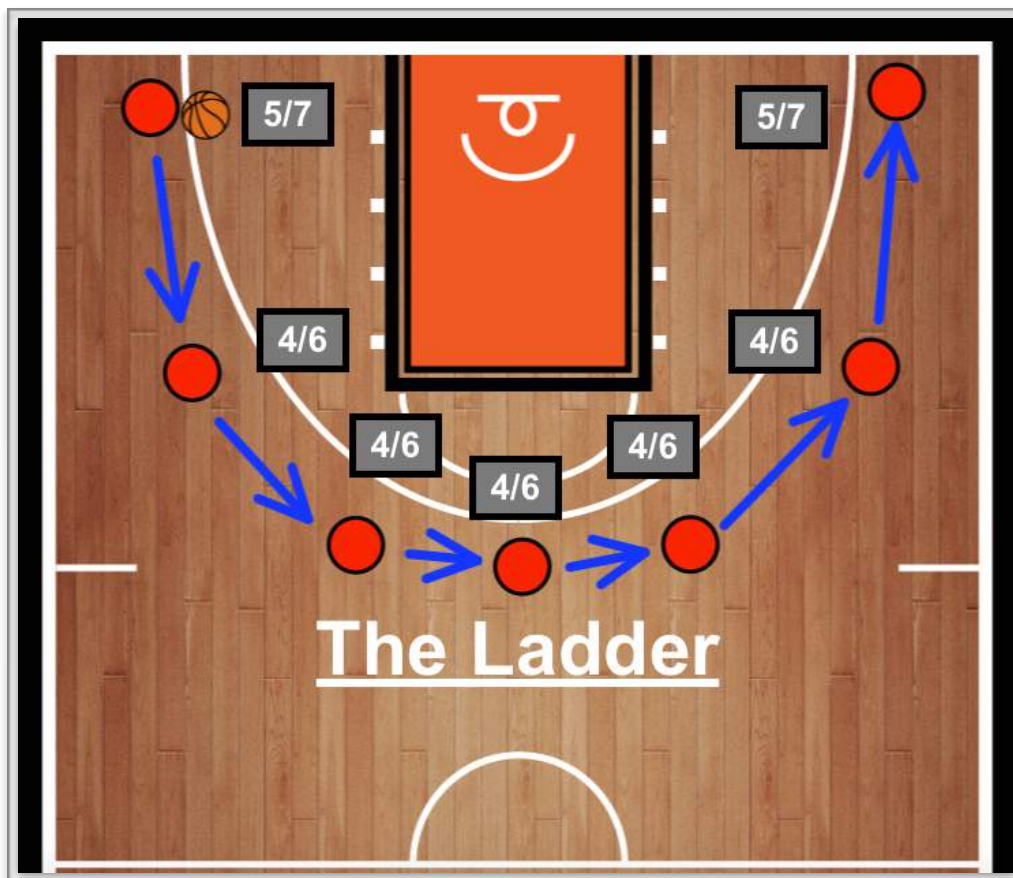
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The Ladder

Goal: Develop consistency as you progress through a series of shooting spots

- Start at in the corner and make **5/7 threes** (because they are closer shots and easier to make) in order to move onto the next spot. Repeat this process (only making **4/6 shots** at the other spots) until you've completed all 7 spots
- If you fail to make the required number of shots at a spot you have **must move back to the previous spot**
- If you want to increase the difficulty, you can penalise yourself if you have to move back to a previous spot by doing 15 pushups or running and touching the opposite baseline when you fail to make your goal.
- **Time yourself** and see how long it takes you to get through all 7 spots and then try to beat your time



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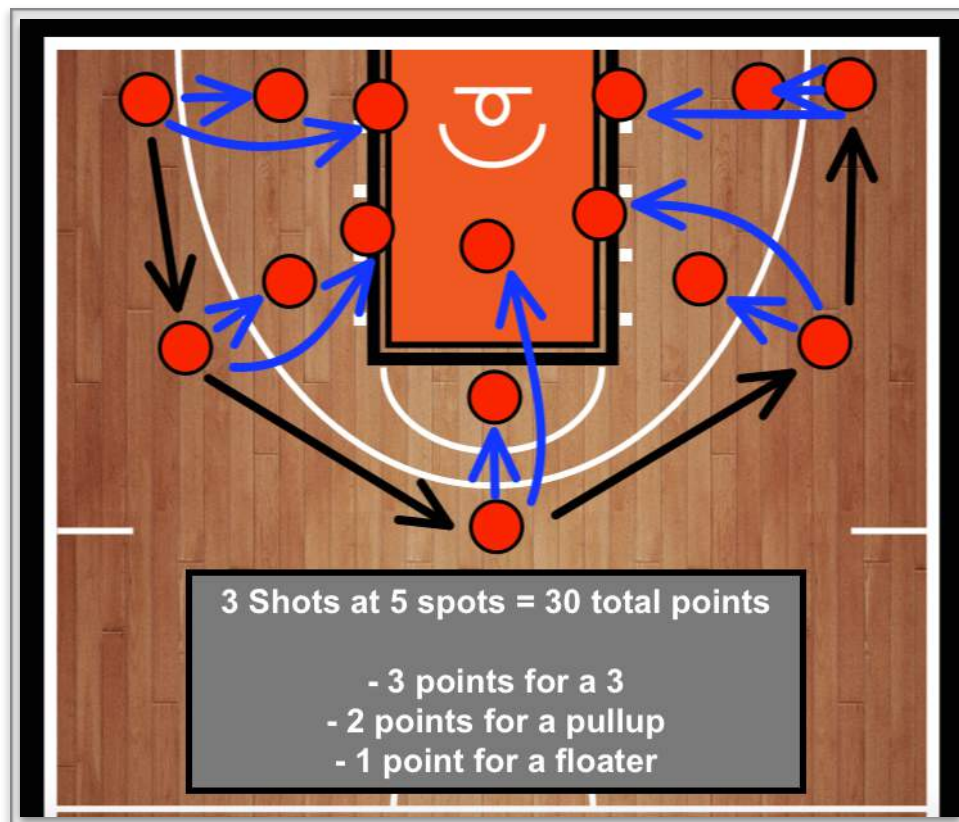
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30-point Frenzy

Goal: Score a perfect 30 points by making 15 consecutive shots

- Start at in the corner and take three consecutive shots. 1 three, 1 dribble pullup, and 1 floater. In between each shot **return to the perimeter** where you first took your three pointer. After three shots move to the next spot.
- Repeat this pattern at 5 spots around the perimeter and keep track of your score.
- A good idea is to switch up the direction of your pull-ups and your shooting hand for your floaters. Or you could go through one entire drill shooting all left-handed floaters then **switch** to your right hand the next time and see how your scores differ.
- Give yourself a baseline score (**22** is a challenging but not impossible number) and hold yourself accountable if you score below that number by doing pushups or a sprint at the conclusion of the drill



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The Order of Excellence

A few quick closing thoughts as we contemplate the importance of incorporating an unwavering commitment to excellence into our lives. First, a question: **do we act rightly because we are excellent or does excellence come as a result of acting rightly?**

This central question is important to consider as we tease out the implications on our lives while pursuing excellence. Athletes and coaches must wrestle with this question as they attempt to develop an inner scaffolding of motivation.

Following the order of excellence is crucial if we want to become virtuous - or in plain language, consistently excellent. Let's first consider what excellence is NOT before we explore the notion of how to achieve it. **Excellence is not** a buried treasure deep inside of us waiting to be unlocked by a **magic potion** or secret mechanism. Although excellence is available to those who act rightly, the attainment of it is not a treasure hunt with a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. There are no formulas, 5-step DIY manuals, or treasure maps that show us the road we must take.

Excellence is a laborious process; it is the summation of thousands of individual decisions that comprise a greater work of art. It is like a sculptor who starts chipping away at a piece of rock. The sculptor does not expect to find his piece of art to take shape after only a few swings of the chisel, **but understands that each cut into the rock brings him closer to a beautiful finished product**. The daily decisions we make to act in accordance with our ultimate goal are the **ONLY** things that matter if we desire to become excellent. Virtuous repetition is the path that leads to excellence; the decision is yours, the choice is up to you.

The Order of Excellence:

- 1. Commitment to Excellence**
- 2. Make Daily Decisions that Align with that Commitment**
- 3. Create Habits and Practices that build your Craft**
- 4. Repeat**

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Questions, people who are walking the path of excellence ask.

Q: What are my positive habits? What are my negative habits?
What do I need to change?

Q: What is my plan to put my commitment to excellence into practice that will help me become a great shooter?

Q: Am I willing to make the daily sacrifice it takes to become a great shooter?

Q: How can I gain a mental edge over my competition?

Q: What is my “grind activator”?

Key Points from this section:

- Excellence is a process that starts with a commitment
- Excellence is achieved as a result of our daily decisions
- Building your Skyscraper is a difficult process but over time you will start to see results
- Everyone wants to be a great shooter, but few players are willing to make the sacrifice and attention to detail it takes to become great

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Secret 2: Consistency

BIG IDEA

Consistency is the standard by which all great shooters live by. There is nothing development than learning to being consistent.

Consistency is the most valuable attribute any shooter can possess. It allows for a player to release the ball the same way each and every time they shoot. During thousands of hours of practice and millions of practice shots, great shooters develop habits that give them a consistent shooting motion each and every time.

I believe in teaching traditional shooting technique (think Steph Curry or Kyle Korver) because I think it is easiest way to develop consistent accuracy when shooting the basketball ([click here](#) to discover my specific views on shooting technique). However, we can not deny there are great shooters who do not have traditional technique. There are several great shooters in the NBA who don't have technically sound jump shots. Shawn Marion and Kevin Martin are two examples of players with proficient jump shots that have unorthodox shooting styles. Ultimately, consistency is more valuable than perfect shooting technique because consistency eliminates the extra variables that cause us to miss.

Consistency is ultimately more valuable than “perfect” shooting technique.

Why is Consistent Repetition so Important?

Think about what its like to shoot in game...shooters already have to deal with distracting variables that interrupt their timing, focus, and shooting rhythm. Fatigue, defensive pressure, and hostile crowds can play a role in causing a shooter to miss shots and lose their rhythm. But if a shooter also has to account for increased variability in their shooting motion, this adds another potential distraction to the mix.

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The fact is simple: **you will not consistently make shots if you shoot a different shot every time.** Consistent technique is far and away the most important part of developing an accurate shot. If you can shoot the same shot each and every time, you will dramatically increase your chances of consistently shooting a good percentage.

Think about it for a minute... If your shooting motion stays the same during every shot you eliminate the variables you have to correct. By committing to a particular shooting motion, you establish a **baseline of muscle memory** that is relatively easy to adjust when you start missing shots.



As you shoot more and more shots, you should find it easier to diagnose the reasons why you miss shots. All great shooters develop the ability to self-diagnose the issues with their technique when they start missing shots. The only way to do this successfully is to understand what your **"normal"** shot feels like. I can't stress this enough: once you observe your shot enough you will come to an understanding of what normal feels like, then when you miss it will be easy to correct. Once a shooter has a good grasp on this, they can identify the inconsistencies and quickly correct the problem by a simple adjustment in technique.

A Case Study in Consistency: Ray Allen

Ray Allen is one of the greatest examples of how developing a consistent release has helped him become one of the greatest three-point shooters in NBA history. With his **2973** made three pointers he leads the NBA all-time in three pointers made while shooting a **solid 40%** from behind the arc. In one recent interview when asked about his shooting routine, he responded.

"you see guys walk into the gym and kind of mess around and shoot, but they are never game shots. For me, I start with free throws to work on my technique, and I always know why I missed it: short, legs, if long I'm aiming it, I can always tell right away."

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Ray Allen is notorious for the consistency in his workouts and his dedication to his craft. Players and coaches throughout his career have raved about professionalism, work ethic, and consistency. Jim Calhoun (former legendary UCONN coach) who has coached hundreds of All-American players throughout his career said that, *"He's not only the best player I've ever coached, he's one of the best people I've ever been involved with."*

**"I always know why I missed it:
'short', 'legs', 'long', I can
always tell right away.
- Ray Allen**

Ray's pregame and post-practice shooting routines have become infamous in NBA circles because he goes through the same routine each and every time and his work ethic is tireless.

Both in practice and on game day, he has been known to show up hours before other teammates get to the arena and begin working diligently through his shooting routine. One NBA commentator recently commented after watching Ray's routine, that his routine was not filled with especially innovative or creative shooting drills, but the magic of his routine was found in the consistency in which he executed it. Allen goes through a series of shooting sets that mimic the type of shots he will get in the game. He methodically works through these various positions until he has put himself in almost every conceivable position on the court. Throughout his 19 year career he has developed his jump shot by repeating these routines.

Fine Tuning the Engine

In professional car racing, the difference between winning and losing a race can literally be a matter of millimetres. For weeks leading up to the race the crew will devote themselves to adjusting the car to the exact specifications they believe will all the car to perform at its optimum level. All relevant factors are taken into

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consideration: the type of race track, regulations, driving conditions, preferences of the driver, etc. These factors determine how the car is built but also the type of adjustments a pit crew can make during the actual race. If a driver feels like the car is handling to loose, the pit crew can make a series of small changes during a 10-20sec pit stop that can mean the difference between a first place finish and a fifteenth place finish. No pit crew is giving their driver a new engine, or changing the cars transmission during the race - if this were the case the driver would have no chance to win! Instead, they are making a series of fine tuning adjustments that allow their team to compete at an optimum level.



