

How to execute and use the fundamental pick and roll basketball play

Go to any playground and watch pick-up games. You will see the best two-man play in basketball. It is a play that most every kid understands; however, this does not mean it is always done right. A good coach makes certain the every fundamental play is executed properly. The pick & roll is no different.

The Basics

If you want to give each of your players a chance to do their best thing, play #3 fits right in. The forward, or guard, can call the screen, either verbally or with hand signals. Signaling is important. Here is the law:

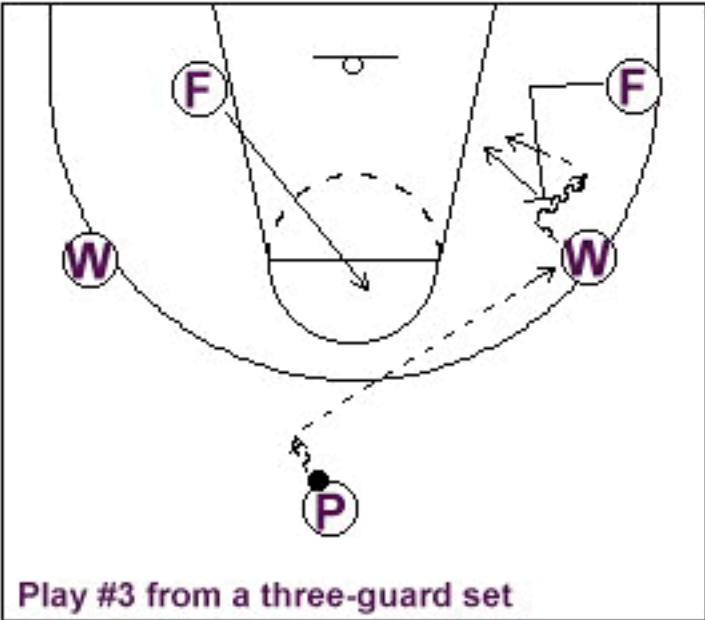
- **If you desire a pick, call for it. If you are picking for a teammate, signal your intention, either by raising three fingers or calling number "3."**

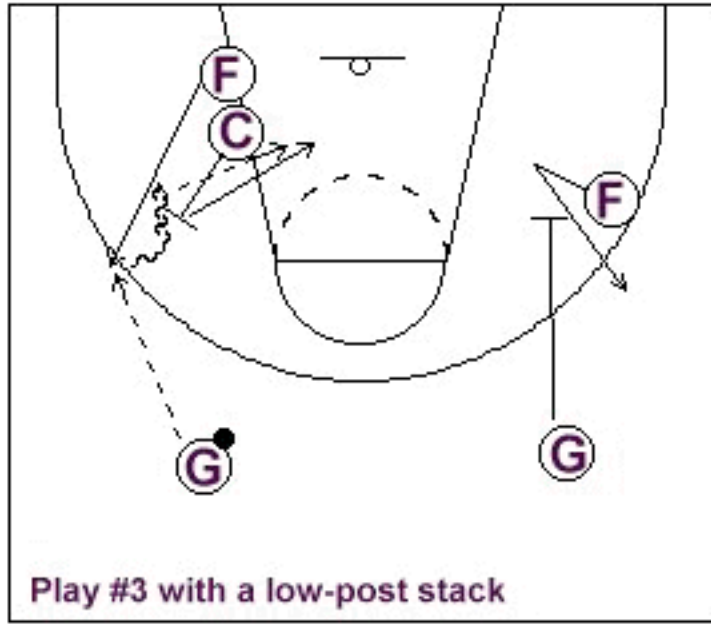
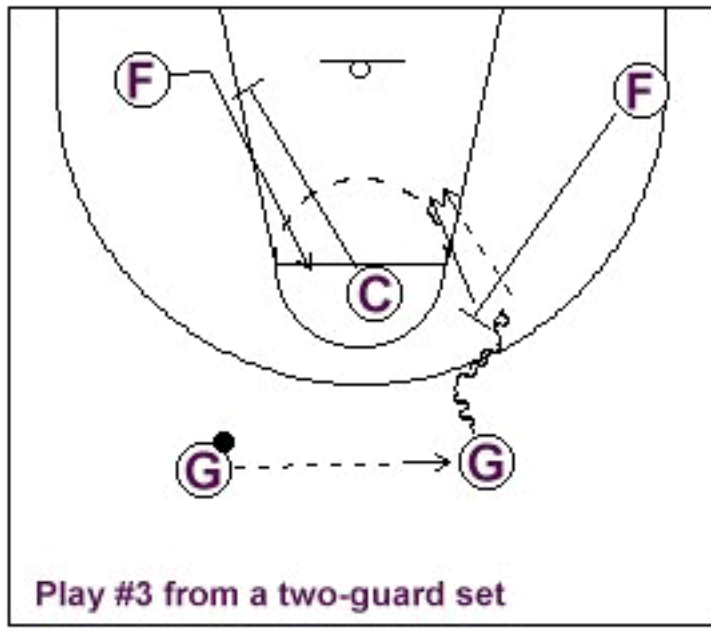
In structuring your patterns, you must understand the pick & roll works best when there is less congestion on that side of the floor. Players on the other side should follow this law:

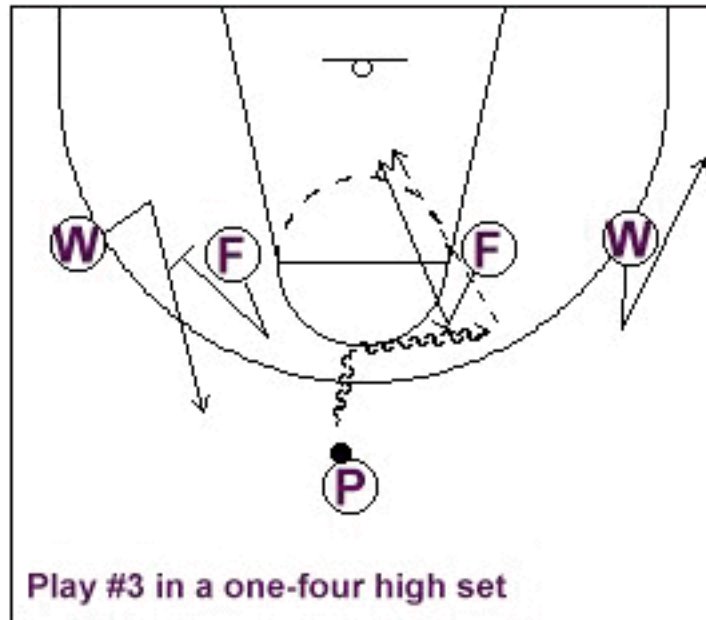
- **If #3 is being executed do not bring your defender into the area; however, keep him occupied so he cannot sag and congest the play area. Look for a shot to be taken and try to be in a good rebounding position**

Guard-Forward or Guard-Center #3

The guard with the ball should always call this play. He may continue with the ball and use the screen himself, or pass to another guard, or wing, for a pick and roll on their specific side of the floor. The following diagrams show the guard with the ball in various sets in a position to call, play #3.







Fundamentals of the Pick and Roll

Before you can execute any of these eight fundamental plays, you must understand all the fundamentals of the play. Many teams use the pick and roll, yet fail to get decent shots. There are others, but here are seven reasons this play fails:

1. The screen is not set on the correct position on the floor.
2. Improper setting of the screen.
3. The screen is not held long enough.
4. Failure of man with the ball to maneuver his defender into the screen
5. The roll is made incorrectly.
6. The pass is deflected or intercepted.
7. One, or both players, fail to take advantage of shifts made by defense.

Setting a Good Screen

The front screen is the most basic and should be taught first. In setting this, the player faces the defender to be screened. The rules allow the screener to set his screen as close as possible as long as the defender can see him. Set the screen to his peripheral side.

The legs of the screen should be wide with knees flexed and arms raised in a defensive stance. This makes your body big and allows the referee to see your hands. Too many players set screens like a telephone pole with hands protecting the crotch. This is wrong. Have the hands in the air, ready to catch the ball once the roll is made.

