

K-2 Coaching Recommendations

General Recommendations: For this age group, the following recommendations

keeps a practice organized, progressing, and enjoyable:

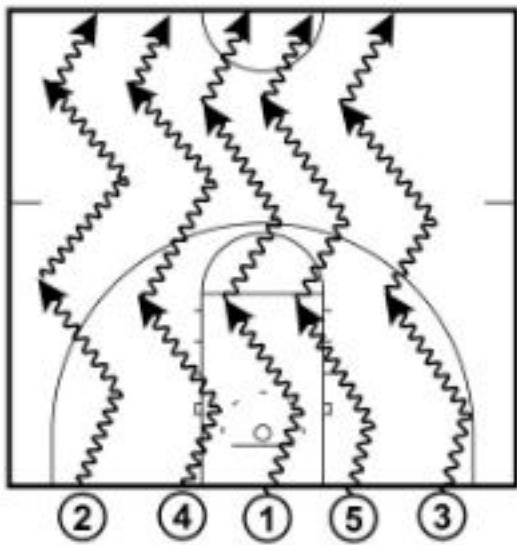
- Keep a time limit on everything - attention spans are limited, especially with more repetitious drills, so keep it short and fast. With that being said, be flexible with how long a drill runs based on need (longer if it takes a while to explain, shorter if kids master it early)
- Provide a demonstration - most kids are going to be visual learners at this age (especially since some of the terminology and phrasing will be foreign to them), needing an example to try and replicate. Specifically for the younger kids, have the coaches demonstrate what it should look like and then progress it so students can demonstrate (for ex., 2 coaches demonstrate the pass, then 1 coach and a player, then 2 players).
- Every kid is at a different level, so do not teach to the extremes. Push lower kids to rise to the middle, and add in challenges for the more advanced kids that work within with the drill
- Know when to bail - if something is not working at all, move on. Rework it for next practice and work around the trouble spots. The quickest way for kids to lose interest and focus is when the coach struggles, so acknowledge it and adapt your plan.
- Engage - kids respond to individual attention more than ever, so ask their name and connect with them. You are under no obligation to know everyone's name day one (in fact, me getting their names intentionally wrong is one of the easiest ways I engage in the early stages), but they should be able to see you and know that you are their coach.

Ball Handling/Dribbling:

This is the most important skill at the younger levels. There is not much you can do on the court with a familiarity with catching and dribbling, so start with very simple ball handling/ warm up activities:

- Ball slaps
- Finger tap control (at levels-in front, low, and high)
- Passing around the body (circles around ankles, one leg at a time, around waist, etc.)
- Dribbling stationary: with K-2, you can even have them kneel on one knee while dribbling and the coach holding up fingers to encourage players to not look at the ball.
- Pound dribbles with either hand at various heights; introduce cross-over or “V” dribble... progress to dribble from one line to another in the gym (used in next drill more). Also use dribbling while we do a “scavenger hunt” of lines... easy way to introduce the names of the lines/terminology on a basketball court.
- For K-2, I would incorporate toss and catch in space, toss, bounce catch while moving... anything to get them used to tracking the ball.
- I like to add counting to the equation, so that players know when to demonstrate the skill being asked. For example, for 3 dribbles on the right and then switch to the left, have them verbally count “1..2...3..switch”. It gives it purpose and sequence.

Dribbling Lines – Dribbling Drill



Overview:

This is a simple drill to teach the basics of dribbling to new players.

It's a good way to introduce new moves without overwhelming them and will also help to improve the technique of the movements players already know.

Setup:

Every player has a basketball and lines up on the baseline.

If you have more than 8 players, create two lines on the baseline instead of one.

How it Works:

The coach will instruct the players to use different dribbling movements to dribble up to either the half-court line or full court.

Tell them the dribble movement you want to be performed first, and then say 'go'.