Shooting is no different than tuning a race car. In the racing world, if you have built a quality car that is primed to perform well on race day, then you'll only need to make minor adjustments if things start to go awry. Likewise, if your shooting is built on consistency and you've laid a solid foundation during practice, then you can easily make minor adjustments to your shooting mechanics if you start to miss shots.

Shooters make shots when they rely on the consistency they have developed in practice. If you find yourself having to make major changes to your shooting technique, that would be the equivalent of a pit crew deciding to replace a cars engine in the middle of a race. When you have to make major adjustments to your technique (especially if you're thinking about it during the middle of a game) then you haven't developed the consistency you need to become a great shooter. Until you develop this consistency, you have built a self-imposed ceiling on your potential as a shooter. Unlock your potential by developing the critical consistency that allows you to shoot the ball with deadly accuracy.

Making Adjustments

Great shooters know how to make smart adjustments. It is important to understand the difference between making a minor adjustment and completely overhauling your shot. Major adjustments could include:

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- **Learning to shoot with your dominant hand**
- **Correcting excessive shooting movement**
- **Restructuring your upper-body mechanics**
- **Changing your release point**

The best time to make structural improvements to your shooting motion is during the offseason when you have a chance to implement those changes with a ton of repetition. Making a significant change during the season often does more harm than good for a few reasons.

First, rarely will you have the time to incorporate those changes so your new shot feels natural. Second, you may begin to second guess your jump shot during competition which is detrimental to shooters. Third, your shooting confidence could decrease because you are not comfortable with your new technique.

If you have laid a proper foundation and have started to develop consistency in your workouts, then making small adjustments is the logical next step in your progression as a shooter. Some typical types of minor adjustments could include:

- **A slight repositioning of the ball in the shooting pocket**
- **Emphasis on focus and vision**
- **Minor follow-through correction**
- **Small change in balance**
- **Footwork adjustment to improve your rhythm**

The great shooters shoot the same shot; each and every time they release the ball. Their mechanics (even if not technically perfect) are consistent from their feet to their upper body. This kind of consistency allows great shooters to make minor adjustments to their shot if they feel something is off and making these kind of adjustments are critical to keeping a consistent shot. Great shooters know instinctively how to make small changes because of the consistency they have developed in practice.

Great shooters become incredibly accurate in large part because they become incredibly consistent. Shooting is nothing more than an infinite amount of small corrections and adjustments that consistently bring a shooter back to the

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fundamentals. Become a master at adjustments and you'll find yourself on the road to becoming a great shooter.

Key Points from this Section:

- Consistency is more important than perfect technique
- The more consistent you are the more confidence you will have to make shots in a game
- Learning to make minor adjustments critical
- The great shooters always know why they missed the shot
- There is no substitute for "consistent repetition"

Questions All Shooters Should Ask Themselves:

Q: Why specifically did I miss my last shot?

Q: What small adjustments can I make that will make me more consistent?

Q: Do I need to make major adjustments or minor adjustments to my technique?

Q: What tools (watching video, making a checklist, observing my shot) will help me develop a "normal feel" for my shot?

Q: Are my practice routines instilling consistency in my shot?

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Secret 3: Mindset

BIG IDEA

Basketball is 90% mental, and shooting is the most mentally demanding aspect in the game. Shooters need to work to develop a “shooters mindset” to become great.

Many people fail to develop the mental edge that it takes to become a great shooter. Making shots has as much to do with **mental toughness** and confidence as it does with practice and repetition: you need both to become a great shooter. Great shooters learn to master their mindset to give them the mental acuity they need to make shots in difficult circumstances. Shooters should be just as concerned with what is happening above their shoulders as what is happening below.

The famous baseball player Yogi Berra once said that *“baseball is 90 percent mental and the other half is physical.”* In essence Yogi understood that his mental approach to the game exceeded the importance on his physical preparation.

**Basketball is 90%
mental and the other
half is physical**

Neglecting the 90%

Think about all of the ways that players and coaches commit to preparing for a basketball game. You have practices, weight sessions, conditioning, scouting reports, stretching and recovery, etc etc. The list goes on and on, and for good reason. Any good coach or player knows that if your body is not prepared to play, then you’ll have little hope of executing at a level that you want during the course of a game.

Yet, if we believe that a large part of our success hinges on our ability to develop a winning mindset, why don’t we spend more time preparing ourselves mentally?

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I believe that the majority of players and coaches neglect the 90%. When it comes to shooting especially, your mindset is incredibly important. In fact, I believe that becoming a successful shooter is the single most mentally demanding aspect of becoming a great basketball player. Why? I think this is true for several different reasons.

First, **great shooters are forced to deal with failure.** The great Michael Jordan is quoted as saying:

“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 again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

- Michael Jordan

Wow. When we think about it from that perspective, we realise that shooters often miss their mark! If we look at a missed shot in a negative sense and believe that we have “failed”, then we are setting ourselves to repeat that action. Thinking negatively about a missing a shot becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy! When we become negative you lose confidence, when you lose confidence you don’t shoot with the same fluidity or rhythm, and when you lose your fluidity you start to tighten up then start missing shots you would normally make. A shooters mindset never counts missed shots as failures, but is able to look at them objectively without assigning a value judgment on the action. You can use a miss as motivation to believe the next shot will go in regardless of what happened in the past because you know you are a great shooter.

Second, **successful shooting is dependent on many external factors.** The ability to make shots is never completely dependent on the shooters ability to put the ball in the basket. There will be nights when the other team’s defense is engineered to prevent shooters from getting open looks. Great shooters also need teammates to set good screens and get them the ball in places where they can be

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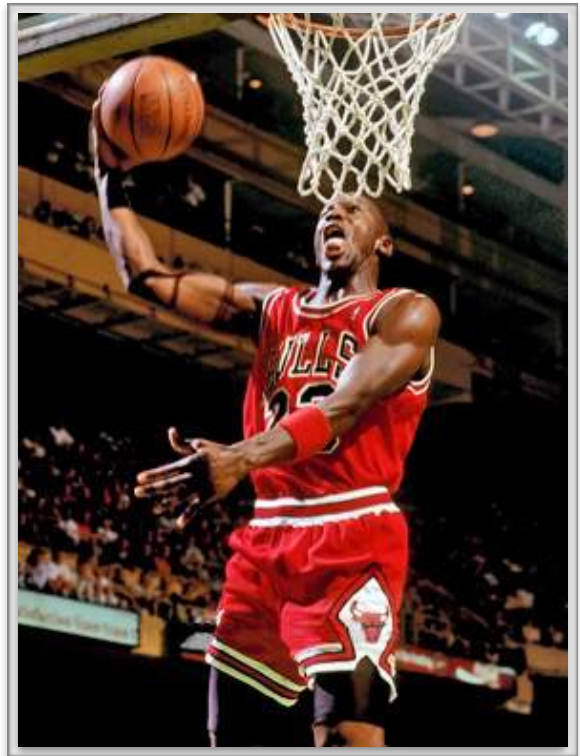
successful. Ultimately, great shooters will learn how to overcome these factors with a shooters mindset.

Third, **shooting is a highly specialized skill.** When it comes down to it, being a great shooter is much different than being a great rebounder, defender, or passer. Shooting is a highly specialized skill that requires a combination of great preparation, focused mindset, and attention to detail. Although a great rebounder is equally as valuable to a team, a player can become a great rebounder through effort, determination, and technique; this is not the case for great shooters. You can not simply “try harder” as a shooter and start making more shots.

What is a Shooters Mindset?

Shooting is a mindset, a particular headspace. This mindset comes more naturally to some players than others, but to become a great shooter you must embrace three vital components.

1. **Great shooters believe they are going to make every shot they take.** They know that their ability to shoot the ball is important to the team’s success and they understand their role on the team. They understand that if they don’t take their shots, they are hurting the team. The team needs them to take and make shots during the course of the game for the team to perform at a high level.
2. **Shooters have a confidence that borders on arrogance.** Depending on the natural personality of the shooter, this can manifest itself in different ways. For example we could think about the difference between two great NBA shooters, Kyle Korver and Reggie Miller. Both players were deadly shooters and both men possessed a great inner confidence in their ability to knock down shots. However, Reggie Miller had a much more outgoing personality that led him to talk trash as he was draining threes on his opponents (check out [this YouTube clip](#) when he made his famous choke sign to



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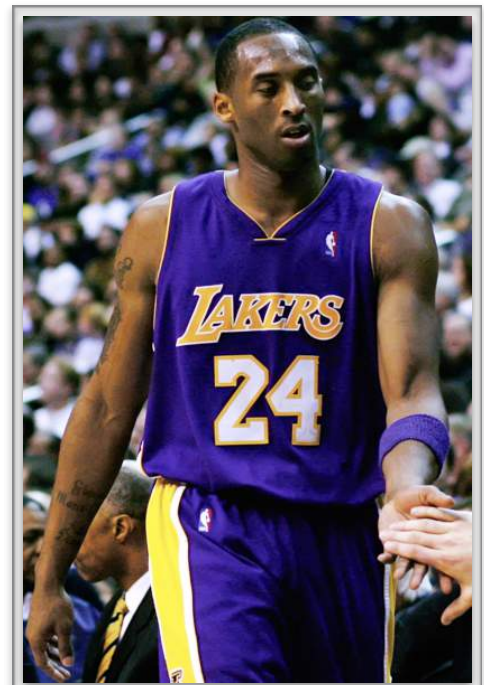
Spike Lee while battling the New York Knicks). In contrast, Kyle Korver rarely talks trash or makes a spectacle of his ability, but that that doesn't mean he has any less confidence than Reggie Miller. These attitudes come from knowing they have **paid the price to be great**. Hundreds of thousands of jump shots and countless hours in the gym give them confidence that no one has worked harder to perfect their craft. A confident shooter draws strength from the hours of practice and hundreds of shots they have made during games.

3. **Shooters forget their misses but always remember their makes.** When you enter a shooting slump or start missing shots during the course of a game it becomes easy to lose your confidence as a shooter. You begin to dwell on the shots you've missed and can become hesitant to take the next shot with confidence. As you begin to mature as a shooter, you will develop an unshakeable mindset that helps you stay emotionally consistent through a game.
4. **Shooters are never afraid of the next shot.** Great shooters learn to shoot with confidence despite the number of shots they have missed. They don't allow fear of missing a shot control their confidence and belief that the next shot is going in.

A Case Study in Shooting Mindset: Kobe Bryant

In my experience some players are more naturally inclined to adopt a shooters mindset than others. Certain players are confident and self-assured while other players have to develop this confidence as they grow, mature, and work on their game. I believe that regardless of your natural inclination, if you put in the hard work you have the capacity to believe in your abilities as a basketball player. Some of the greatest shooters ever to play the game – ex. Reggie Miller, Kobe Bryant - were also some of the most confident players.

Bryant in particular, embodies the kind of confidence that you need when you want to become a great shooter. He has a special mindset when it comes to shooting the basketball. Bryant's ability to block out the negative and focus on the next shot is



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special. This can be a difficult exercise because many of us are hardwired to think more about our mistakes than our successes. Kobe Bryant is someone who embodies this type of mindset which was on full display when Deron Williams recently talked about how he became hesitant to continue shooting after he started the game 0-9 from the field. This is how Kobe responded:

“I’d rather go 0-30 before I would go 0-9. 0-9 means you beat yourself, you psyched yourself out of the game... the only reason is because you’ve just now lost confidence in yourself.”

- Kobe Bryant

Admittedly, Kobe’s shot selection is not always the greatest, and I’m not suggesting that players should shoot 30 times when their having an off night, but the philosophy of this mindset rings true for great shooters. Whether you are 0-5 or 10-10, great shooters should trust in their training and abilities to believe that no matter what has happened they will not become psyched out of the game.

How to develop a Shooter’s Mindset

Here are a few ways I have found that help give me that mental edge over my opponents and helped develop a “*shooter’s mindset*”.

- **Challenge yourself to accomplish difficult tasks and don’t stop until you finish (see specific drills below).** For example I could walk into the gym with the goal of making 100 three-point shots or I could challenge myself to make 10 out of 13 shots behind the three at 10 spots, and each time I fail to make the goal I force myself to do 20 pushups. The difference is that the second drill puts pressure on you and forces you to raise your level of focus and concentration.
- **Give yourself positive reinforcement.** Our tendency is to remember our mistakes and forget our triumphs, but shooters should dwell on their successes and dismiss their failures. One exercise to boost your confidence (especially

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before a game) is to watch a clip-tape full of yourself making shots. Ask your coach or manager to help you make a highlight film of your made buckets. This visual reinforcement will fill your mind with positive images and remind you of what you are capable of.

- **Watch video clips of other great shooters.** We can learn a lot by watching great shooters and how they approach the game. Watch a full game or highlight clips of your favourite shooter and see how they approach the game. Pay attention to their technique, demeanour, and reactions to both misses and makes.
- **Create a “mindset” checklist (see template below).** Write down your own mindset checklist with reminders of the things that you need to focus on when it comes to shooting the ball. Review this checklist before practices and games and start to engrain these principles into your psyche.

Shooting Drills to Develop a “Shooters Mindset”

When most players walk into a gym to get shots up, rarely do they consider what types of drills might help them develop a shooters mindset. Developing a shooters mindset means developing mental toughness and fortitude by forcing yourself to attain a high standard of performance throughout your workout. This is a difficult task because it’s much easier practice your shooting without forcing yourself to be accountable to a certain standard. Below are a few drills that you can incorporate into your next workout to help develop your shooters mindset.

