



NEW COACH GUIDE

1st & 2nd Grade Development League

SAUCON VALLEY YOUTH BASKETBALL

2026-2027 SEASON

Your role matters. You are helping children build confidence, learn the game, become good teammates, and develop a lasting love of basketball.

PROGRAM CONTACT

Kelly Landino, President | president@svyb.org

Welcome to Coaching

Thank you for volunteering to coach our youngest players. This guide is your first introduction to the Saucon Valley Youth Basketball program and is designed to help you lead practices, manage games, understand league expectations, and create a positive first basketball experience.

Our 1st and 2nd grade league is developmental. Players will arrive with very different skill levels, confidence, attention spans, and prior experience. Your job is not to produce a polished team. Your job is to help every player improve.

The standard for a successful season: Players are excited to come back, feel included, learn basic basketball skills, and understand what it means to be a good teammate.

Your five priorities

- Safety and age-appropriate instruction
- High energy, patience, and encouragement
- Fundamental skill development
- Balanced participation and meaningful touches
- Sportsmanship, teamwork, and fun

Before your first practice

- Complete all required coaching clearances.
- Review the rules and game format in this guide.
- Confirm your TeamSnap roster and assistant coach.
- Bring a simple written practice plan.
- Arrive early enough to set up before players enter the court.

Guide at a Glance

1. Program Philosophy	3
2. League Rules	4
3. Game-Day Operations	6
4. Coach Responsibilities	7
5. How to Run a Practice	8
6. Example Practice Plan	10
7. Drill Library	12
8. Fun & Holiday Games	15

Use this guide as a framework. You do not need to run every drill or teach every concept. Keep practices simple, repeat core skills, and adjust to what your team needs.

Program Philosophy

This is a development league for 1st and 2nd grade boys and girls. General basketball rules apply, but instruction and player growth take priority over strict enforcement and winning.

What development looks like

- Players learn the names and basic areas of the court.
- Players begin to dribble with control and protect the ball.
- Players learn to pass, catch, jump stop, pivot, cut, shoot, and rebound.
- Players understand the difference between offense and defense.
- Players learn to guard one player and stay engaged.
- Every player receives opportunities to handle the ball and participate.

Coach the child in front of you

Violations do not need to be called identically for every player. As the season progresses, hold more experienced players to a higher standard while giving newer players space to learn. Every child should be challenged at an appropriate level.

Plainly said: We want the kids to play. Use whistles to teach, not to constantly stop the game.

The scoreboard is not the objective

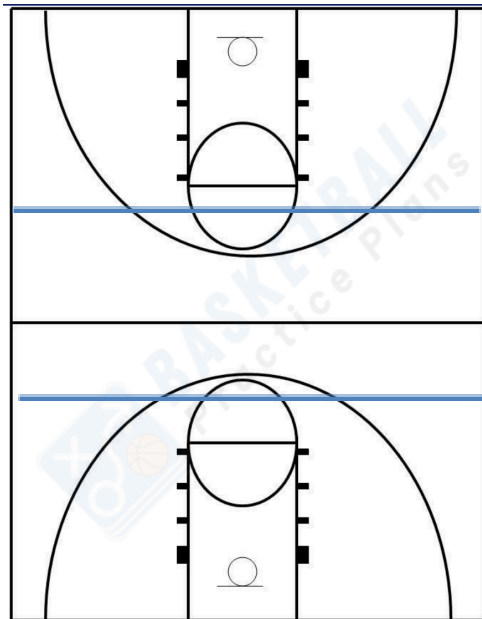
Match players fairly, prevent blowouts, share the ball, and create situations where less assertive players can succeed. The goal is player development, not competitive advantage.

League Rules: Coach-Refereed Games

Games are coach-led and coach-refereed. Call obvious travels, repeated double dribbles, obvious out-of-bounds, and obvious fouls. A whistle does not automatically have to result in a turnover. You may correct the player and allow the possession to continue.

Three key league rules

1. Defense begins behind the designated line. The defensive team must allow the offense to cross the taped line before applying pressure. Steals may not occur before the offense crosses the line.



Court reference: use the designated taped line in the Elementary School Cafeteria.

2. Play player-to-player defense. Players should guard the opponent they are matched with and should not leave that player to double-team. Help defense is allowed when a defender is beaten on a drive. Temporary double-teams may occur naturally while defenders reset after screens or movement.

3. Do not shoot from behind the defensive line. Shots from an unguarded area do not support development. Teach ball movement, passing, cutting, spacing, and attacking the basket.

How to Referee and Teach: Rules in Action

Use your whistle with purpose

- Stop unsafe or overly physical play immediately.
- Call clear violations, then briefly explain what happened.
- Allow a retry when it supports learning.
- Avoid long lectures during live play.
- Become slightly stricter as the season progresses.