Making a Good Roll

If the legs are wide at the screen, it is easier to make a wide roll. This helps to screen out the defender on a switch. Make the pivot on the foot nearest the basket throwing the outside elbow toward the basket with hand extended as a target for a pass. The butt should make contact with the defender being screened. This puts the defender on the roller's back should a switch occur. Contact is necessary for best results. Even if the player with the ball shoots, the roller is in excellent rebounding position because he has the man on his back.

Guard Runs the Defender into the Screen

Success or failure of the pick and roll depends largely upon the player with the ball. There must be an inside maneuver to set up the execution. He must master these five fundamental moves with the ball:

1. The cross-over step
2. cross-over dribble
3. behind the back dribble
4. reverse dribble

5. between the legs dribble

- **RULE:** The player with the ball is responsible to run his defender into the pick once the screen has been set.

Improper Placement of the Screen

If the screen is not set in the proper place on the floor, the defense can easily adjust or does not need to adjust at all. When set in the middle of the floor, the roll is into a congested area. The defense can help and recover too easily. When a pick is set outside, or on a clear side, the defense must make more adjustments, or give up a shot. If the screen is set too far outside, the guard may have a shot beyond his range, then no switch is necessary.

- **RULE:** If the guard is dribbling, let the guard make an inside move first, before setting the screen. Then, let the guard drive his defender into the screen.

Setting a Wide Screen

Another reason the pick and roll fails is because the screen is not wide enough. The screen, whether it be a front or back screen, should be set wide. The feet should be wider than the shoulders, yet the knees should be flexed to take the contact. If the screen is not wide enough, the defense can go over the top or slide through too easily.

If the screen is wide, the screener will take his first step wide to the basket. This also prohibits the defense from switching well enough to cover the roll. The long step produced by the wide screen keeps the defensive guard and the offensive forward's

back. The short step allows the defense to front the roller with less difficulty.

Hold the Screen Long Enough

The screen must be held long enough that the defending guard is screened out of the play. Too many times the forward rolls before the guard is screened and no switch is needed to defend the play.

- **RULE:** The screen should be held until the offensive ball handler is past the screen. The guard should be out of the peripheral vision of the roller before he executes his roll.

Release too early and the play fails; however, if the screen is wide and the switch is made, it really makes no difference when the roll is made. The offense should have the advantage because a guard will now be defending a forward. Even if a shot is taken from the outside, the offense has a better advantage of rebounding a missed shot. If not, the guard can take the ball to the corner and the forward can post up down low with a small defender on his back.

RULE: If the switch is made, especially a jump switch, the guard should try to take the defensive forward to the corner and the offensive forward should post his smaller opponent.

The Incorrect Roll

For some reason, many players turn rather than roll to the basket. A "turn" is a front pivot rather than a reverse pivot. A front pivot turns the offense into the defensive guard causing a moving pick.

Also, the forward takes his eyes off his teammate who has the ball. The roll gets you to the basket quicker because the first step is toward the basket. The roll causes the defensive guard to be behind the forward rolling toward the basket. Players must be drilled early in the proper execution of Play #3.

The Incorrect Pass

Whenever a player passes through a defender on any offensive situation, either of two passes may be executed, a bounce pass or a high pass.

- **RULE:** Use only the high pass or a bounce pass in executing the pick and roll.

Defending Play #3

There are four basic ways to defend the pick and roll:

1. No switch
2. Jump switch
3. Slide through
4. Help and recover

No Switch

Whether this method is used or not, it should be practiced, especially early in the season. Aggressive players are necessary. Players should be talking constantly on defense and the guards must be quick and have the ability to change directions quickly. Defensively, the "no switch" is the best because the defense never gets involved in a mismatch.

The defensive guard must learn how to beat the screen. To go over the top: step-up, belly-up, and go over the top.