Free Throw Perfection

Goal: Increase your concentration with free-throws by turning it into a contest

- Play against a teammate or an imaginary player (maybe your favourite NBA star) in a race to 10 points. Depending on your level of skill, assign a point value for every shot that you take. For example, a **swish is worth 1 point**, a miss gives your **opponent 2 points**, and nobody gets a point if you make the shot but it hits the rim.
- As you improve, increase the standard of difficulty; a **swish is worth 1/2 point**, a **miss** gives your **opponent 3 points**, and a make that hits the rim gives **your opponent 1 point**.

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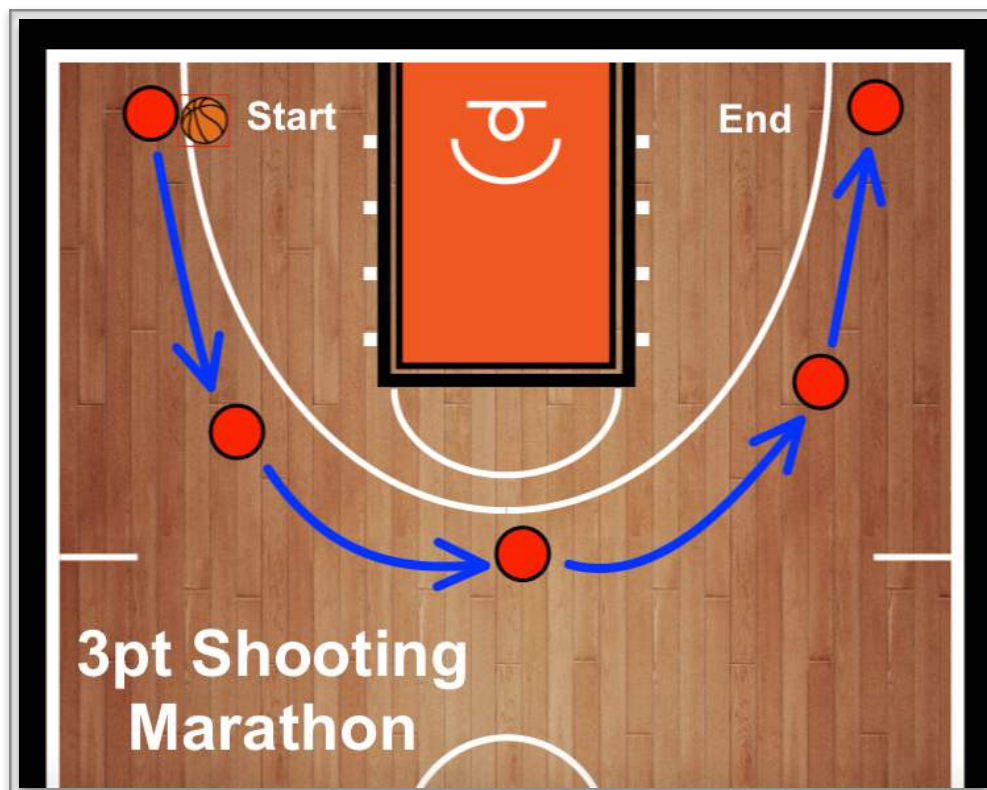
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- As you can see when you only get credit for a swished shot, you have to increase your concentration and focus!

Three-Point Marathon

Goal: Train yourself to never miss two shots in a row.

- Start shooting in the corner and continue shooting at the same spot until you miss two shots in a row. Once you miss two in a row move to the next spot and continue the process until you've finished all 5 spots
- Count 1 point for every shot you take (both makes and misses) and see how many points you end up with at the end of the drill
- A good score is above 50, a great score is 75-100, and elite shooters will make 100-200 points in a single round (I recently set a personal record of 215 points!).
- You can use this drill to practice both 3pt and 2pt shots
- This is an awesome drill because each time you miss a shot there is a huge amount of pressure to sink the next one.



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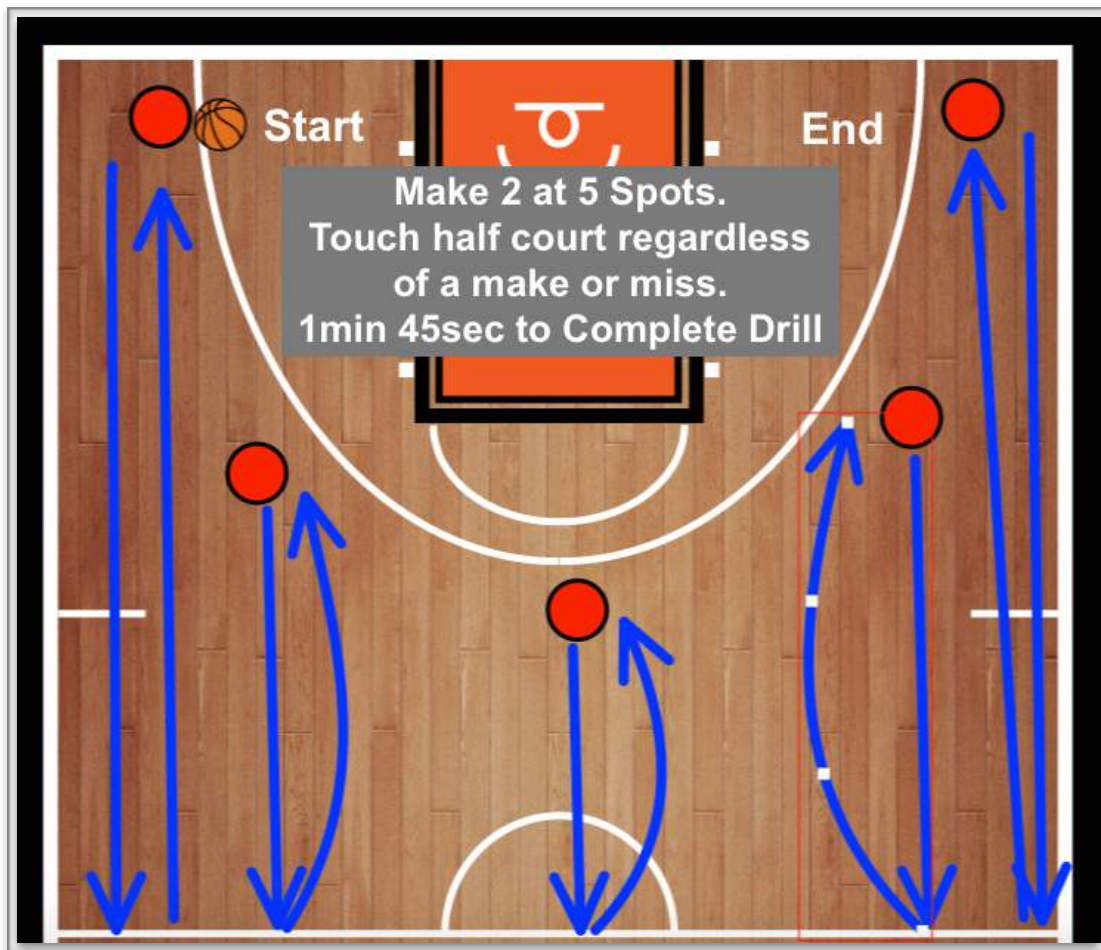
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The Crucible

Goal: Beat the clock and force yourself to make shots when you're fatigued

- Make 2 shots at 5 spots in 1min and 45sec
- Between each shot you have to run and touch half-court
- Once you've made 2 shots in a spot you move to the next spot
- A great drill to help you learn how to make shots when you're tired
- Shooters have to be mentally tough when they are fatigued



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Shooter Mindset Checklist

<u>Confidence</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am going to shoot every shot with great confidence - My confidence comes from knowing I have put forth the effort in training and practice - Confidence is going to be my dominant emotion regardless of circumstance
<u>Mindset</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am entering this game with a shooter's mindset - My mindset as a shooter allows me to have a shooters arrogance
<u>Positivity</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regardless of how many shots I miss I am going to remain positive and not get down on myself - Positivity will let me move on to the next play - Negativity will not dominate me
<u>Belief</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have a belief that I am going to make every shot - I have made 1000's of shots in practice and that is why I will be successful on the court - I believe I am a Great Shooter and will help my team through my shooting ability
<u>Trust</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I will trust my training and my technique - I will trust in my teammates and my ability to make shots - I will trust that my hardwork is going to pay off

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Key Points from this Section:

- Great shooters understand the importance of developing a shooters mindset
- Shooters know how to deal with missing shots by always believing the next one is going in
- Shooters use practice to develop their mental toughness
- Focus and concentration are a shooters greatest weapons

Questions to develop a Shooter's Mindset:

- Q: Did I train the mental aspect of my shooting this week?
- Q: What can I do to make myself more mentally tough?
- Q: How am I going to respond if I miss a few shots in a row?
- Q: Am I neglecting the 90%???

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Secret 4: Rhythm

BIG IDEA

Rhythm is one of the most elusive yet important aspects of becoming a great shooter. When you find your rhythm you will find your Shot.

Defining Rhythm

The word Rhythm can be confusing. In my 10 years as a high school, collegiate, and professional basketball player I have heard the word rhythm used thousands of times by coaches in various contexts. When I started my European career in the Spanish second division, I quickly learned the Spanish translation for "rhythm" because my coach would yell out "*ritmo, ritmo, ritmo!*" on nearly every offensive possession.

Rhythm can be used in general terms such as, "**our team never got into a rhythm tonight**" or it can be specifically like, "*our defense never allowed their best player to get into a rhythm* because we trapped all their ball-screens." Regardless of the context, rhythm is without a doubt one of the most crucial elements on both a personal and team level.

For shooters, **rhythm is everything**. If we assume that you work hard to consistently shoot the same shot each and every time; then why are there times when your shot feels so different some days compared to others. The answer is simple: **you've lost your rhythm**.

Other words associated with rhythm include: groove, flow, pace, pattern, and stroke. As shooters we know the feeling when we are in the zone and every shot we take feels amazing coming off our hand. The goal is to figure out how to get ourselves in this zone more frequently. I think the musical definition can help set a framework to achieve our goal.

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The musical definition for Rhythm is this:

The systematic arrangement of musical sounds, principally according to duration and periodical stress.

When translated into basketball terms, I think we can learn a lot from this definition of rhythm. Put simply, as shooters all we are trying to do is arrange our system of shooting movements according to the duration and periodical stresses of a basketball game. If we can figure out how to tailor our practice and training habits to maximise our in-game rhythm, we will be able to find that exclusive shooting zone more frequently. Again, according to the definition here is what we need to figure out how to do:

Arrange our system of shooting movements to align with the duration and stresses of a basketball game.

Specifically, I think we can do this in two specific ways: first, build our rhythm from the **ground-up** and second we need to understand the **Rhythm Equation**.

Steph Curry: Building from the Ground-Up

All great shooters have great rhythm. Perhaps the most stunning modern example of great shooting rhythm is Steph Curry. He is a great case study for the importance of rhythm when shooting the basketball. Before the 2015 NBA All-Star game he talked with Huffington Post about the importance of rhythm even within the strange environment of a shooting competition.



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It's a different style, yeah. I'll practice it a couple times to get ready, but for the most part, once you get a rhythm it doesn't matter where the ball is coming from, as long as you get to your shot pocket and make it work.⁵

The rhythm for Steph Curry's jumper starts with his feet and moves to his upper body in one seamless motion. The foundation for his shot starts when his feet act as a springboard for the rest of his shot. The energy that he generates from his feet – Steph uses both a two-footed and 1-2 foundation – allows him to generate enough power to get his shot off against more athletic defenders.

He always quickly drives his feet into the floor before rising up to release the ball. He knows one of the most important aspects of gaining rhythm in your shot is to start from the ground up. Your lower body generates the power and momentum that feed into the top of your shot.

Whether he is shooting off the dribble or from a standing position, the foundation of Curry's shot gives him the rhythm and timing to be a great shooter. His feet starts the momentum and he finishes his shot with a high release and a quick flick of the wrist. These aspects give him the ability to make shots from anywhere on the floor. Curry's ability to set his feet quickly makes it so that he rarely does he take shots where he is out of rhythm.

Check out [these shooting highlights](#) from Curry and notice a few specific things regarding the incredible rhythm he generates in his shot.

- He quick knee bend generates “**power**” and “**pop**” that gives him a quick release
- He gets his **feet down quickly** which allows him to start his shooting motion
- He is always ready to shoot, off the catch or dribble
- His upper body motion looks effortless because of the **momentum generated by his lower body**
- He is always **searching** for space to shoot, and thus is never surprised by a shot

When Curry was asked how he has developed the ability to shoot both off the dribble and off the catch, he credited his confidence that comes from his preparation, his response:

⁵ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/05/stephen-curry-golden-state_n_6623606.html

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“Just confidence and how I practice. The shots I take in the game are exactly how I practice so you can rely on muscle memory and repetition and rhythm.”

The Rhythm Equation: With Spurs Shooting Coach Chip Engelland

Chip Engelland has become known as one of the premier shooting coaches in the NBA today. In his college days he played four years at Duke University and then went on to play 10 years as a professional overseas in the Philippines where he became known for his legendary shooting ability. After his playing career finished he went on to work in the NBA, and has since helped countless players including: Grant Hill, Carmelo Anthony, Tony Parker, and Kawhi Leonard improve their shooting technique and rhythm⁶.

