

Setting and using Basketball Screens

A screen, also called a "pick" is a legal block set by an offensive player on the side of or behind a defender in order to free a teammate to take a shot or receive a pass.

To properly set a screen, do the following:

1. Set a good base for yourself by spreading your feet wide and slightly bend the knees.
2. Hold both hands up so referee can see them.
3. A good screen is a matter of angles and timing. It can be set anywhere on the floor. Once you have played the game for a while, and you know how to screen, you will start to do it naturally. When you see a teammate is in trouble, you will automatically go and set a screen for him. It should be set perpendicular to the direction the defense expects to move.
4. Use the hip of the defensive player as your target.
5. The moment it's understood that you will set a screen, the teammate that you are screening for should do his part by setting up his defensive man properly. This means that he'll first take him at moderate speed a few steps away from the screen. This relaxes the defender, somewhat. Then, boom! Your teammate will use a change of pace and change of direction and run, or dribble, quickly, close off your shoulder.

It's important that your teammate comes close to you on the screen. If he makes the mistake of going a step or two away from you, the screen will lose most of its effectiveness, especially when a good defensive man is guarding him. A foot of space is all that's needed for the defense to slide in between you and your teammate and pick him up again.

6. After you set a screen, make a 180-degree turn and look to receive a possible pass. You will be surprised to find how many times you are free after setting a screen.

There are four different types of screens. A brief explanation of these follow. You should understand their uses and make them part of your offensive bag of tricks.

The Vertical Screen

This is often called a "down" or an "up" screen. The "down" screen, for example, a teammate at the high post moves down, vertically, and screens the defender of the teammate at the low post. The teammate at the low post will run his man off his screening teammate.

The "up" screen works just the opposite. In this case, the low post teammate will move up, vertically, and set a screen on the high post teammate's defender.

The Horizontal Screen

This screen is made over the top or parallel to the sideline.

The Diagonal Screen

This screen is usually set in the three-second area. The screener goes from one upper corner to the opposite low corner of the lane or vice-versa.

The Blind Screen

A blind screen, also called a "back pick", is usually made behind the back of the defensive man. You can make this screen either with your chest or with your rear end.

How to Use the Screen

The effectiveness of the screen depends not only on the screener, but also on the player who receives the screen. This player must be able to read the defense and react accordingly without predetermining which way he will go. It is the defensive alignment which actually dictates this. There are four basic ways to take advantage of a screen:

1. *The Front Cut:* If your defender is properly screened make a front cut over the top of the screen.
2. *The Back Door:* If the defensive man tries to slide over the top of the screen, make a fake and go over the top of the screen with your outside foot and then quickly change your direction and cut down to the basket.
3. *The Pop Cut:* If your defender drops off or tries to go between you and the screener, pop out to receive the ball. To signal this play to the screener, push him on his hip. As he feels you moving away from him, he will know that he should then cut to the basket to receive the pass from you.
4. *The Fade:* If your defensive man is making it difficult for you to use the screen by playing you high on the top side or toward the middle, move quickly toward the screen, push the screener on his hip, and then drop back toward the baseline.

Basic Moves Without the Ball

Go to any basketball game and your eyes will most likely follow the man with the ball and the player guarding him as they move about the floor. A more careful observer, however, will be watching the offensive patterns as they develop within the team. It's these key offensive movements by the other four players as they set screens and move into position that will start a carefully orchestrated play, that, once set into motion and executed properly, will result in getting a player free for a shot.

Offensive basketball is like a chess game. Players are strategically moved around the court without the ball in an effort to attack and exploit the defense's weakest link. Most spectators don't realize the fact that a good portion of offensive basketball is actually played with the offensive players barely touching the basketball. In a 32-minute high school game, it's estimated that each starting player will have the ball in their hands for a total of only three minutes.

Work on the basic moves without the ball. Make them a well-used part of your offensive bag of tricks. Remember, the more ways you know how to beat the defense, the easier it will be to free yourself for a shot. Some of the basic moves without the ball follow:

The V-Step

A good defensive player will always do his best to keep you from getting the ball by positioning himself between you and the player with the ball. However, with the V-step move, an in and out, change of direction move, you can shake loose of your defender most anywhere on the court.

When your teammate has the ball on your side of the court and can't get it to you because you are being closely guarded, start to angle yourself down to the basket at three-fourths speed. Try to get close to the basket and to your defensive man. By being close to the man guarding you, you will actually have a better chance to free yourself from him once you sprint away.

When you are ready to cut back up for the ball, make body contact with your man and then sprint back up-court at a different angle. To do this, take a step with your inside foot (the one nearest the baseline), placing it near the lead foot of the defender. Put the weight of your body on your forward foot and push off. Sprint back up at a different angle and ask for the ball, making a target with your hand to receive the pass. Finally with the ball in your hand, pivot around and square up to the basket. You are now ready to pass, shoot, or drive to the basket.

Reverse To The Ball

This is a move used to break free of your defensive man and then receive a pass. Begin by taking a step toward the forward foot of the defender with your leg that is nearer to the ball. Quickly make a 180-degree reverse toward the ball.

While reversing, swing your outside leg in front of the defender, placing your arm on his outstretch arm to keep him from moving in and stealing or knocking away the incoming pass.

When you have the ball in your hand you can take a step forward with your foot nearest the basket, turn, and face the hoop. Protect the ball.

Pop Out

Here is a two-part move to get free of your defensive man and get the ball in your shooting range. To make the move, go at three-fourths speed down toward the basket. Once you get in a position where you are just behind your man's head and he has to turn to look at you, take a final hard step, make contact with the chest of your defensive man with your forearm to freeze him there for an instant, then "pop out" at full speed moving away from the basket to the side court. Present your shooting hand as a target to the passer.

The Back Door

The back door play is another effective change-of-direction move to be used when your defensive man is overplaying you, blocking your receiving lane, or otherwise preventing you from receiving a pass.

To go back door, cut behind your defender when you are overplayed. There must be cooperation between you and the passer. Signal one another with the eyes, a wave of the hand, or a fake pass. First, lure your defender away from the hoop by taking two steps at three-fourths speed toward the passer. Then, changing pace, take a quick, hard step with your outside foot, pivot, take a long first step with your inside foot at full speed, cutting to the basket. With your defender now behind you, ask for the ball, making a target with your outside hand. Take the pass and go on in for your shot.

You can also make this back door by using a reverse move. Start by taking two steps toward the ball. On your second step put your baseline foot next to the back foot of your defender, and make a 270-degree reverse. Use your hand and inside arm, placing them on the defender's hip and back. This will "hold" him a split second in his position and give you a chance to safely break for the basket to receive the pass.

The Front Cut

This cut is used when you are playing high and want to receive the ball going toward the basket. Your defender is facing you, standing between you and the basket. This makes it difficult to penetrate. To get around this, move at a moderate speed toward the defender. Getting close to him is essential if this move is to work. Once you do get near him, make a hard step with your outside foot, then a crossover step in front of him with your inside foot. Cut to the basket to receive pass.

Fake Screen And Cut

To execute this move, you simply go away from the ball and set a fake screen. But instead of making the screen, you make a 180-degree turn by pivoting on your inside foot to receive the pass. Another option is to make a change-of-direction after the fake screen and then cut to the basket to receive a pass.