Here are a few that I like to use:

- Right hand up, left hand back

- Crossovers
- Behind-the-back
- Through-the-legs
- Dribble low
- Dribbling backwards

Coaching Points:

- Players must keep their heads up at all times.
- Once they develop good technique, focus on the players pushing off with their outside foot when making a move.
- Write down the dribbling moves so that you don't forget them. I always do!

Dribble Knockout – Dribbling Drill



Overview:

This drill works on ball-handling and protecting the dribble.

All players dribble around in a small area and the goal is to knock other players' basketball out of the area while keeping your own basketball alive.

Setup:

The first thing the coach must do is determine the area the players will be dribbling in. This will depend on the amount of players you have but will usually be the three-point line or the 1/3 court line.

All players must have a basketball.

How it Works:

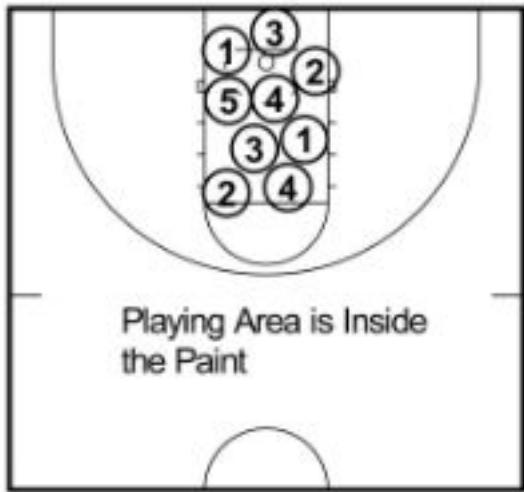
On the coach's call, all players begin dribbling and attempt to knock each other's basketball out of the playing area.

As more and more players get out, the coach must pause the game and make the playing area smaller. This continues until you have a winner.

Coaching Points:

- If a player fouls someone else, travels, or double dribbles, they're out. It's the coach's job to keep an eye out for these things.
- Constantly remind players to keep their head up.
- Have a designated area for players that get out or you'll end up with kids everywhere!

Collision Dribbling – Dribbling Drill



Overview:

Similar to dribble knockout except players aren't allowed to hit the basketball of the other players away.

Instead, the aim of the drills is to navigate through and dodge all the other players using dribbling moves and by being creative with the dribble.

Setup:

All players have a basketball and are in a small space determined by the coach.

How it Works:

On the coach's call, all players will start dribbling around each other in the small space aiming to keep their dribble under control.

This drill will improve ball-handling because players must react to other players and can't predetermine their actions. It also forces all players to keep their heads up or they'll run into someone!

Coaching Points:

- Don't allow players to all dribble in the same direction or it will be too easy.
- Keep reminding the players to keep their heads up!

- Encourage players to use both hands. Not just their strong hand.

Scarecrow Tag – Dribbling Drill



Overview:

Scarecrow Tag is a fun drill that involves everyone dribbling around trying to avoid two taggers.

Players love this drill and it's great for developing ball-handling skills.

Setup:

Every player starts with a basketball and begins in the half court except two players who will be the 'taggers'.

The taggers don't have a basketball and preferably are wearing different colored pinnies so that other players can identify them.

How it Works:

The drill begins when the coach calls out 'GO'.

The taggers then do their best to tag each player dribbling a basketball.

When a dribbler is tagged, they must stand in the place they were tagged with their legs wide and hold the ball on top of their head. They can be freed by other dribblers by rolling the basketball through their legs.

This game never has a winner unless the taggers happen to get everyone out at one time (this doesn't happen often).

Every couple of minutes switch the taggers.

Coaching Points:

- Players are not allowed to throw the ball between a teammates legs, the ball must be rolled.
- Dribblers are not allowed to travel, double dribble, or any other violation. If they do they're out.
- Change up the amount of taggers and the size of the playing space depending on how many players you have.

Dribble Tag – Dribbling Drill



Overview:

Similar to scarecrow tiggy, except that all players start with a basketball (even the taggers) and when you're caught, you're out and must sit down on the side of the court.