I love Engelland’s shooting philosophy because he emphasises many of the things I personally think are important when it comes to shooting the basketball. After studying how Engelland teaches his players I noticed the 1 thing he emphasises above all else, is learning to build a **shooting rhythm**. Regardless of whether you are a big man who shoots from 15ft and in, or a guard who shoots from long range, it is nearly impossible to make shots if you can’t find your shooting rhythm.

There are three crucial elements that go into finding great shooting rhythm:

- (1) Practicing game specific shots with game-like intensity**
- (2) Developing your technique**
- (3) Learning to shoot your shot with confidence during the course of a game.**

Technique + Practice + Your Shot = Rhythm

⁶ <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jun/12/sports/la-sp-0613-chip-engelland-spurs-20130613>

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Let's break down each part of this equation and see how it can help give you great shooting rhythm.

Technique

The type of shots you can effectively make are directly determined by the limits of your technique. Great rhythm shooters are incredibly comfortable with their technique. For example, when asked about the difference between working with big men verses guards, Engelland used Elton Brand as a **case study**.

Elton Brand Case Study

He said that Brand shoots with a technique where he releases the ball over his head, but has a "*limited connection with his legs*"⁷. This means that if Brand wanted to shoot threes that he would have to reconstruct his shot, but that's not Brand's game: he primarily shoots from 18ft and in so his technique serves him well from that distance.

Elton Brand's technique would never work for Steph Curry, because Curry recruits the power needed for launching long-distance bombs from his quick knee bend. This is not to say that everyone who shoots threes has to shoot like Steph Curry: Engelland himself is quoted as saying that the most important thing is making shots. If a guys can "*do 40% from the 3-point line, 45-46% from the field, and 80% from the free throw line*"⁸ then they don't mess with his shot.

That being said, if you are going to shoot from long range the chain reaction that happens in the mechanics of your shot is as follows:

1. **Leg Drive** - power for the shot is generated from the ground-up (this picture gives you a good idea of the amount of knee bend you want)



⁷ http://ready4thegame.blogspot.com.es/2009_12_01_archive.html

⁸ http://ready4thegame.blogspot.com.es/2009_12_01_archive.html

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2. **Upper Body** - the path of the ball from the catch to the release point is the same on every shot (every person's release point will be a little bit different, but this is a good picture of a "classic" shot - ball in-front of the right eye, away from your face)



3. **Ball Release** - everyone has a slightly different release, but all accurate long range shooters release the ball the same way every single time.



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Building an accurate shot starts with your technique. For most guys working on your technique just means making small adjustments that will improve your percentages. Once your technique improves, you will start to see the ball go through the hoops, and the more you see the ball go through the hoop the more confidence you will have in your shot.



Practice

Once you iron out your technique, you have to train yourself to stay consistent with that technique every time you shoot the ball. The more reps you get up the more your confidence will grow and with more confidence comes better rhythm.

Coming out of college Kawhi Leonard never shot better than 45% at San Diego State. After working with Engelland, Leonard propelled himself to become the second most efficient shooter on the team at **nearly 54%** from the field and **39% from the three-point line** as of the 2013 NBA Playoffs.

Engelland equates his coaching to writing a script:

“I’m helping, but the work that they put in and the confidence they have behind it...you can go one page of the script a day or you can move quickly.”

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Kawhi and any other player that wants to become a great shooter must ask themselves these 5 questions if they want to see consistent improvement in their ability to make shots:

- 1. How many makes do I need to shoot per day to drastically improve my percentages?**
- 2. What kind of shots do I need to shoot in practice so I am prepared for the game?**
- 3. How many shots can I make at game speed before I see a drop off in intensity?**
- 4. How badly do I want to improve my jumpshot?**
- 5. Am I willing to listen to instruction and accept correction?**

Finding Your Shot

The last part of the equation is learning to find and take your shot with confidence. The great shooters learn how to play to their strengths and minimise their weaknesses. The players that learn this lesson will inevitably shoot a higher percentage, while the players that don't will typically shoot below 45% from the field. A huge part of becoming an efficient shooter is about finding and taking your shots with the confidence that comes from being comfortable at your spots on the floor.

A few great shooters that come to mind when we think about the word efficiency are: Kyle Korver, Ray Allen, Al Horford, Wesley Matthews and Danny Green.

These guys all have different skill sets, but within the context of their teams they have found a niche because they play to their strengths. Their teammates know



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what kind of shots they like and they find the spots where they can be successful.

Knowing what kind of shots you need to take to be successful comes from the confidence and technique you develop in practice. Once you have gained this knowledge and understanding in practice, once you step on the court during a game it is easy to step up and make your shots. Here are a few things to consider when thinking about finding your shot.

- 1. What kind of shots do I need to take that will help my team?**
- 2. What spots on the court should I always be ready to shoot?**
- 3. What type of shots can I practice so that I am ready to shoot with 100% confidence in the game?**
- 4. How does my technique help me decide what type of shots I need to take in the game?**
- 5. What shots will hurt my team if I don't shoot them?**

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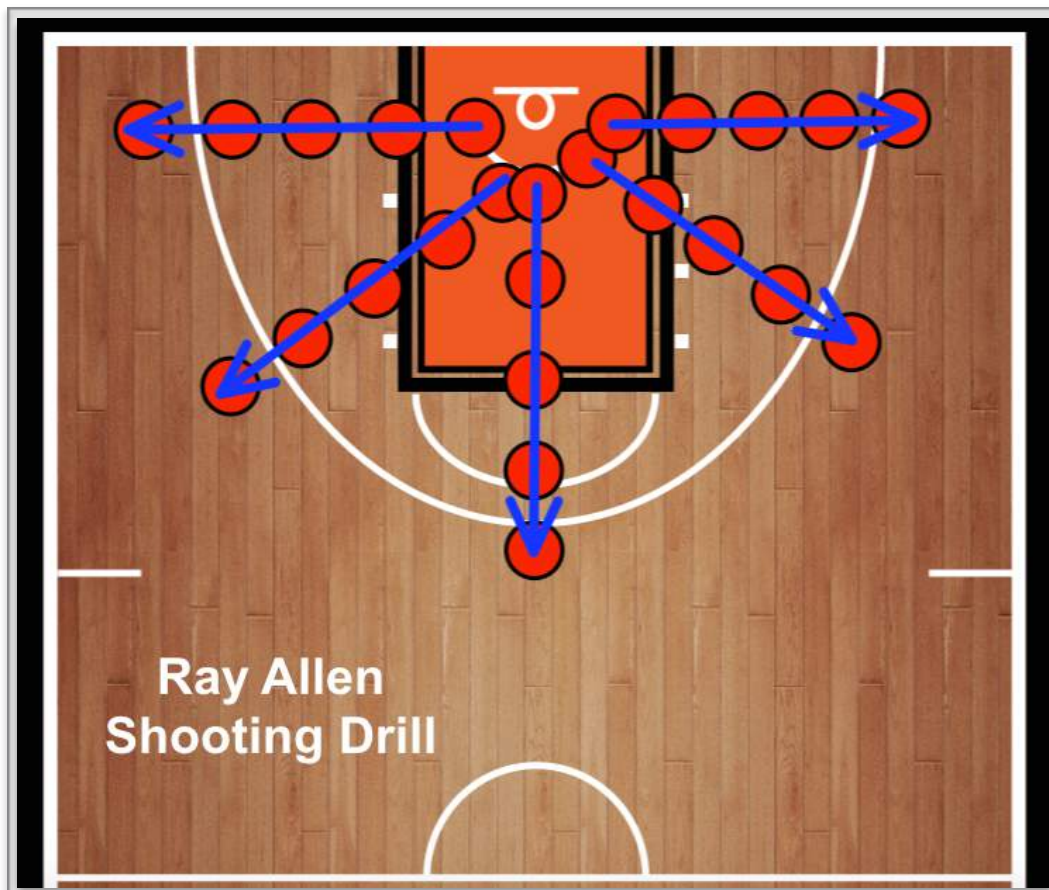
Drills to Help Develop Rhythm

Remember that the equation for great shooting rhythm is **technique + practice + taking your shot**. Although the technique part of the equation can be difficult to tweak without someone looking at your shot live, here are some drills I've used throughout my career to help me develop habits that create a good rhythm.

Ray-Allen Shooting

Goal: To complete as many "lines" as possible in 3 minutes

- 1 line consists of making 5 consecutive shots, starting under the rim. If you miss a shot before you make 5 in a row you go back to the first spot and start over again
- You have 3 minutes to complete as many lines as possible
- This can be done with a rebounder or on your own
- It is a great way to build rhythm by progressively making shots at varying distances



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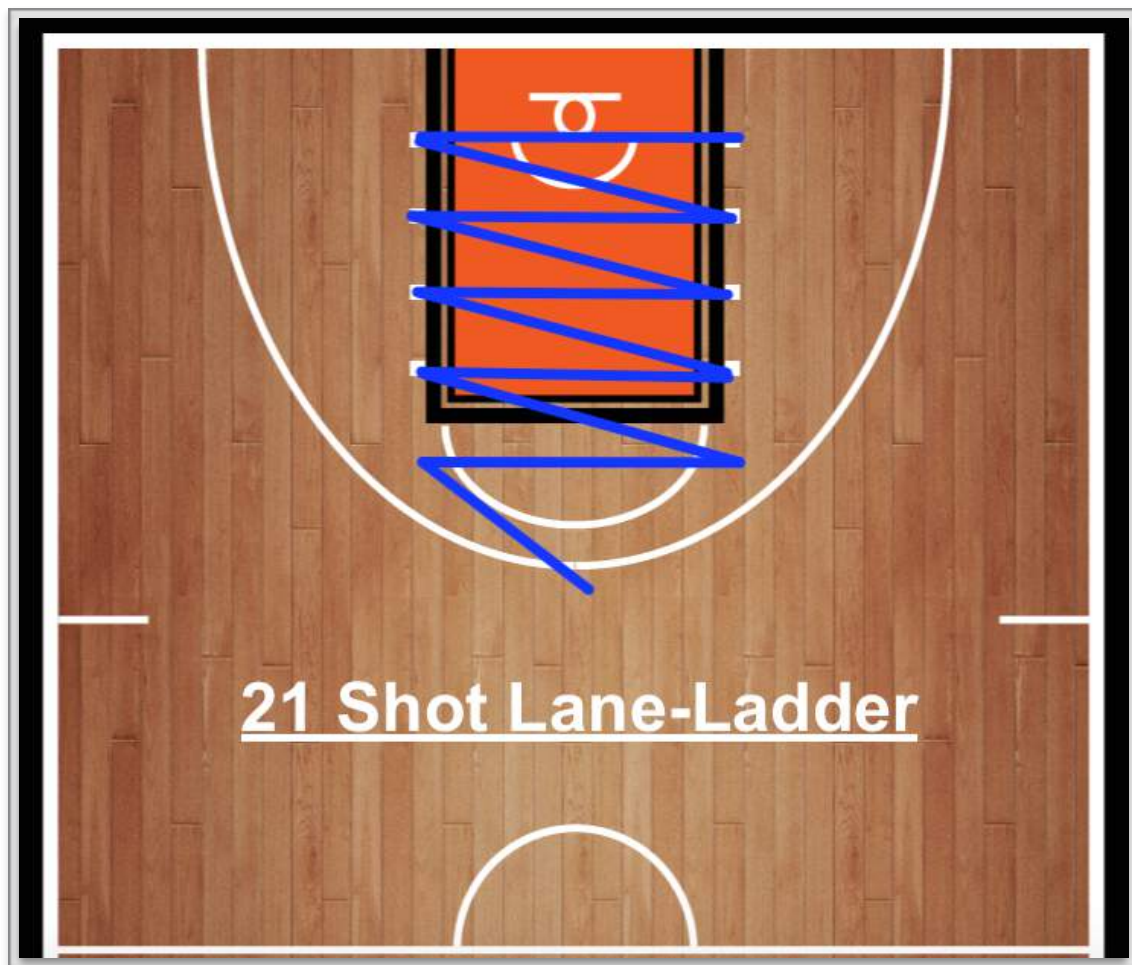
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21 Shot Lane-Ladder

Goal: To make as many shots as possible out of 21 attempts

- Start on the block and make a criss-cross pattern working your way up the lane using the blocks, hash-marks, and elbows as guides. Finish with a 3 at the top of the key and then work your way back down the lane
- There is no time limit, but you should take a total of 21 shots
- This can be done with a rebounder or on your own
- If you want to increase the difficulty, just extend your range beyond the lane lines, but still use the marks as guides
- Great for getting your rhythm from different distances