Whenever the defensive forward sees his man going to set a screen, for example, he should, instead of calling "screen left," he should shout, "step-up left." This helps to remind the guard to step-up with his left foot in order to beat the screen. This generally takes a couple of short quick steps to get in front of the screen. Then, the defending guard throws his hip and stomach forward and slides over top of the screen. Using the hand nearest the screen also helps him to find the screen.

- **RULE:** Call out screens when your man is setting a screen. Use "step-up right" when the screen is on the right and vice versa.

If your opponent's offense isn't strong, you can beat many screens this way, especially if the defense is communicating properly. Talking on defense is one of the most important factors in any good defensive team. Players must be drilled on this and penalties assessed to players not conforming, especially early in the season. Bench time, or laps, usually work.

Jump Switch

If you choose to switch, the jump switch, if executed properly, is best. If properly executed, you may draw a charge, trap the ball, or cause a turnover.

For example, say you have been going over the top, usually the defense tries to adjust. Sometimes a change to the jump switch will often catch a very good offensive player off guard and cause an error.

The jump switch is just that. The defensive forward, or guard, makes a quick sideways move in front of the dribbler. The most

common mistake is that the jump fails to make the dribbler alter his direction. In fact, they have accomplished what they wanted – a mismatch or a defensive player out of position. If the switch is made properly, the offensive guard must stop, change direction, or charge.

RULE: If you jump switch, jump completely to the outside of the dribbler.

Most dribblers do not come close enough to the screen because they are driving hard to the outside. If a switch is made, they continue hard, but may have to move farther outside. Very few dribblers come back to the pick side when a screen is set for them. If the jump switch is hard and far enough, an error generally happens the first time.

This defensive action works better if the ball handler is weak; however, even good ball handlers are usually best with their strong hand. I always instructed my players guarding a dribbler to stay on his strong side.

RULE: If it is a guard to guard pick, always jump switch.

The Slide Through

Some coaches prefer to defend against the pick and roll by having the defensive forward step back and help the defensive guard through. Unless the guards shoot from the outside, this is not the best defensive option against the pick and roll.

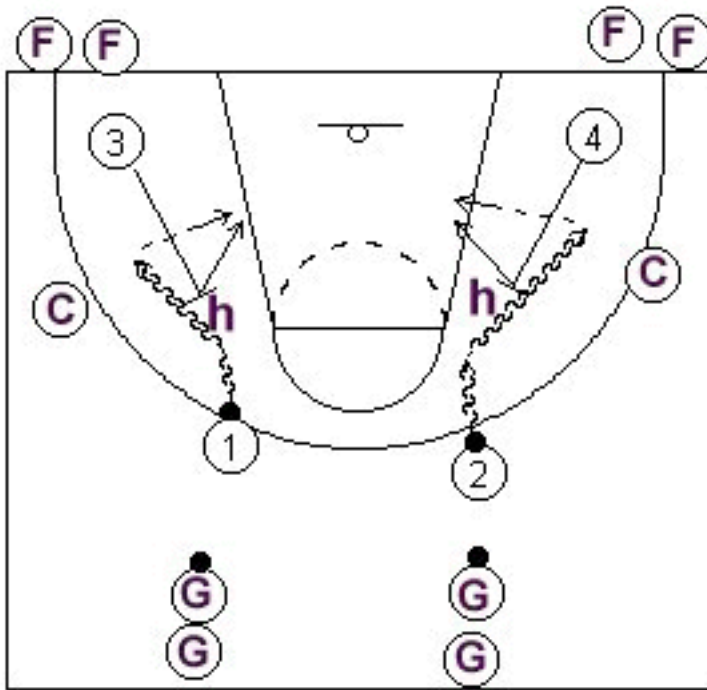
Help and Recover

This is a combination of the no switch and jump switch defensive options. No switch is really involved. The defensive move made by the guard is "belly-up and over" while the forward uses the "helping" move. Do not teach this one until the no switch and jump switch has been taught.

The defensive forward should be outside as if ready to jump switch. This forces the offensive guard to go outside a little farther off the screen and helps the defensive guard to "belly-up and over."

