



10 Commandments Of Skill Development



Coach Don Showalter

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Basketball is a game of skill. If players want to succeed they need to develop their skills and coaches need to learn how to properly teach skill development.

Below you will find the 10 Commandments of Skill Development that Coach Don Showalter teaches with USA Basketball.

One

8 Skills To Incorporate Into Practices & Workouts - The first one is the 8 skills that should be developed in practices and workouts. These are:

1. Footwork
2. Ball Handling/Dribbling
3. Rebounding
4. Screening
5. Passing
6. Whole Offense
7. Whole Defense

As a coach, you should be examining your practices to make sure you are hitting all 8 of these areas. Without a plan in place, or by just “winging it” you are likely missing 1 or more of these areas on a regular basis.

Two

Consistency Creates Greatness - Becoming great at anything is not easy. The only way to truly say you are great at something is to be able to perform that act consistently.



Whether you like it or not, how your team plays in a game is a reflection of how they practice. Teams that have up and down practices, will probably have up and down games. Teams that consistently perform at high levels, with high intensity in practice, will also probably repeat this action in games. In games, you play how you practice.

Three

Players Never Graduate From A Skill - Players never get so good at a skill that they do not have to practice the skill anymore. A great example would be Steph Curry. One of the best, if not the best shooter of all-time in the NBA. Steph Curry continues to practice in work on the skill of shooting. He does this in the off-season, during practices, pregame etc.

Players should continue to work on all skills to continually improve their game.

Four

A Player Doesn't Rise To The Occasion, They Sink To The Level Of Training - When working on skill development it is important to work on these skills in a game-like method. There must be competition in this setting. The closer you can recreate a game-like atmosphere, with game-like pressure for players, the more likely they are to succeed in pressure moments on the court.

Five

Comfort Zone Is The Enemy - You must try to get players comfortable at being uncomfortable. How do you do this? Get players out of their comfort zone in practice as much as possible. For instance, if you want to have your team play at a fast pace in games, make sure your drills reflect this. Players should be pushed in practice to play FASTER than they will probably play come game time. By doing this, their level of comfort with the pace of the game will increase and they will perform better in games.

It is up to the coach to determine what the comfort zone is for players during practice, and get players out of this comfort zone as much as possible.



Along with this, all players have strengths and weaknesses. Players should work hard at turning the tables and taking their weaknesses and turning them into strengths.

Six

Illusion Of Choices - Oftentimes coaches hear players say that they want to be great or they want to be the best. Players who want to be great have limited ways to get there. Players who want to be great must have a work ethic that aligns itself with this goal. If a player wants to be great, but only wants to put in the same work as the other players, they are not being realistic in achieving the goal they are after.

A question to ask players is “Does your work ethic align with your goals?” This question is a good way to help them see that if they want to be better than the rest, they will have to work harder than the rest.

Seven

Training Is Linked To Competition -Your training and practices must be competitive. Games are competitive situations, so you must practice this way as well. Using time and keeping score is a great way to make drills more competitive. Using small sided competitive games such as 3 v 3 are also great ways to link training and competition.

Eight

Demand Perfection To Get Improvement - Skills must be held to a high standard in order to achieve the improvement desired. In order to improve skills, the reps done must be perfect reps. If you are repping incorrectly, you are developing the wrong habits. As you rep skills, make corrections as you go, and then continue to rep the skills the correct way.

Your skills should progressively build upon themselves. Start simple and allow for athletes to perform the skill correctly, and then gradually add complexity and layers. Again, making sure they are performing the skills correctly each step of the way.



Nine

Evolve From Individual Skill Development To Skill Decision Making - Skill work is only one step in the process. Along with this you need to evolve from skill development to skill decision making. As players progress with skill development, they also need to work on decision making. This can be done by adding obstacles to the drills, which could include defenders.

Ten

Practice Skill Development Year Round - Skill work should be done year round, in season and out of season. Some coaches get into their season and they forget to continue with skill work. Teams should divide their practices into thirds. One-third should be for skill work, one-third should be for whole offense, and one-third should be for whole defense.

Practice sessions should not be longer than a maximum of 2 hours on court at the beginning of the season, and should gradually decrease as the season progresses.