Matchups at the start and after substitutions

Line up your players facing the opposing team. Pause the clock while coaches match players by approximate height and ability. This usually takes about one minute and helps every player know whom they are guarding.

Do not manufacture mismatches. Match stronger players with stronger players and developing players with developing players whenever possible. This creates a better experience for everyone.

When the score becomes lopsided

At a 10-point difference or greater, coaches should actively reduce the competitive imbalance. Options include:

- Require three passes before the leading team may shoot.
- Discourage steals off the dribble while still allowing steals on passes.
- Use the game to emphasize passing, catching, pivoting, V-cuts, and ball movement.
- Reset the score at halftime and treat the second half as a new game.

Game-Day Operations: Format and Participation

Boys game format

- If teams of 10, play 5v5 with two 20-minute halves.
- If teams of 8, play 4v4 with 16 minute halves
- Substitutions occur every 4-5 minutes.
- Halftime is five minutes.
- Even playing time.

Girls game format

- If teams of 8, play 4v4 with 16 minute halves
- If teams of 6, depending on attendance, coaches decide to play 4v4 or 3v3
 - Choose the format that creates the most participation, ball touches, and creates an overall good experience.
- Substitutions occur every 4-5 minutes.
- Half time is 5 minutes.
- A team parent or responsible older sibling should run the clock.
- Even playing time.

Create meaningful touches

Vary who receives the inbound pass after a basket. Give less assertive players intentional opportunities. A player still developing ball control may dribble up without defensive pressure and pass to a teammate before the defensive line.

Game-day reminder: Good basketball play, teamwork, confidence, and development matter more than the final score.

Coach Responsibilities: One Team, Shared Roles

Head Coach

- Bring positive energy and a calm, encouraging tone.
- Create a simple plan for each practice.
- Lead practices and coach-referee games.
- Manage the team schedule in TeamSnap.
- Communicate cancellations, weather issues, and important updates.

Assistant Coach

- Match the head coach's energy and expectations.
- Help run stations and provide individual instruction.
- Manage substitutions during games.
- Offer drill and practice ideas.
- Help keep lines short and players active.

Parent Volunteer

- Run the game clock.
- Help set up chairs before games.
- Help stack chairs after the final game of the day.
- Coordinate an optional postgame snack, if the team chooses to have one.

Required clearances: All coaches must complete the clearances required by Saucon Valley Youth Basketball before participating.

How to Run a Practice: Simple, Active, Repeatable

Young players learn best when practices move quickly, instructions are short, and core skills are repeated often. A strong practice does not need to be complicated.

Use a three-part structure

First third — Warm-up and ball handling Brief discussion, court terminology, coordination, dribbling, and movement.

Second third — Skill development Passing, catching, defensive slides, jump stops, pivots, cutting, shooting, and rebounding.

Final third — Game play 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v3, simple team concepts, relays, or competitive games.

Eight coaching habits that work

Keep it simple: Resist teaching too much new information at once.

Practice patience: Move on when a drill is not landing. Revisit it later.

Repeat skills: Repetition is the foundation. Add challenge gradually.

Give fast feedback: Use short, specific corrections while players are moving.

Ask questions: Use questions that require more than a yes-or-no response.

Teach offense and defense together: Use 50% or “dummy” defense when introducing offensive movement.

Avoid long lines: Use stations, partners, and small groups.

End with fun: Finish with a game, relay, or live play whenever possible.

Coaching Young Players: Attention, Confidence, Clarity

Keep explanations short

Demonstrate the skill, give one or two coaching points, and start the drill. Correct players while they are moving. Long explanations usually create more confusion, not more learning.

Correct without discouraging

- Name what the player did correctly first.
- Give one clear correction.
- Let the player try again immediately.
- Praise effort, focus, and improvement.

Useful coaching phrases

- “Eyes up.”
- “Control first, speed second.”
- “Jump stop and get balanced.”
- “Find your player.”
- “Pass and move.”
- “Great idea, try it again.”
- “Who has not touched the ball yet?”

Read the room. Do not spend too long on a drill that is not working. Simplify it, change it, or move on. You can come back to it another day.

Example Practice Plan

0:00-0:08 Court awareness and quick rules

- Dribble to named court locations: half court, foul line, sideline, baseline, top of the key, corner, block, elbow, lane line, and white line.
- Review double dribble, traveling, and fouls.

0:08-0:18 Ball warm-up

- Two-hand toss and catch with one foot raised.
- Single-hand toss and catch: right hand, then left hand.
- Pass the ball between hands.
- Figure-eight around the legs using fingertips.
- Right- and left-hand pound dribbles.
- Low dribble while identifying how many fingers the coach is holding up.
- Protective dribble with the off arm up.
- Introduce the crossover.