DRILLS FOR NUMBER 3

There are many more drills for the pick and roll than is shown here. Some are strictly instructional; however, most can be put in competitive drills which can be run many different ways. "Make it – take it" is a good method. That is, if the offense makes the basket, he or the team remains on offense. If the offense fouls, it is a turnover. If the defense fouls, the ball remains with the offense. A specific number of "turnovers" can be set up for the offense with score kept. Losers can do push-ups or laps.



Pick & Roll Chair Drill for Forwards

- The forwards line up along the baseline
- Guards line up near center line. The two front guards have a ball in the position as shown.
- The two front forwards (3 & 4) are in their starting position.
- A coach is on both sides of the floor and chairs are placed as shown in the diagram near the free throw line.
- The coach calls for the forward to come up and set a screen.
- The forward must wait for the guard to drive before rolling.
- The coach has guards to alternate timing, checks, and corrects any faults.
- All faults must be eliminated before using any defense.
- The screen must be set close to the chair so the "turn" is prohibited.
- A good pivot is produced. In the beginning no balls are used, just the pivot on the chair.

A screen can be set as close to an opponent as desired, short of contact, so long as the player being screened is in the normal field of vision of the opponent and the opponent can avoid contact. Outside the field of vision a screener must be far enough

away from the opponent to allow for a normal step. Screens can be stationary or moving, with or without the ball, inside a defender (between the defender and the offensive teammate that he is guarding), or to either side of a defender.

If a screener is moving, he must be moving in the same direction as the defensive player he is screening. It is important that all players know how to screen and how to cut or dribble off a screen, because when offensive balance and defensive balance are equal, screening is the best way to obtain an offensive advantage. The primary function of a screen is to free the cutter or dribbler for a good shooting opportunity. The secondary purpose is to beat a switching defensive maneuver by taking advantage of inside position resulting from the exchange in defensive responsibility.

Inside Screen

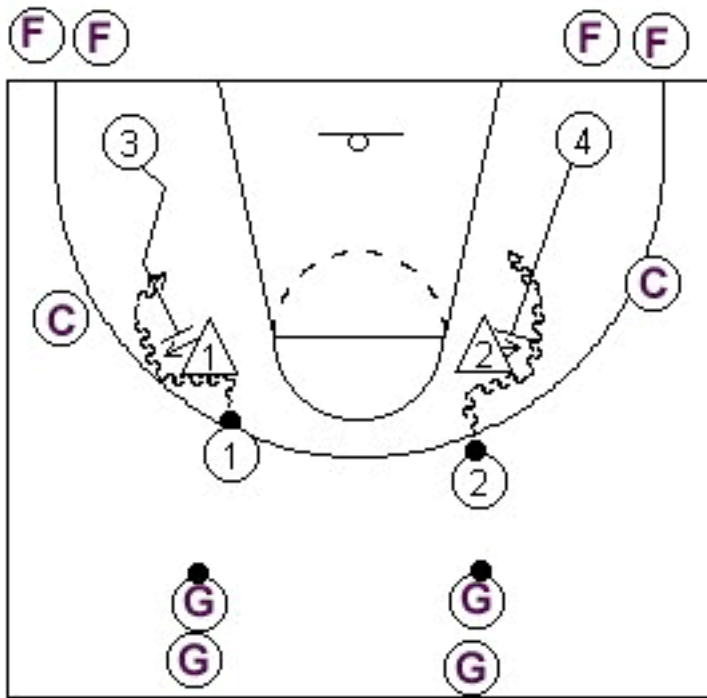
When the defender is close to the offensive teammate being screened for, the screener should be inside the defender, closer to the basket.

Outside Screen

When the defender is playing loose, the screener should be outside the defender, between the defender and the teammate he is guarding.