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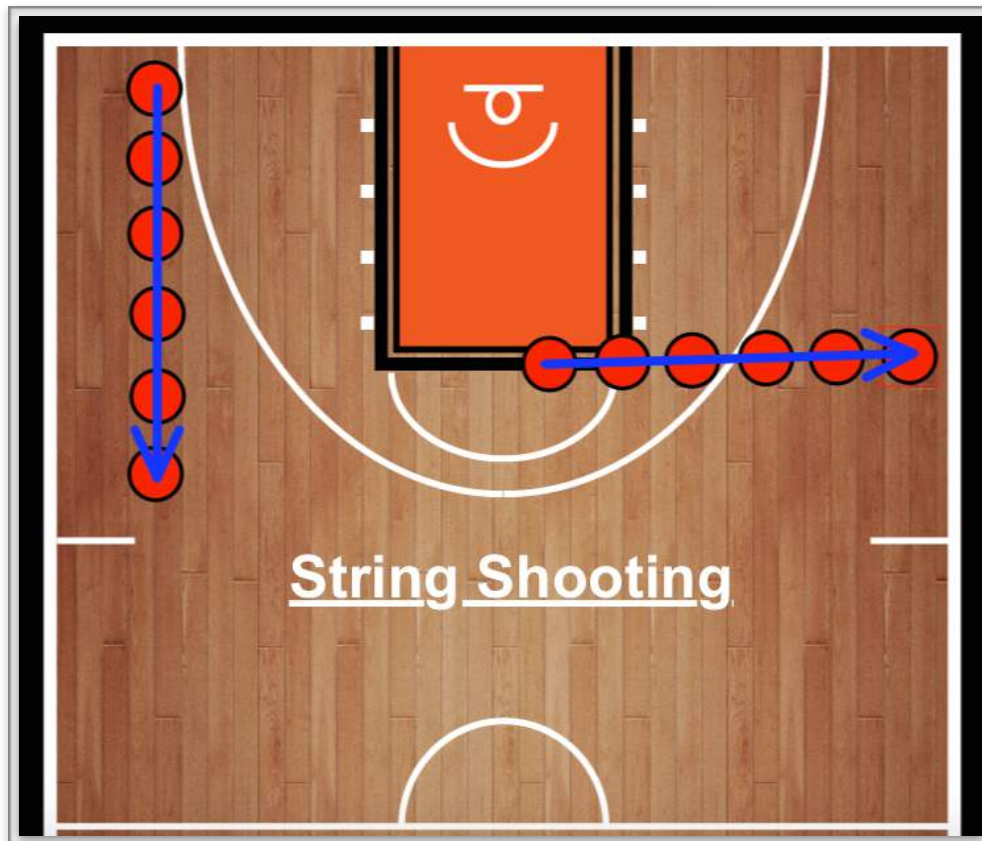
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String Drill

Goal: To complete a string of 6 made shots without missing 2 in a row

- A string can start anywhere on the court from any angle, the graphic below just represents two examples. The only regulation is to make sure you are moving further away from the rim on each consecutive shot (so that each shot becomes harder)
- Once you start a string, move to the next spot after a make, if you miss you shoot the same shot again. The standard is 2 misses then you're out (but you can adjust depending on skill level).
- The type of shots you shoot is up to you. I've done the drill with set shots, one-dribble escape shots, two-step shots, etc.
- Great drill for increasing your range and finding a rhythm where you have to string together a bunch of makes in a row.



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Key Points from this Section

- Rhythm starts from the ground up
- The Rhythm equation is technique + practice + your shot
- Preparing to take your shot in a game greatly improves rhythm
- Shooting your shots at game speed in practice gives you the confidence you need in a game

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Secret 5: Preparation

I love this quote from Michelangelo.

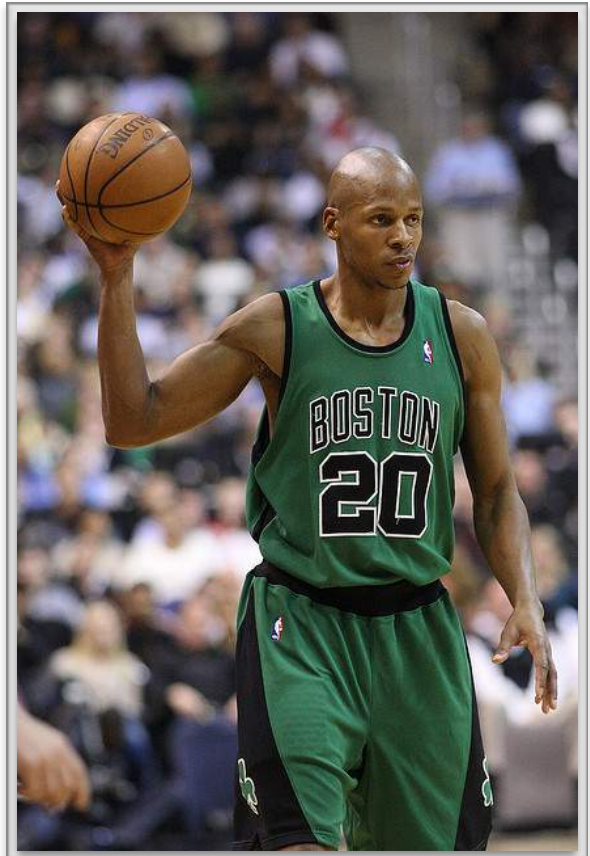
“If the people knew how hard I had to work to gain my mastery, it wouldn’t seem wonderful at all.”

We live in a culture that saturates our minds with images and lifestyles of the rich and famous. These realities can cause us to envy what the most famous in our culture have achieved. The truth of the matter is that if we knew what those people had sacrificed to get to that point, many of us would be unwilling to walk a similar path.

Talent, undoubtedly plays a role in the level of success we achieve, but the question is not; what do I need to do to become rich and famous? No the question should be: Do my habits of preparation allow to to maximise the talent I’ve been given?

Ray Allen recently alluded to this reality of how the majority of athletes think about their skills in relation to others, he said:

***“I've argued this with a lot of people in my life,” Allen said. “When people say God blessed me with a beautiful jump shot, it really ticks me off. I tell those people, ‘Don't undermine the work I've put in every day.’ Not some days. Every day. Ask anyone who has been on a team with me who shoots the most. Go back to Seattle and Milwaukee, and ask them. The answer is me -- not because it's a competition but because that's how I prepare.*”**



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So often we get caught in the trap of comparing ourselves to others. This comparison trap ultimately doesn't help anybody and it certainly won't help you get where you want to go.

We need to change our focus from what others have, to what can I do with what I've been given. Most of us have the temptation to focus on the things that we can't control, when we should be putting 100% of our energy into the things we can control. The most simple, yet effective tool that you have complete control over, is how **you choose to prepare**.

Preparation Wins Championships

We are going to step away from the basketball court for a minute and onto the football field to consider the the two teams that faced off in the 2015 Super Bowl. The New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks are both incredible examples of how preparation wins championships.

Two stories of extraordinary preparation from two of the games greatest coaches (Bill Belichick and Pete Carroll) made the difference in two of the biggest games of the year for their teams. These two stories were reminders about how obsessive preparation can make the difference in hyper competitive contests. After hearing these stories, I can confidently say that neither team, the Patriots nor the Seahawks would have accomplished what they did this season if it wasn't for the attention to detail exhibited by their coaches on the two most crucial plays of their respective seasons.

Seahawks and the Fake Field Goal

In the Seahawks conference championship game, they were struggling against a visiting Packers squad. Down 16-0 with 5 minutes left in the third quarter they executed a fake field goal that changed the momentum of



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the game⁹. On the surface it appeared that Carroll decided on a whim to go for the fake field goal, but underneath the surface was a much more intricate decision process; this process was informed by their scouting and preparation that had been ongoing through the entire season.

The Seahawks coaching staff had noticed a tendency (this observation was first made in the early weeks of the season) for reserve linebacker Brad Jones to come flying off the edge trying to block the field goal attempt (ultimately losing outside contain and opening up the possibility for a fake).

The Seahawks coaches concluded that they would only run fake field goal play if Jones lined up on the left side, because that would allow Jon Ryan (the kicker) to roll out to his left and throw a pass or run for the first down. If Jones wasn't on the field they would take a delay of game penalty and kick the field goal.

Gilliam (the player who caught the touchdown) couldn't help his excitement when he saw that Jones lined up on his side at that point in the game:

"I broke the huddle like, Please be on my side, please be on my side," Gilliam says. "And then [Jones] was."

They made the call, ran the play, and scored 7 points instead of 3. They went on to win the game in overtime which gave them the chance to win their 2nd Super Bowl in 2 years. None of that would have been possible if it wasn't for the preparation that gave them the confidence and intelligence to run that play at the perfect time.

Pats Goal Line Defense

In the Super Bowl, the Seahawks had the ball 2nd and goal on the Patriots 1-yard line with less than a minute left on the clock. Their season was slipping away. All the Seahawks had to do was punch the ball in the end zone and they



⁹ <http://mmqb.si.com/2015/01/19/nfc-championship-game-seahawks-special-teams-onside-kick-fake-field-goal/>

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would have taken a 3-point lead with little time left for a comeback. Many teams would have panicked. Many coaches would have called a timeout to regroup. Bill Belichick and his Patriots did neither. They trusted in their prep and put the burden of execution back on the Seahawks.

They knew in that particular situation that the Seahawks would likely run a quick hitter, a Russell Wilson pass on a slant. Here's what Malcom Butler the Patriots cornerback had to say:

"At practice they had that play," Butler said. ***"The scout team ran that same play, and I got beat on it. [Belichick] told me, 'You gotta be on that.'***

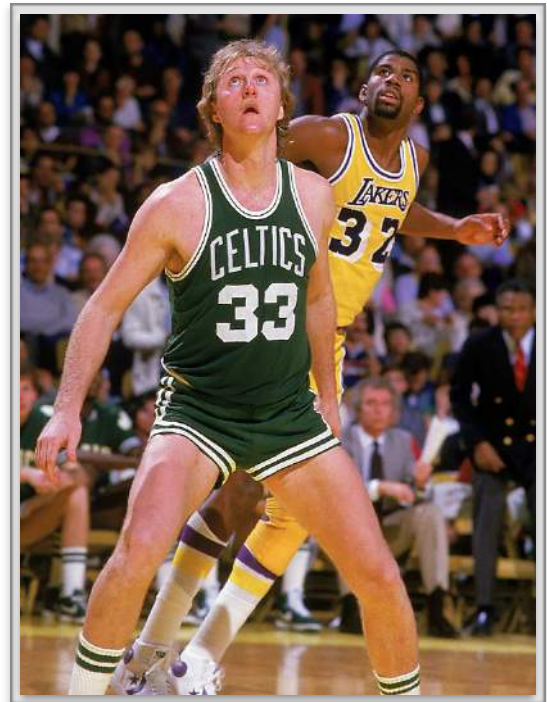
At that time, memorization came through, and I just jumped the route and made a play [a game saving interception]. I just did my job." The difference between a touchdown and a SuperBowl saving interception can be summed up in one word: **preparation**. Butler was prepared to make the biggest play of his life because his coaching staff put him in a position to do, which allowed him to do his job.

You reap what you sow

One of the oldest clichés in life is that you will reap what you sow, simply meaning, that whatever you put into something is what you get out. Although this may be a cliché there is nothing that could be more true when we think about becoming a great shooter. People look at the most successful players in the NBA, and will get discouraged because they don't have the same athletic ability, or level of talent.

But the thing about becoming a great shooter is that you don't need talent to learn how to put the ball in the basket. Shooting is one skill that can be learned over time with hard work and a commitment to excellence.

Larry Bird was one of the greatest shooters in NBA history. Sure, he had talent, but what set him apart from his competitors was his



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commitment to consistently outwork them. Larry was known to be a maniacal about his preparation. He was an extremely detailed planner of his workouts.

The Summer Grind

Every summer in French Lick, he would get up before the sunrise and get all of his workouts in for the day and then go about whatever other business he had. One friend who visited him in Indiana during these times was impressed with the amount of detail and consistency with which Larry approached becoming a great basketball player¹⁰. Every day Larry would wake up and would execute a predetermined plan that outlined what he needed to do that day to become a great player.

During those long summer days Larry was sowing into his game with hard work, persistence, and a commitment to excellence. He was putting in the right ingredients so that when the time came he could harvest the benefits. During the NBA season he would reap the rewards of all that effort by becoming one of the greatest players in NBA history.

Pregame Legend

Larry was often held up as an example by other NBA coaches of how players should approach the game. One story goes¹¹, that an NBA coach took his team to the arena early so they could observe Bird doing his pregame workout (which is incredible to think that another NBA coach would do this in the first place). When they walked into the gym it appeared that Bird was nowhere to be found, initially the coach was embarrassed. But after a few minutes the coach realized that Bird was working on his conditioning that day by running around the top of the stadium. Bird had already been in the stadium for hours.

It was common for Bird to get to the Stadium 3-4 hours before game time and fire hundreds of jumpers before anyone else walked into the gym. When Bird was asked why he worked the way he did, he simply responded by saying that:

“Thats the number one thing, the desire. The ability to do the things you have to do to become a basketball player. I don't think you can teach desire.

¹⁰ http://www.nba.com/features/birds_coaches.html

¹¹ <http://www.perfectshotshooting.com/basketball-shooting/larry-bird-the-legend-continues/>

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A ton of players want the fame and notoriety that comes with being a great player, but few players are willing to make the sacrifices. What kind of player are you?

“Excellence is to do a Common thing in an Uncommon Way”

The above saying is from Booker Washington and perfectly encapsulates the great truth of preparation.

In closing I want to talk about 2 NBA players who have made a career out of being the some of the most prepared athletes on the planet. The thing about preparation is that with **great preparedness comes great confidence**. When you commit to the process of preparation, you can handle whatever comes at you in a game because your body is prepared by being in that same situation in practice thousands of different times.

Kyle Korver’s Game-Day Prep

On game days Kyle Korver has 4 shooting sessions before every game to give him the best chance of being as prepared as possible. He shoots four separate times on game days: at morning shoot-around, after morning shoot-around, in pre-game warmup, and before the game. His routine is tailored to the Hawks offense and consists of a mix of different shots. He takes shots from different distances, off screens, stationary, moving, etc. Basically any situation Korver might find himself in the game he tries to practice before he gets on the floor. Korver had this to say about his game day routine:

“I want to seek perfection. Four times during that day, that’s what I’m trying to do.”