Setup:

The first thing the coach must do is decide on the playing. This will depend on the amount of players you have.

After that, select two players to be taggers and get everyone else to spread out around the court.

How it Works:

When the drill starts, the taggers attempt to tag as many dribblers as possible.

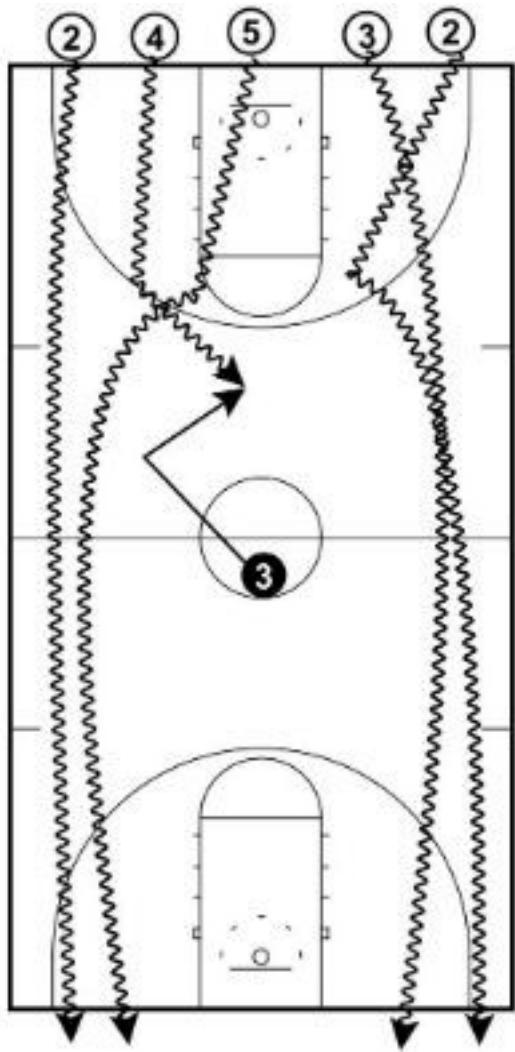
When a dribbler is tagged, they are now out and must wait on the sideline for the rest of the players to be caught.

This continues until there is one dribbler left and they are the winner. ***To be honest, I rarely use this style... I much rather non-elimination style and have tagged players leave and perform an exercise or skill (pound dribbles; wall sit while dribbling 10xs with each hand) before re-entering.***

Coaching Points:

- If the taggers are struggling to tag anyone, consider allowing them to run around without having to dribble a basketball.
- Vary the size of the court and amount of taggers depending on the amount of players you have.
- If a dribbler commits a dribbling violation, they are automatically out.

Sharks and Minnows – Dribbling Drill



Overview:

Sharks and Minnows is one of my favorite games for youth practices.

The aim of the game is for the minnows (dribblers) dribble from baseline to baseline without getting tagged by the sharks (taggers).

Setup:

The drill starts with you selecting one or two 'sharks' who will be the taggers.

Everyone else will start on the baseline and have a basketball. These are the 'minnows'.

How it Works:

On the coach's call, the minnows must attempt to dribble to the other baseline without getting tagged by a shark.

If a shark does tag them, they must stand in the spot they were tagged, place the basketball between their feet, and now are scarecrows. If a minnow comes within reach of them, they can tag them to get them out.

The last player alive that hasn't been tagged is the winner.

Coaching Points:

- As always, if there's a dribbling violation by a minnow they are immediately out.
- Scarecrows must hold the ball between their feet at all times and stay on balance. This stops them moving too far and cheating.
- Implement a time limit if players are taking too long to get from one side to the other.

Four Corners – Footwork Drill



Overview:

This is a great drill for working on jump stops, pivoting, and passing.

It will allow the coach to teach the different kinds of pivots and is a drill the players enjoy doing.

Setup:

The coach must first create a large square in the half-court by placing four cones an even distance apart. There must also be another cone or D-man in the exact middle of the square. You can see where I recommend placing these cones in the diagram.