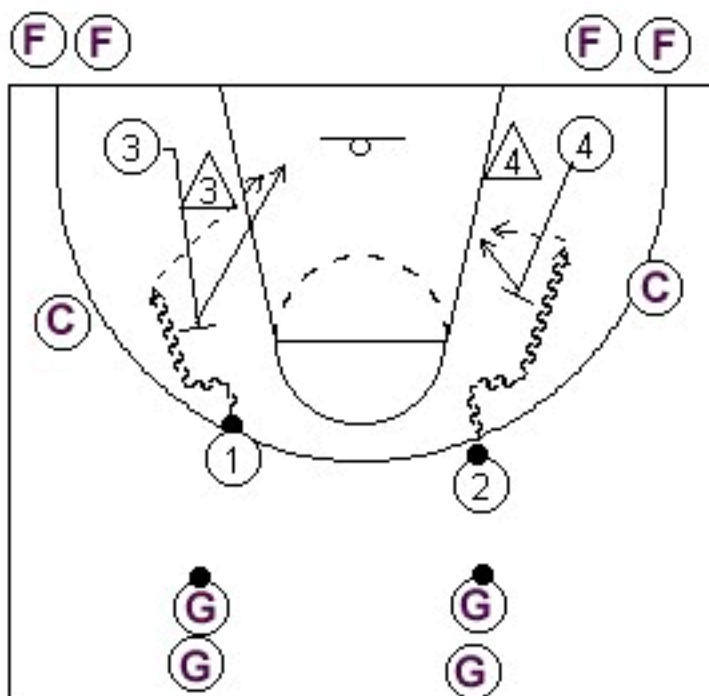
Back Screen

When an offensive player moves behind a stationary teammate who has the ball, or dribbles behind a teammate, a back screen is being set. Both defenders will be inside and closer to the basket than the offensive players.



Pick & Roll Two-on-one Guard Drill

- Only one defensive guard is used. He can be permitted, or prohibited, from the overshift drive.
- The coach can designate one offensive move only (shot, drive, crossover, etc).
- The coach can designate the defender to go over the top or slide through behind. Actually, this could be designated a defensive drill; however, it is my opinion you should concentrate on either offense or defense only.

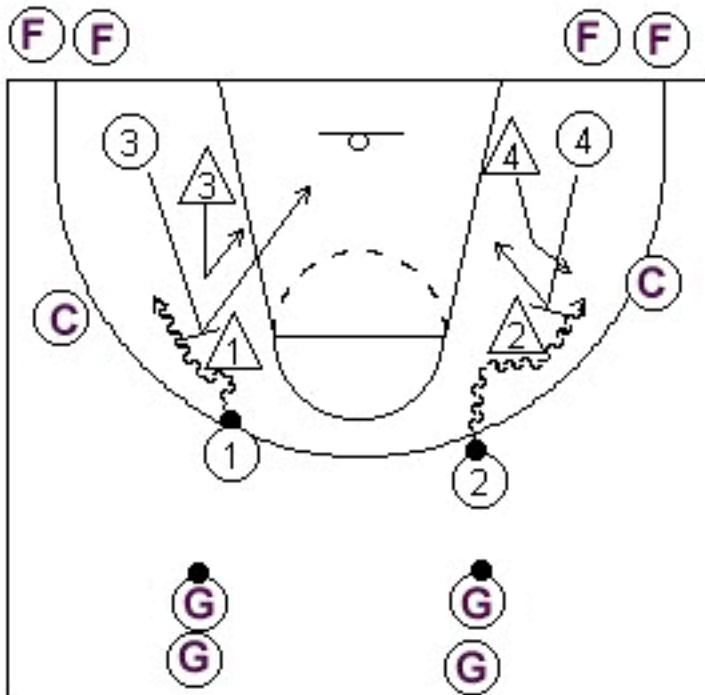


Pick & Roll Chair Two-on-one Forward Drill

This is a chair drill with the forward being defended. The defender can be told to switch, helps and recover. Concentration is on the pass, either high or bounce to the rolling forward. Do these things:

- Forward comes up and sets a screen on the chair.
- The defender switches or helps and recovers.