0:18-0:25 Defensive movement

Create four lines on the baseline. The first player in each line steps forward. Call out fast feet, slide left, slide right, and rebound in changing order. Finish each repetition with a sprint to half court and back. Rotate until every player completes two or three turns.

Water break Keep breaks short and organized. Use the reset to explain the next drill.

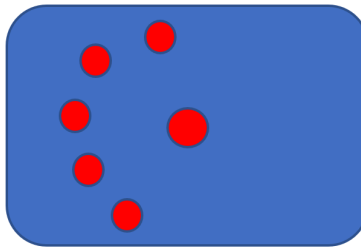
Example Practice Plan – Con't

0:25-0:35 Passing and shooting

Pair players in two lines facing each other about 10 feet apart. Practice chest passes, bounce passes, and short form shooting. Emphasize receiving the ball securely and using proper form.

0:35-0:42 Rapid Passing

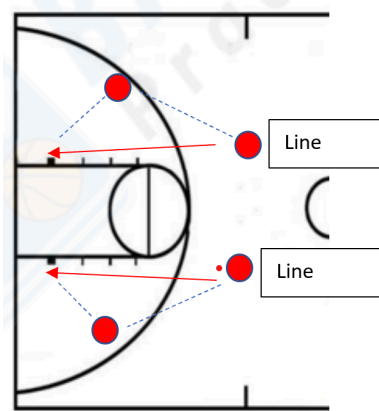
Divide into small groups. One player stands in the center while teammates form an arc. The center player passes to each teammate, who immediately returns the ball. Rotate the center after everyone has received a pass.



Rapid Passing setup

0:42-0:50 Pass and Cut

Use two lines with one coach at each line. The player passes to the wing, cuts to the block, receives a bounce pass, and finishes. Progress by adding a defender on the wing and teaching a V-cut to get open.



Pass-and-cut setup

0:50-1:00 War

Split into two teams along the sideline and assign each player a number. Call one or more numbers and bounce the ball into play. Progress from 1v1 to 2v2 or 3v3.

Finish strong. End practice with a game or relay so players leave energized and excited to return.

Drill Library: Ball Handling and Footwork

Dribble Knockout

Purpose: Ball control, awareness, and protection.

Setup: Players dribble inside a defined space and try to knock away another player's ball.

Coach it: Players whose ball is knocked away complete 10 jumping jacks and immediately rejoin. Coaches may join the game.

Progression: Shrink the space or require the weak hand.

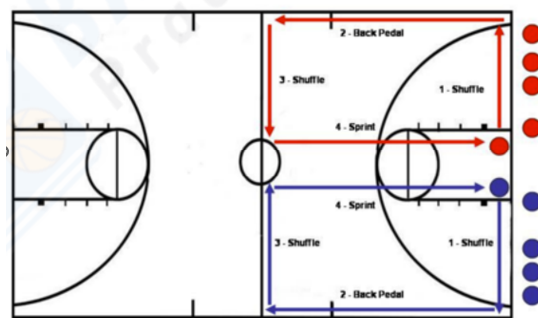
Shuffle Relay

Purpose: Footwork, change of direction, and conditioning.

Setup: Players sprint to half court, slide, backpedal, slide, and tag the next player.

Coach it: Demand athletic stance, controlled direction changes, and proper defensive slides.

Progression: Run three rounds, then have each team sit when finished.



Shuffle Relay court pattern

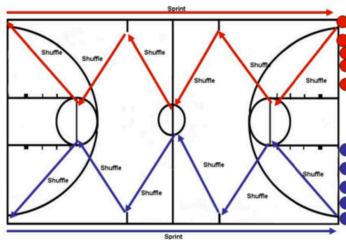
Zig-Zag Shuffle

Purpose: Defensive slide technique and body positioning.

Setup: Players move in a zig-zag pattern across half court.

Coach it: Keep hips low, feet apart, and avoid crossing the feet.

Progression: Add a dribbler and have the defender mirror at controlled speed.



Drill Library: Attacking and Decision Making

1v1 from the Wings

Purpose: Confidence attacking the basket and defending in space.

Setup: One side of the court goes at a time. Offense starts on the wing.

Coach it: Encourage decisive drives, control, and strong finishing. Mix lines to vary opponents.

Progression: Limit dribbles or start with guided 50% defense.

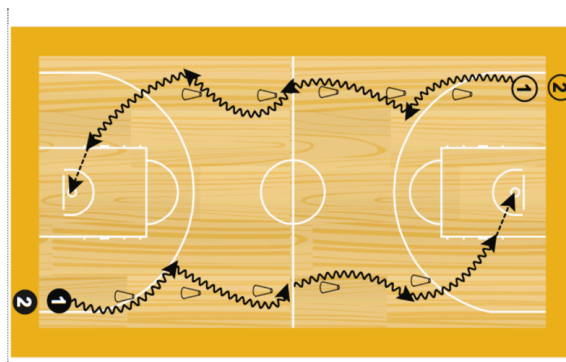
Snake Transition

Purpose: Dribbling with control around cones and changing direction.