Split your team up into four groups and send each group to a cone. The cones will be the starting position for each line.

The person at the front of each line has a basketball.

How it Works:

The first thing the coach must do is tell the players which way they'll be passing (either right or left) and which kind of pivot they should use.

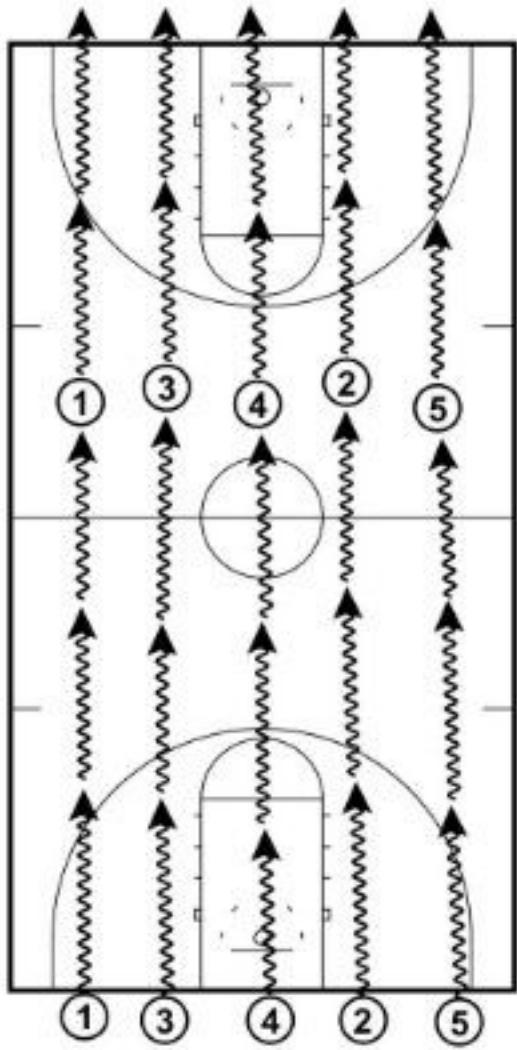
When the coach calls out 'go', each player with a basketball dribbles in towards the middle cone, performs a jump stop a couple of feet away, pivots, and then passes to the next line before joining the end of it.

The next player in the that catches the basketball does not start until the coach has called out 'go' again.

Coaching Points:

- Each player must be pivoting the same direction so that two balls don't end up being passed to one line. Do make sure to reverse the direction half way through the drill.
- Use front and reverse pivots and make sure players aren't traveling.
- Explain to the players it's better to jump stop with a small hop. The higher they jump, the more off-balance they'll be when they land.

Red Light, Green Light – Footwork Drill



Overview:

This is a simple but effective drill that will improve and allow you to teach jump stops and pivoting.

I have used this drill with every single youth team I've coached.

Setup:

The drill starts with every player line up along the baseline holding a basketball.

If you have more than 10 players, I recommend creating two lines.

How it Works:

Everyone starts on the baseline in triple threat position.

The coach will then lead the players up the court by calling out 'go' and 'stop'. On go, the players begin dribbling at a comfortable pace towards the opposite end of the court. When the coach says stop, the players must immediately perform a jump stop.

This continues until the players reach the other end of the court.

Once your players are comfortable with the jump stops and are performing them correctly, you can make the drill more advanced by adding pivots.

You can either say 'pivot' and allow them to pivot either way. Or you can be specific and say 'right foot pivot' or 'left foot pivot'.

Coaching Points:

- Players must not jump too high on the jump stops.
- Make sure players in good stance when they land after the jump stop. Knees bent and head up.
- If adding pivots, make sure players don't raise out of their stance when pivoting.

Explode, Pivot, Pass – Footwork Drill



Overview:

This drill focuses on basic footwork fundamentals. It's a really quick and simple drill to run. Your team can get a lot of benefit out of it even if it's only run for 5 minutes.