Those who have watched Korver’s pregame routine have marvelled at the amount of energy and focus he brings to each session. Over the course of an 82 game season it would be easy to take days off, but Korver knows where his bread is buttered. He knows that without preparation he has no chance to be successful.

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Here are a few things to keep in mind as you think about the best way to prepare yourself for a game:

1. **How does my pregame routine specifically prepare me for the game?**
2. **Am I bringing a high level of energy and focus to every shooting session?**
3. **If a stranger walked into the gym how would they describe what they saw?**
4. **What specific situations do I need to practice to get ready for this opponent?**



How Preparation Saved a Season

In Game 6 of 2013 NBA Finals the Miami Heat were down 3 points with 18 seconds to go in an elimination game against the San Antonio Spurs. LeBron James of the Miami Heat missed a three-pointer that would have tied the game, all San Antonio had to do was secure the rebound and the game would have been over. Ray Allen's teammate Chris Bosh grabbed the rebound after LeBron's miss and that's when Allen's preparation took over. Ray Allen was caught inside the paint as Bosh

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secured the rebound meaning that he had to back pedal at full speed, get his feet behind the three-point line, and not step out of bounds all while he had defenders rushing at him (watch the [clip here](#)).

Why was Ray Allen able to execute this kind of shot under the most extreme of circumstances? How did Allen know the perfect speed and distance he had to go in order to get his feet behind the line without stepping out of bounds? How was he able avoid the distraction of defenders and sink the shot? One word: **preparation.**

It turns out that Allen had been practicing that shot for years on the chance that he would have to make a last second shot like that in a game at some point. When Allen started his career in Milwaukee he would do a drill where he would lie in the middle of the key on his stomach and then on a coach's signal he would backpedal at full speed to the corner for a three. He was training himself to get his footwork exactly right so that he didn't step out of bounds or on the three-point line (Allen even knew exactly how many steps he needed to take to get his feet behind the line).



Erik Spoelstra tells the story that shortly after Allen joined the Heat in 2012 he saw him performing the same drill after practice:

"It was the first time I ever saw anybody do that," Spoelstra says. "He told me he does it for offensive rebounding purposes. He said, 'You never know when you'll be in a situation where you have to find the three-point line without looking down.'"

The truth is that Allen probably only shot a handful (if that) of 'full-speed backpedaling' threes during the course of his career, but that's not the point. The point is that Allen did everything within his control to prepare as thoroughly as he could for whatever situation he found himself in during the games.

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Ray's uncommon commitment to being the most prepared athlete he could, helped him develop into one of the greatest shooters in NBA history. Regardless of how much talent you have, you can make a decision to prepare like Ray Allen did. You can rest assured that an unwavering commitment to preparation will take you where you want to go.

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Shooting Drills to Prepare you to Make Game Shots

When shooting guru Chip Engellend was asked how much conditioning factors into a players ability to make jump-shots late in the game, here was his response:

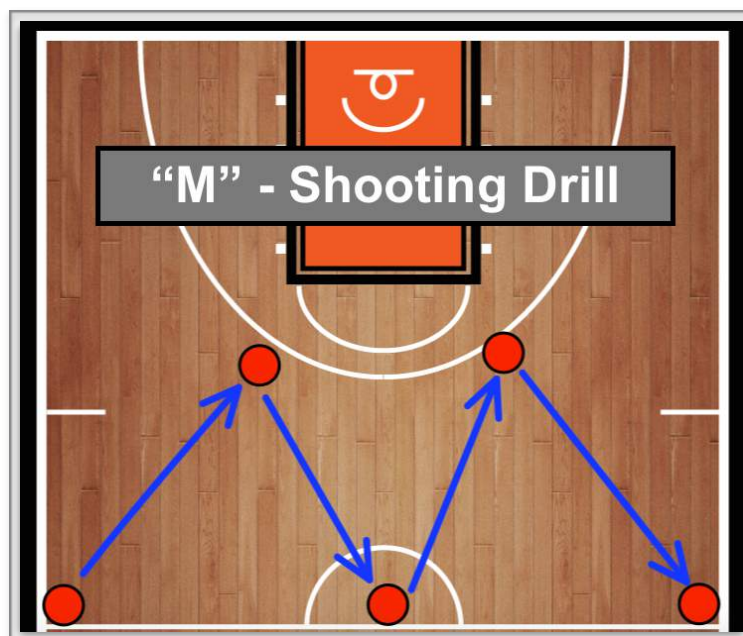
“Legs and a jump shot go hand in hand. Second half of the season, second half of a game and the fourth quarter, conditioning is a huge part of it, mentally and physically. It’s huge.”

We have seen that all great NBA shooters understand that preparation is the key to their success. As a shooter it is your job to prepare your mind and body to make shots during the game, and conditioning is one area that you have complete control over. You can train yourself to the point of fatigue to simulate a game-like experience, and these drills will help you do that.

“M” - Shooting Drill

Goal: Make as many shots as you can in 1:30sec while going full speed

- Start at the corner of the half-court and sideline and follow the pattern touching the half-court line in-between each shot
- You can use modify the drill and shoot whatever kind of shots you want (ex. pull-ups, side-step threes, step-backs, etc)



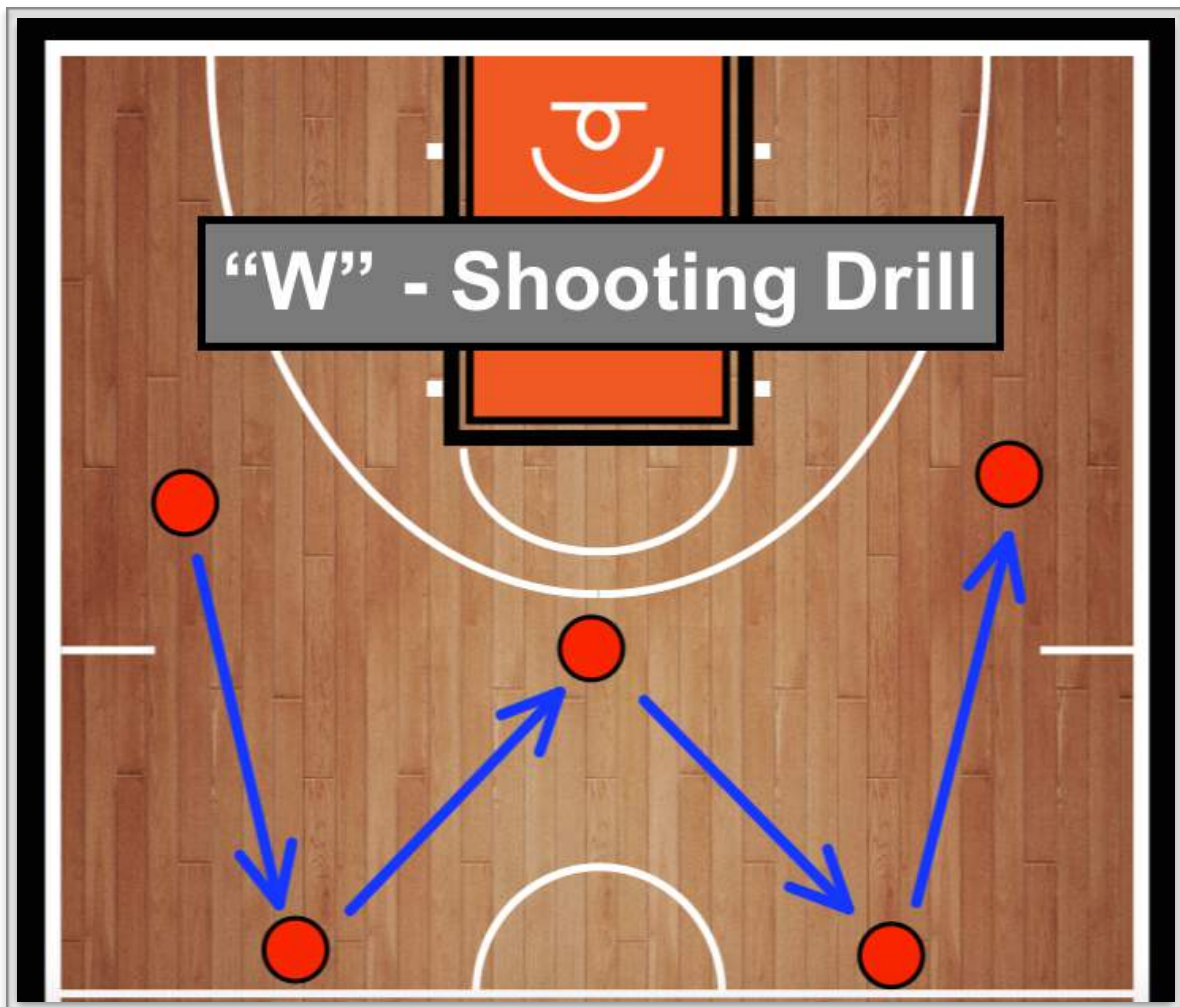
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“W” - Shooting Drill

Goal: Make as many shots as you can in 1:30 while going full speed

- Start with a jumper on the wing and then go to the half-court line after that shot. Follow the pattern touching the half-court line in-between each shot
- This is very similar to the M shooting drill but it lets you take shots from different places on the floor. This is great for wing players to practice transition threes.
- You can use modify the drill and shot whatever kind of shots you want (ex. pull-ups, side-step threes, step-backs, etc)



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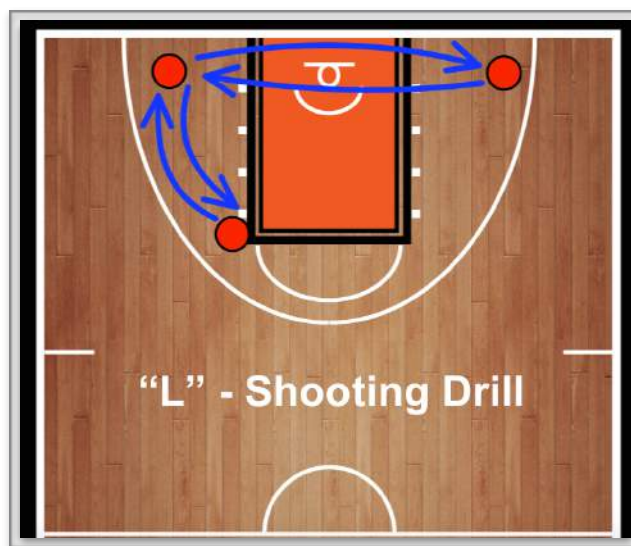
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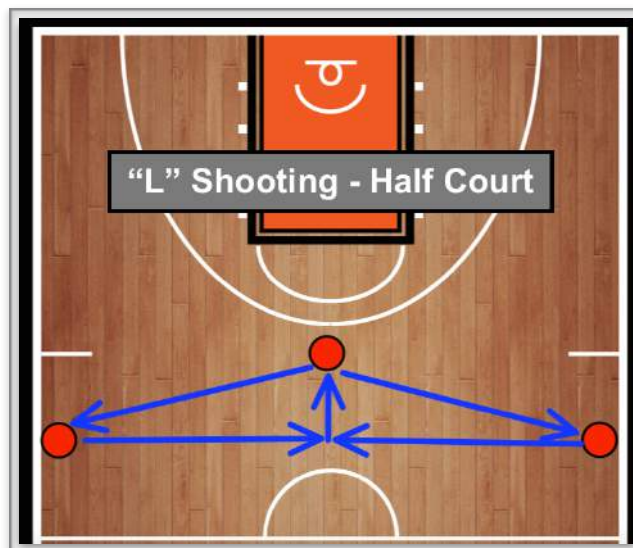
"L" - Shooting Drill

Goal: Make as many shots as you can in 1:30sec while going full speed

- This is a great drill because you get to practice three different kinds of shots coming off of screens (curl screen, flare screen, and baseline screen)
- You can move these shots out to the 3-point line, I usually do a few sets of both 2 point shots and 3's because it gives me good practice getting my feet set from different differences



- You can also move the drill out to half court to take a bunch of top of the key threes.



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Key Points from, Section 5: Preparation

- The most effective tool you have as a shooter is your ability to prepare
- Your level of excellence as a shooter is directly tied to intensity with which you prepare
- You never know when your preparation is going to help you make a shot or win a championship
- Preparation gives you confidence

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Bonus - Shooting Games

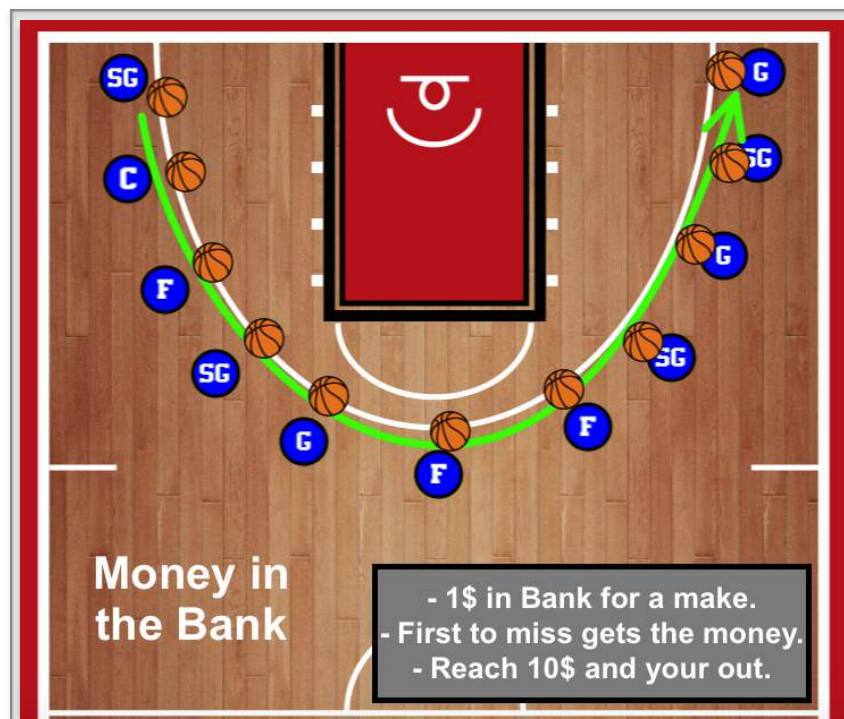
The bottom line is that **shooting is fun!** Putting the ball in the basket is one of the best parts of playing the game. All shooting does not have to be serious. After practice, competitions with teammates or coaches can be a great way to build team spirit and togetherness.