Setup: Set cones in a snake pattern. Use half court if space is limited.

Coach it: Eyes up, ball protected, and controlled change of direction.

Progression: Weak hand only, crossover at each cone, or add a finish.



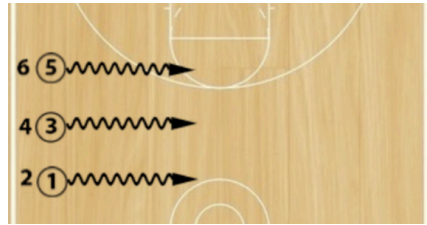
Dribble, Jump Stop, Pivot, and Pass

Purpose: Balance, footwork, and passing under control.

Setup: Use four lines. Players take three or four dribbles, jump stop, pivot, and pass to the next player.

Coach it: Land on two feet, establish balance, protect the ball, and pivot without traveling.

Progression: Call the pivot direction or add a defender.



Drill Library: Passing, Cutting, Teamwork

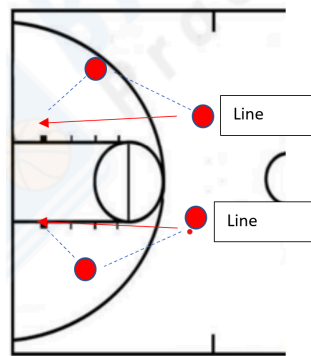
Pass and Cut

Purpose: Passing, moving without the ball, and finishing.

Setup: Use two lines and a wing passer. The player passes to the wing, cuts down the lane line, receives the return pass, and shoots.

Coach it: Pass accurately, cut hard, show hands, and finish under control.

Progression: Add a wing defender and teach the V-cut.



Rapid Passing

Purpose: Quick hands, accurate passing, and catching readiness.

Setup: One player in the center and the remaining players on an arc.

Coach it: Hands ready, step to the target, pass quickly, and return the ball immediately.

Progression: Change pass type or add a time goal.

Build progression without overcomplicating

- Start without defense.
- Add a guided or 50% defender.
- Add a decision: pass, drive, or cut.
- Finish with live 1v1, 2v2, or 3v3.

Repetition is key. Use these drills throughout the season. Progress them by increasing pace, adding a defender, reducing space, or requiring the weak hand.

Fun & Holiday Games: Skill Building Through Play

Seasonal themes are optional, but they are an easy way to keep players engaged during the long winter schedule. Change the names and themes to fit any holiday or practice.

Call It Out / The Grinch

Purpose: Dribbling, awareness, and protecting the ball.

Setup: One player is in the middle. Assign the remaining dribblers into groups such as Elves, Santas, or Snowmen. The middle player calls which group crosses.

Coach it: When a ball is knocked away, that player becomes a stationary obstacle who may also knock balls away.

Progression: Reduce the dribbling area or call multiple groups.

Santa's Sleigh Around the World

Purpose: Dribbling under time pressure and team shooting.

Setup: One team dribbles down and back along the white line while the other team takes one foul shot at a time until a shot is made.

Coach it: The shooting team yells “stop” when a shot is made. Award the point, then switch roles.

Progression: Change the dribbling route or shooting spot.

Passing Relay — The Gift

Purpose: Bounce passing, pivoting, and teamwork.

Setup: Two teams form single lines with players about eight feet apart. The ball travels down and back through bounce passes and pivots.

Coach it: Accurate passes, secure catches, and controlled pivots. Play best of three.

More Games to Finish Practice: Keep Them Moving

Christmas Train Tag

Purpose: Dribbling with awareness and avoiding pressure.

Setup: One player is the train. Everyone else dribbles. When tagged, the player joins the train with hands on shoulders.

Coach it: The train grows with each tag. Make the dribbling area smaller if needed.

Hot Basketball

Purpose: Catching, bounce passing, and readiness.

Setup: Players form a circle and bounce pass to one another while music plays.

Coach it: Players must catch cleanly and quickly select the next target. When the music stops, the player with the ball is out.

Elbow Shooting Challenge

Purpose: Shooting repetitions, rebounding, and team energy.

Setup: Split into two teams. Each team lines up at an elbow. Players shoot, rebound their own ball, and pass to the next player.

Coach it: Use a three-minute timer. Coaches keep score. Play best of three.

You can turn almost anything into a game. Split the group into teams, create a clear way to earn points, keep the activity moving, and celebrate effort and improvement.

Final reminder

Your players will remember how coaching felt long after they forget the score. Bring energy, stay patient, teach the fundamentals, include every child, and make basketball something they want to keep playing.

THANK YOU FOR COACHING

Saucon Valley Youth Basketball