Setup:

Players get into groups of 2 or more. I prefer 3 players in each group if possible.

Each group has one basketball and should start in a straight line behind either the sideline or the baseline.

How it Works:

The player starting with the basketball must begin the drill behind the line in triple threat stance.

Their first action is to take two explosive dribbles out from the line and then perform a controlled jump stop.

After the jump stop, the player pivots 180 degrees until they're facing their group and makes a strong chest pass to the next person in line. They then jog to the end of the line.

The three main things coaches are looking at are:

1. No traveling when exploding off the dribble.
2. A controlled jump stop.
3. A controlled pivot.

This process continues for a set amount of time.

Coaching Points:

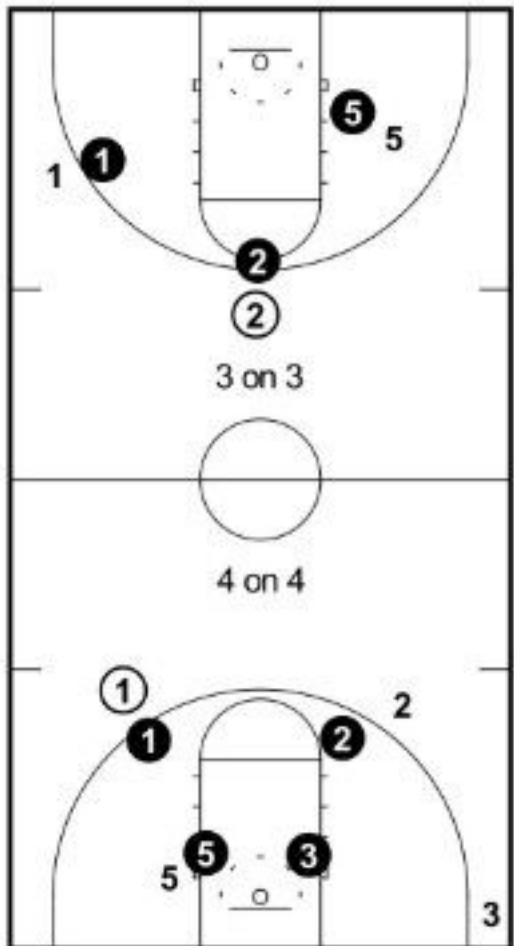
- The player receiving the basketball should be starting in a low stance and showing target hands.
- Players must explode out with the dribble. Don't allow them to go half-speed.
- Switch up which kind of pivot the players use. It can be forward or reverse, and with their left or right foot.

Competitive Play

Do kids love anything more than playing a real game of basketball? Kids normally want to compete, so build in the opportunity to do so and encourage it. A few recommendations on how to manage competitive play opportunities:

- Keep teams balanced - nobody gets any better when one team dominates play, so try to keep them balanced from the beginning, or switch players as the drill progresses if you see a trend of dominance.
- Coach, but do not over coach - mistakes are a part of the natural learning process, so let kids make mistakes. Jump in once repetitive mistakes start to impact the flow of the game
- Be consistent with the rules that you choose to enforce, and those choose those rules carefully - if you choose to be on the lookout for traveling at this age, you will see it all the time. Be flexible with traveling/double dribbling, but enforce out-of-bounds lines and fouls that change possession.
- Promote ball movement - share the ball and keep everyone involved. If necessary, enforce the "everyone has to touch it before you shoot" rule (although do this selectively, as sometimes players do not want the ball).
- Encourage everyone to shoot - offensive confidence is one of the most important traits a successful players has, so start to build it up early. Everyone should be shooting open shots, no matter who they are.

Small-Sided Games



Overview:

I recommend playing small-sided games for the benefits listed here. Depending on the amount of players you have, I believe 3 on 3 or 4 on 4 are the best small-sided games to use. If you have an imbalance of skill, make the teams unbalanced (4v3) to not allow one player to dominate the ball.

Setup:

Use both halves of the court and create small-sided games depending on the amount of players you have.