Here are a few shooting games that teams and individuals can play. You can use them to have a good time while learning to shoot in pressure situations!

Money in the Bank

Goal: Be the last player standing by receiving the least amount of dollars possible

- Have your team line up around the perimeter and take shots in a clockwise rotation. Every time a player makes a shot there is a dollar in the bank, and the more shots made in a row the more dollars accumulate in the bank.
- Any player who ends a streak of made shots with a miss receives the number of dollars in the bank at the time. Once a player accumulates 10 dollars they are out. The game continues until there is 1 player left standing.



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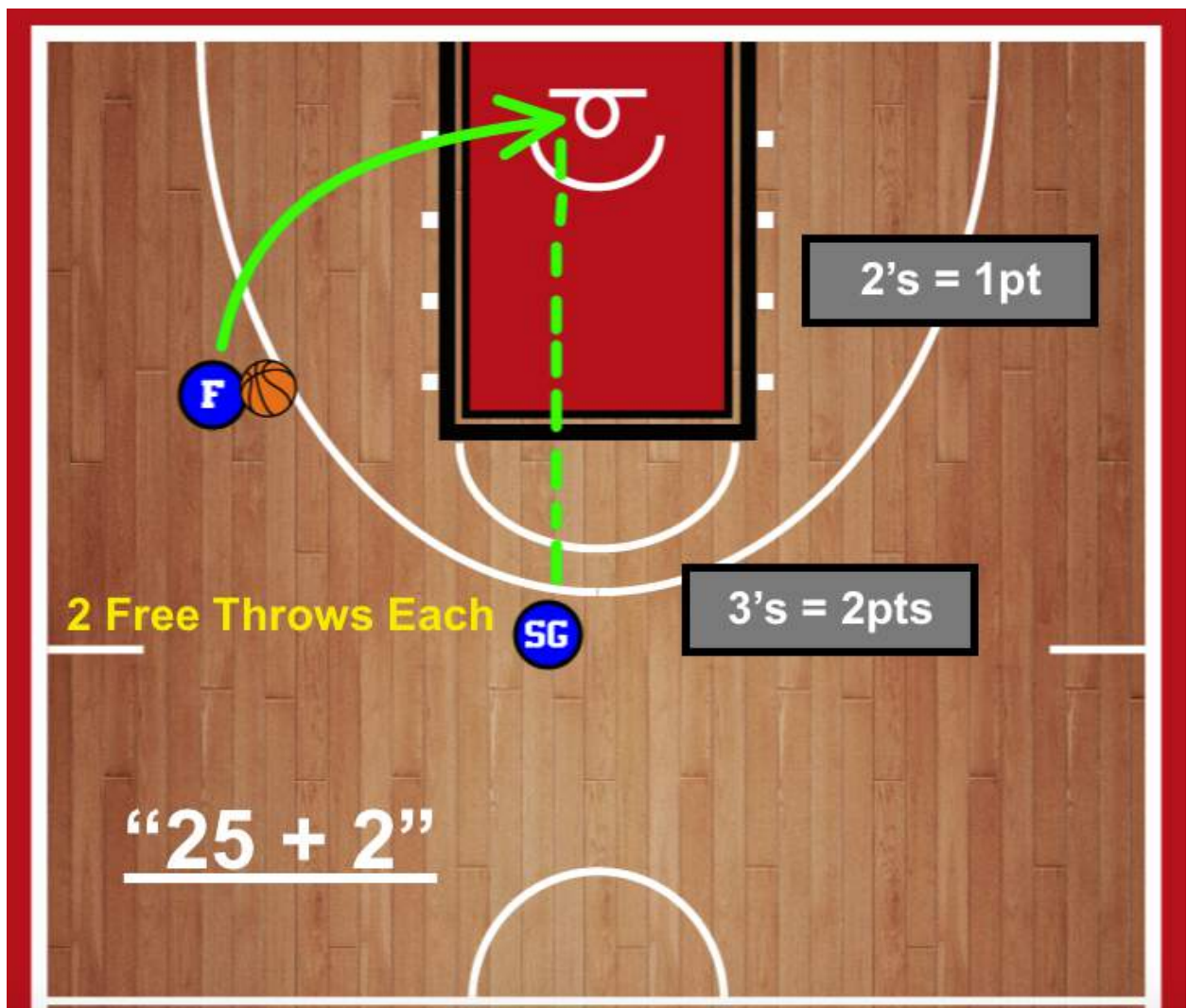
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25 + 2

Goal: Be the first team of two players to make 25 points and 2 free-throws each

- Start by partnering up and split up at different baskets. Partners alternate shooting either 2pt or 3pt shots (1 point for a 2-pointer and 2 points for a 3-pointer) and chase after their own rebound and give it back to their partner
- After a team has reached 25 points each partner has to make two consecutive free-throws (4 total) to be declared the winner. If either partner misses a free throw they go back down to 20 points and have raise their score back to 25 points shooting jump shots before they can try to shoot free throws



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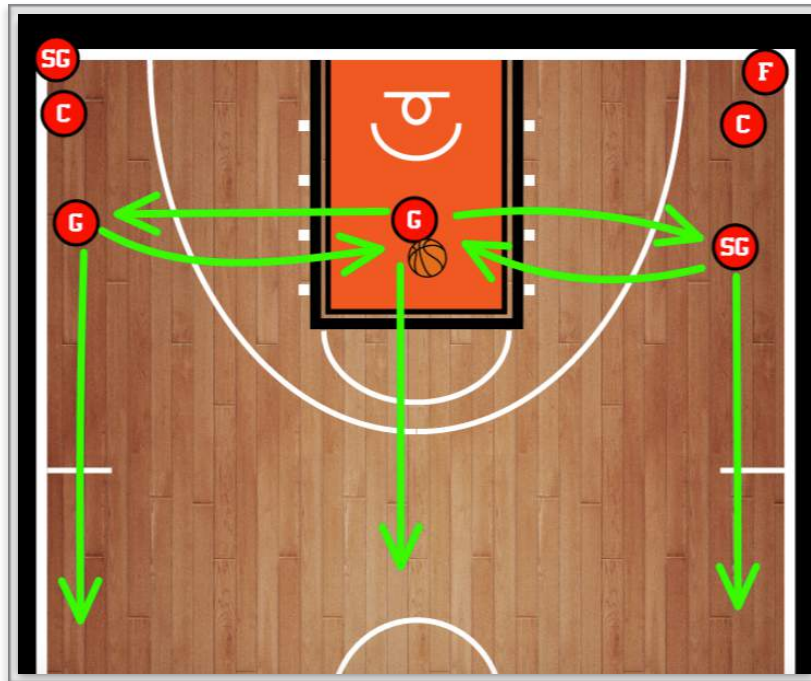
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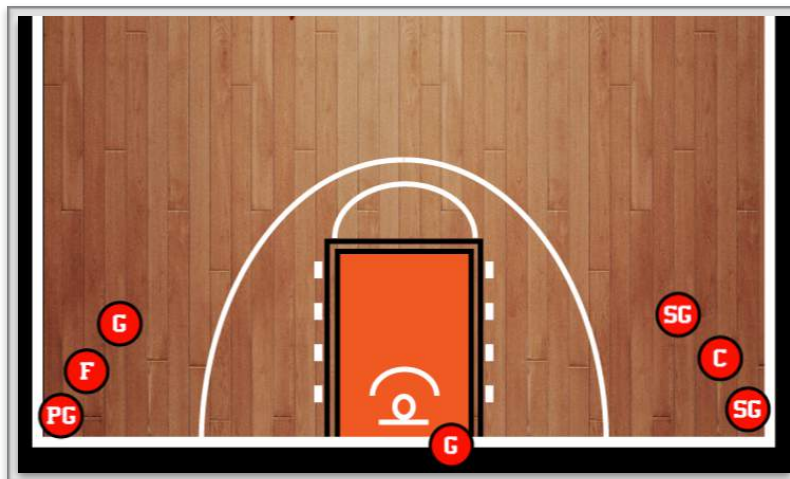
Celtics Shooting

Goal: Score as many points as possible in 2 minutes.

- Start with 3 players on one side of the court with the ball in the middle. Pass the ball from side-to-side as you run down the court.



- The other end of the court should look the same with the rest of the team set up to run a three-man group back down the court (it should look like below).



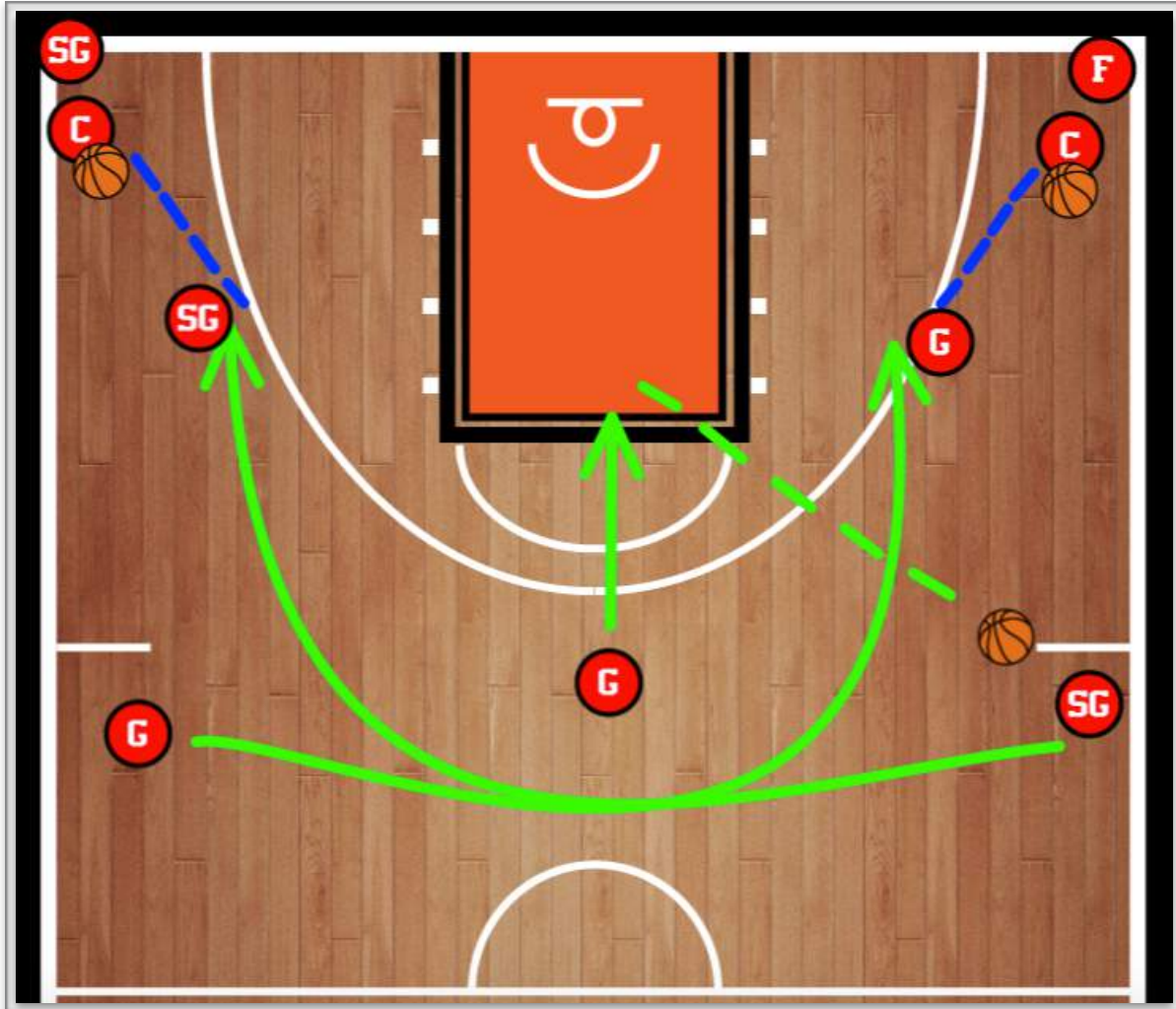
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- Once the guy in the middle gets a pass for a layup, the two wing players cross to receive a pass from the players waiting in line in the corners.
- There should be a guy waiting underneath the basket to grab the ball and continue the pattern until the 2 minutes was up. Track your scores and try to beat your score every time you run the drill.