The forward and his defender go after the rebound and returns the ball to a guard line

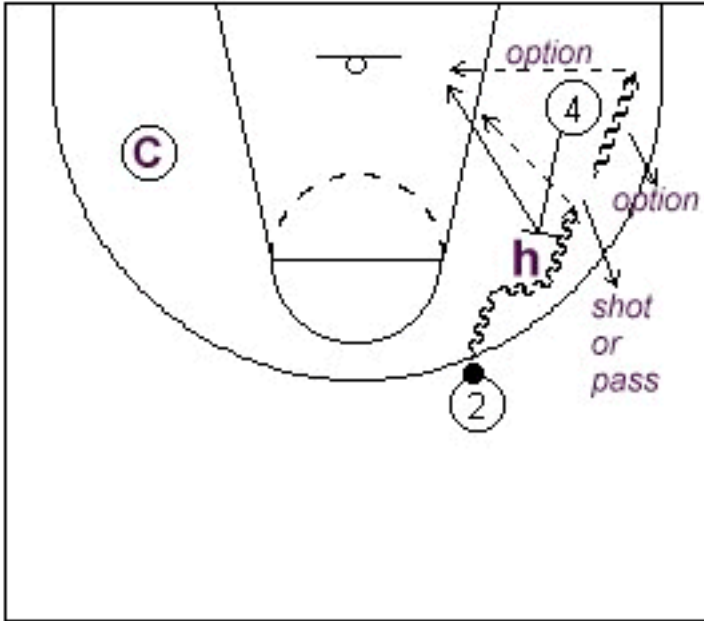


Pick & Roll Two-on-Two Drill

This drill should not be introduced until all the previous drills have become acceptable. The coach can designate moves, both offensively and defensively, such as guard must pass, defense must switch, no switch, help and recover, no inside drive, guard must shoot, etc. Follow these steps:

- Forward sets screen on teammate's defender.
- Guards defender switches, or helps and recovers to the forward.
- Forward rolls.

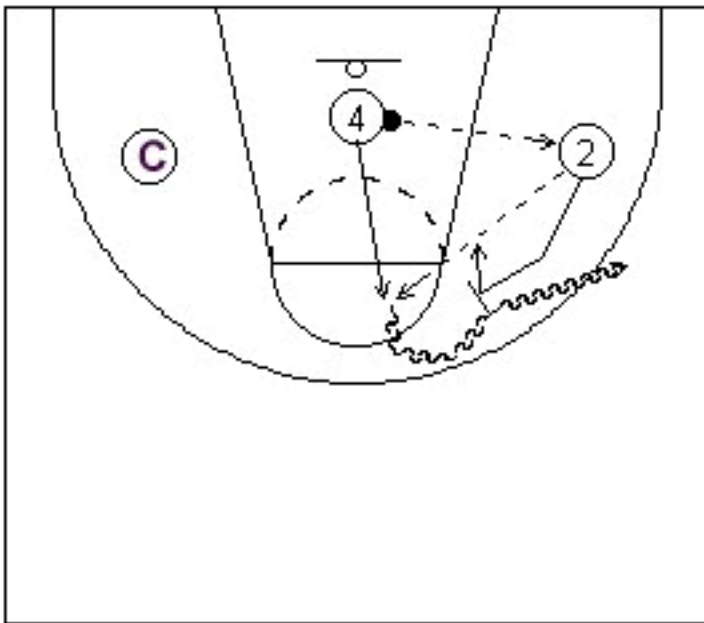
Defenders 1 and 2 switch or help and recover.



Pick & Roll One-Man Shooting Drill

In this drill, concentrate on both shots and moves. Do this with a guard and forward. The coach can call for a shot or drive. Do as follows:

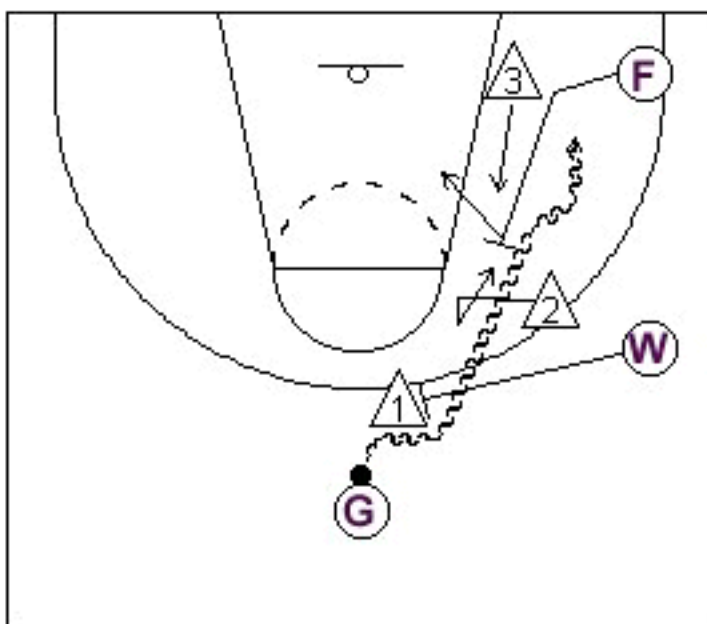
- The forward sets a screen for the guard.
- Either the forward or guard can be practicing their shots.



Pick & Roll One-on-One Continuation Drill

This is a continuation of the previous play. Follow these steps:

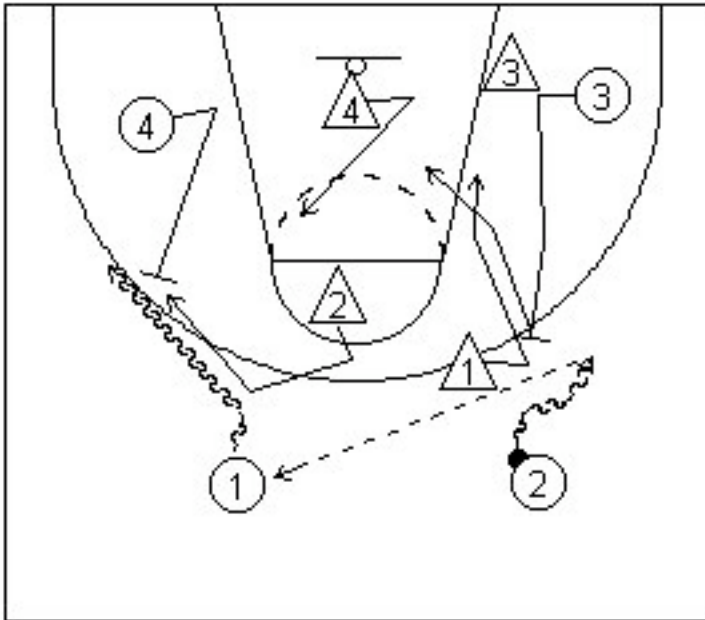
- Teammate 4 is out-of-bounds if a score is made and inbounds the ball to 2.
- Player 4 breaks down the middle and receives a pass from 2.
- 4 is now in the guard's spot and drill continues as 3 sets a screen for 4.
- Managers could serve as a dummy defense.



Pick & Roll Three-on-Three Drill

This drill is used to practice the guard-guard-forward #3 play. It is nearly the same as the two-on-two, except the first pick is by a guard and there is no roll by the guard setting the pick. It can be done from any three-man offensive set-up. Also, it can be an offensive or defensive drill as the coach can designate both offensive (shot, pass, drive or type of move) and defensive (no switch, switch, etc.) options. Here are the steps to be taken:

- Wing sets a screen on defender 1 for the point guard.
- Point dribbles off the screen.
- Defender 2 switches onto the point guard.
- Forward sets a screen on defender 2 for the point guard.
- Defenders 2 and 1 switch or help and recover.
- The forward rolls to the basket.



Pick & Roll Four-on-Four #3 Drill

This drill is basically the same as the two-on-two; however, if the play is defended on one side of the court, the ball is quickly reversed to the opposite side for a play #3 there. Help-side team defense can be practiced as well as offensive ball reversal.

- Offensive player 2 goes off a screen set by teammate 3.
- Defender #3 jump shifts.
- Guard 2 reverses the ball to guard 1.
- Guard 1 and forward 4 execute play #3 on the opposite side of the court.