Tell each team they must advance the ball to either half-court or the third line of the court if you have one.

Each game needs one basketball.

How it Works:

Start the game and let them play!

Make adjustments and team changes when you need to, but I recommend trying not to interrupt too much. Let the players learn from their own mistakes by experience.

Coaching Points:

- Small-sided games are the best.
- Stop the game if you see a mistake 3 times in a row. Until then let the kids experiment and learn on their own as much as possible.
- Stress the importance of spacing.

Shooting

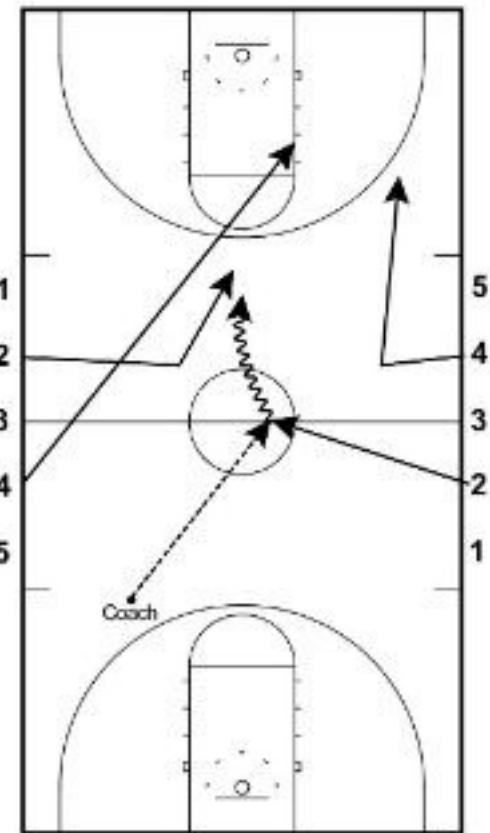
I think hoops should be lowered for all K-3 kids... it really depends on the town/city, but I just feel like it enforces bad mechanics when its stuck at 10' or 9.5'.

My biggest emphasis is on making lay ups correctly. Have them start in very close, working on "1, 2, up"... or "right, left, shoot". Really the repetition in this can be monotonous but it's so important. Like everything else, I try to make it competitive... break them up into 2 teams per hoop (2-3 kids per team ideally) and first to make it to 3 makes wins. I add a cone so they have to dribble around and back before they take a lay-up. Progress from there to jump stop, etc. Silly stuff, anything to get them pumped up.

As I progress to jump shots, I really emphasize stepping into the shot. I start with a ball flip, left foot steps on the catch, right digs down as my right hand is under the ball and "up". I literally do this with everyone from 1 baseline to the other. Kids all have their own ball and do it,

sometimes down and back. I also use the wall to have them shoot off of, focusing on the backspin scrapping the wall on the way down. I just feel this way kids can shoot with proper form and not worry about getting it in necessarily. Then obviously introduce the hoop with the same mechanics.

Versus – 1v1 Drill



Overview:

War is a great drill to incorporate fun small-sided games into your practices. It's a series of small-sided games between two teams that can be played in both the full court and half-court.

This is always one of the most favorite drills no matter what level I'm coaching.

Setup:

The drill is set up by splitting your group into two teams and lining each half up along opposite sidelines.

For example, let's say there are 12 players total and 6 players on each team. You will give each individual player on each team a number from 1 – 6.

The drill requires one basketball and it always starts with the coach.

How it Works:

The drill begins with the coach throwing a basketball out into the middle of the court and calling out a few numbers between 1 and 6.

If the coach wants to play games of 3 on 3, they might call out “1, 4, and 5!” If this happens, numbers 1, 4, and 5 from both teams come out and play a game of 3 on 3 until a score occurs.

The coach can play games with any number of players from 1 on 1 to 6 on 6.

Coaching Points:

- Try to match the best players up against each other.
- Throw the basketball out to the advantage of one side each time because you don't want players running into each other as they scramble for the basketball.