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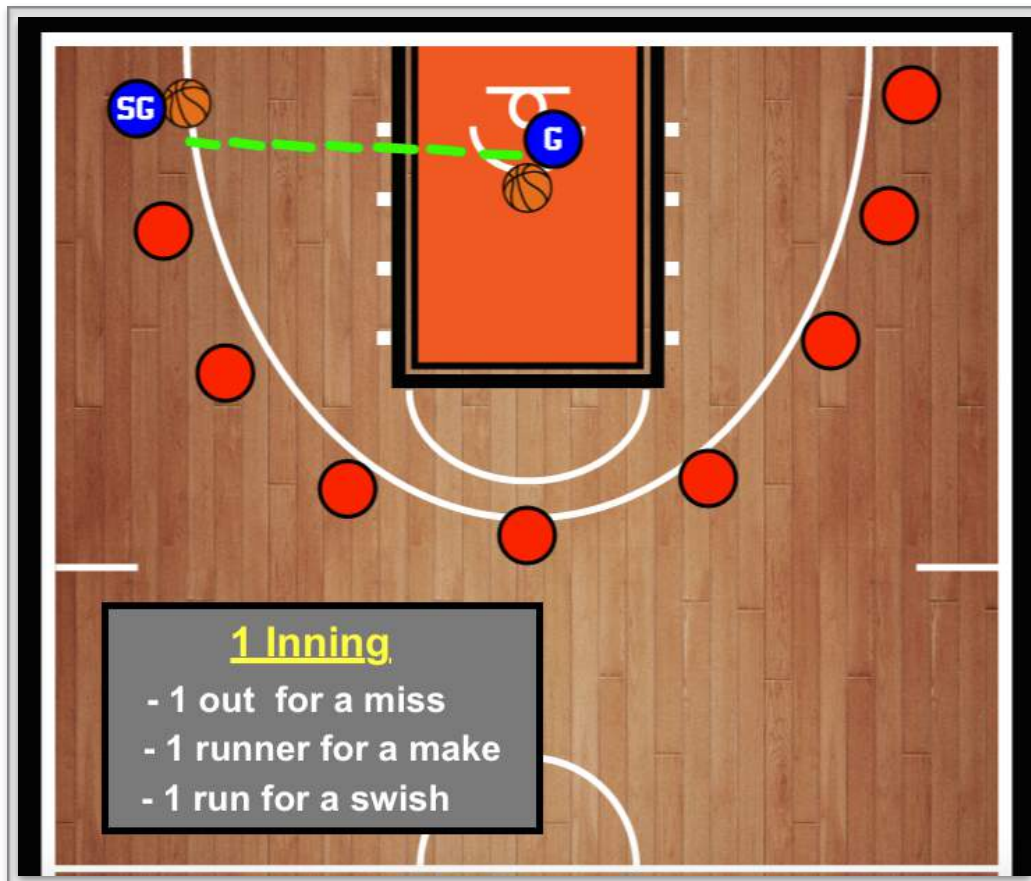
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Baseball

Goal: Score as many runs as possible in 9 innings

- Pick a spot anywhere on the court and start the inning. Every miss counts as 1 out and you get 3 outs per inning. Use imaginary ghost runners to keep track of scoring.
- Every swish is a home-run and every make is a single. Keep track using ghost runners how many runs you score until you miss three shots and the inning ends. Play 9 innings. You need at least 2 players to play, but the game can be extended to an entire teams if you split off into groups. Score as many total runs as possible in 9 innings.



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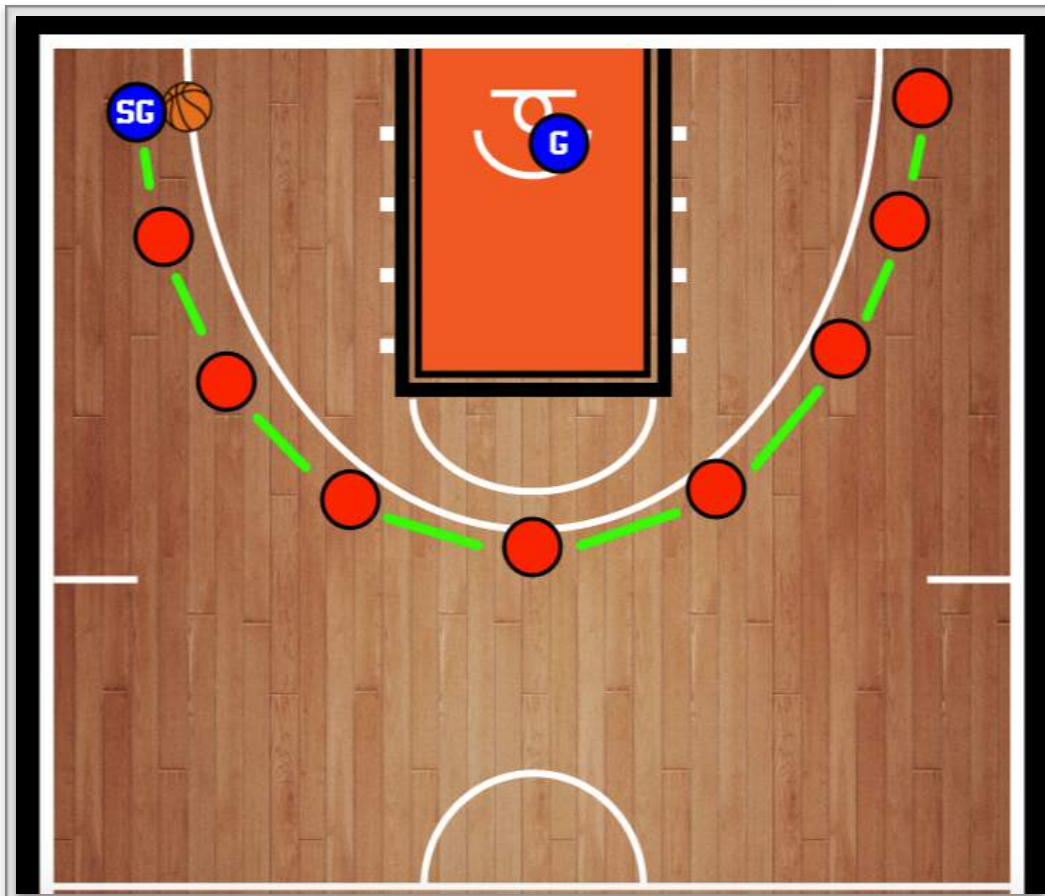
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Streak Game

Goal: Put together as many streaks as possible until you reach 20 points

- Grab a partner and pick a spot or pattern that you want to shoot in (I like to do threes and move for this game). Keep shooting until you miss and count the number of shots in your streak.
- Once you miss switch places with your partner. Add the number of makes in each streak until you reach a total of 20 makes. First to 20 wins. Make sure each partner has the same number of shooting rounds (so if one partner reaches 20 on their 4th try and the other person has only had 3 streaks, they get one chance to try and tie).



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Bonus - How to Make a Shooting Checklist

I think making a shooting checklist is one of most useful exercises you can do as a basketball player. In truth, it wasn't until recently when I read Kyle Korver's shooting checklist that I decided to sit down and make one for myself.

Just to be clear, your shooting checklist is going to be different than mine and Kyle Korver's.

We all have different habits, body types, training experiences, and mechanics. So the point is not to copy what I've done but to search for the things that help you get into your shooting sweet spot.

I've always had a mental list in my head about the various elements of my shot that I need replicate to achieve a consistent shot, but I've never written them down on paper until now.

I'm going to walk you through the same questions that I've asked myself when I created my list, and I'll also provide the answers to the questions.

Practically speaking this has been a great exercise for me for several reasons.

1. Objective Self-Analysis is the Key to Growth

- I recently read a book called the [*Inner Game of Tennis*](#) which argues that a big key to the natural learning process is the ability to objectively self-evaluate without assigning a value on the action. For example, when a lot of shooters miss a shot they often get frustrated and angry; and when they make a shot they will give themselves praise. In both situations the person tries to consciously change (during a miss) or repeat (during a make) the action to achieve a desired outcome. This "trying" often does not allow a shooter to achieve the fluidity and smoothness that is required for shooting a jumper.
- The key is to observe the mechanics of your shot and allow yourself those changes to be absorbed into your shooting motion as you feel the ball release from your hands. What the checklist does is allow you to observe the tendencies you want to be repeatable in your shot so that you can feel them during practice. If you're not aware of these things then you won't be able to feel them.

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2. Focus on the Process

- A checklist puts into very real terms the specifics of what your process as a shooter looks like. If you can train yourself to repeat this process every single time you shoot the ball, you will have a great chance of making shots. One of the greatest traps a shooter can fall into is allowing their emotions to rise and fall depending on whether the ball goes through the hoop. This is a difficult habit to break! But it is one of the great keys to becoming a consistent and confident shooter.

3. Your Feelings will be Tied to Mechanics

- Every shooter knows the great feeling of getting in that shooting zone, where it feels like your in an alternate universe. You get into a flow that is hard to describe. One of the benefits of creating a list like this is to write down the mechanics that are associated with these feelings. One example could be, when I'm in the zone I can always feel the power of my shot coming from my legs. Repeating these movements in practice will help us build habits that allow our natural shooting movements to take over and the forced, tense, habits of "trying to shoot well" to be left behind.

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Step 1: Create an Opposites List

This first exercise will give us a list of things that we feel whenever we start shooting poorly. If we can figure out what not to do in our shooting, all we need is to take the inverse of that and we'll have a positive point of reference. Remember your bad habits will probably be different than mine.

Question: When I start missing badly what do I notice about my shooting motion?

-
- **Observation:** I start dipping the ball behind my head.
 - **Positive Principle:** Release the ball in front of your face
-
- **Observation:** I usually miss short, which means I'm not loading my legs.
 - **Positive Principle:** Feet down quick, explode up.
-
- **Observation:** I raise my head in the same motion as my shot.
 - **Positive Principle:** Eyes up early.
-
- **Observation:** I'm off balance.
 - **Positive Principle:** Find your feet early and get pointed towards the rim.
-

Write down your observations and then turn them into a positive principles like I have in the chart below.

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Question - 1

When I start missing shots
◀ what do I notice about my ▶
shooting motion?

Positive	Negative
◀ Release Point ▶	◀ Ball Dip ▶
◀ Feet Explode ▶	◀ No Leg Drive ▶
◀ Towards Rim ▶	◀ Head Down ▶
◀ Early Eyes ▶	◀ Off Balance ▶

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Step 2: Create an 'In the Zone' List

This second exercise will give us a list of things that we feel whenever get into that illusive shooting zone - what a great feeling!

The Key is to increase your awareness of how your body feels when you get into the zone. This can be difficult because your focus often blocks your conscious mind out of the process, but start to feel how your feet, body, torso, hands, wrist, eyes, head, legs, and back work in unison when your shot feels smooth and effortless.

Question: When I get into the zone what do I observe about my body, feelings, and posture?

● **Observation:** My release becomes short, explosive, and effortless.

● **Positive Principle:** No wasted movement. Shooting pocket and up.

● **Observation:** My shot feels effortless and smooth.

● **Positive Principle:** Relax your muscles and allow your natural shooting motion to takeover.

● **Observation:** My body feels strong from start to finish on release.

● **Positive Principle:** Strong legs, strong core, strong finish.

● **Observation:** My follow through feels quick and powerful.

● **Positive Principle:** Powerful wrist flick.

Write down your observations and then turn them into a positive principles like I have in the chart below.

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Question - 2

When I'm "In the Zone"

◀ what do I observe about ▶
my body and shot?

◀ **Observe** ▶

- ◀ Easy Release ▶
- ◀ Smooth Shot ▶
- ◀ Strong Body ▶
- ◀ Strong Release ▶

◀ **Principle** ▶

- ◀ Efficient Movement ▶
- ◀ Relax and Up ▶
- ◀ Strong + Up ▶
- ◀ Powerful Wrist ▶

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Step 2: Create a 'Focus' List

This third exercise will give us a list of things that we know help us get into a zone of concentration and focus when we start shooting the ball.

I've found that when you can focus on smaller things in and around your shot (i.e. your release point, the rim, the seams of the ball, etc) that making shots tends to take care itself. If you just focus on whether you "make or miss" the shot then you become to engrossed in the results and stop focusing on the process.

Question: What parts of my shot can I use to help me focus on the process and avoid thinking about results?

● **Observation:** When I release from my shooting pocket I find good rhythm and consistency.

● **Positive Principle:** Focus on finding the sweet spot in shooting pocket.

● **Observation:** Before games when I focus on encouraging my teammates I stop focusing on how my shot feels.

● **Positive Principle:** Encourage others and avoid worry.

● **Observation:** Feel the ball coming off middle and pointer finger.

● **Positive Principle:** Feel the ball leave your through those those fingers.

● **Observation:** See the front part of the rim before you shoot.

● **Positive Principle:** Sight before shot.

Write down your observations and then turn them into a positive principles like I have in the chart below.

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Question - 3

What helps me focus on
 ◀ the process and not the ▶
 results of my shot?



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Here's an idea of what a shooting checklist could look like. Everyones list will look a little bit different. Yours could be longer or shorter depending on how many answers you have to the questions we asked previously, but the important thing is to have a list that you can reference. Happy Listing!

Shooting Checklist

- ◀ High release point ▶
- ◀ Explosive Feet ▶
- ◀ Body towards Target ▶
- ◀ Eyes on rim early ▶
- ◀ Relax + Shoot Smooth ▶
- ◀ Powerful wrist flick ▶
- ◀ Find your sweet spot ▶
- ◀ Feet towards the rim ▶
- ◀ Encourage Others! ▶
- ◀ Ball off two fingers ▶
- ◀ Strong core, legs, + finish ▶
- ◀ See Rim then Shoot ▶

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