

Screen To Get Open !

By Andrew Haysom, Level 1 NCAS, Greenvale, Victoria

The setting of screens is an important part of a successful team offense. The primary purpose of screening is to allow one of your teammates to get "open" away from their defender.

By "setting" a screen, you block the path of the defender so that they cannot follow your teammate as they cut off your screen.

The player who is setting the screen should remember the following key points,

- Keep your feet shoulder width apart, bend your knees and take up a strong balanced position.
- Hold your arms strongly across your chest (for girls) or groin (for boys) to protect yourself. Gripping one wrist with the other hand allows you to strengthen your stance.
- Expect contact - the idea is for the defender to run into you!
- Make sure your body is positioned "square" to the direction you are trying to screen.
- Line up the defender in the middle of your body.
- Let your teammate know you are screening. Remember the raised "fist" or verbal call.
- You must not push or contact the defender.
- You must remain stationary, and in your "cylinder".
- Once the "cutter" has gone the screener can "roll" to the basket.

The player who is going to "cut" off the screen should remember the following key points;

- Don't cut too soon. You must wait for the screener to have set the screen properly and to be stationary.
- Fake in the opposite direction that you are going to cut to put the defender off balance.
- Cut close to the screener! Brush shoulders with them. If you leave a gap the defender may get through it!
- "Read" the defense and make your move accordingly (see below).

The Down Screen

A down screen is when the screener moves down towards the offensive baseline to screen a defensive player closer to the baseline (diagram 1).

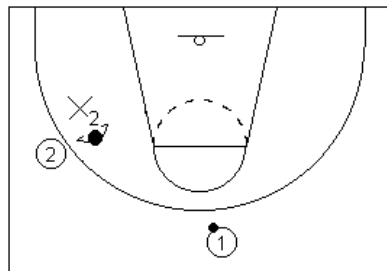


Diagram 1.

When setting a down screen remember the following principles;

- The screener should always be inside (closer to the centre of the court) the cutter.
- Screener has their back to the ball

This way the screener should have a cut to the basket and a cut to the ball.

What the cutter does depends upon the reaction (and ability) of the defender.

If the screener does a good job and the defender is run right into the screen, the cutter should make a tight cut, close to the screener, into the lane looking for a pass (diagram 2).

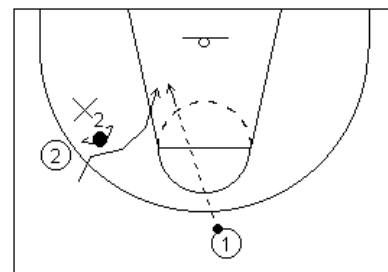


Diagram 2

If the defender gets between the screener and the cutter (fights over the top of the screen), the cutter can go back door looking for the pass. The screener should turn (face the basket) to block the defender (diagram 3).

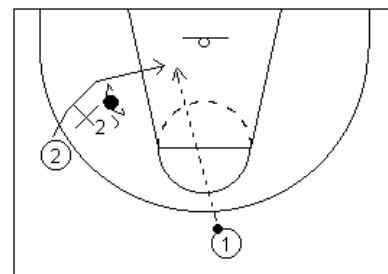


Diagram 3

If the defender chooses to go behind the screener, the cutter pops out for an easy pass (and possibly a 3-point shot). Again the screener can turn to block the defender (diagram 4).

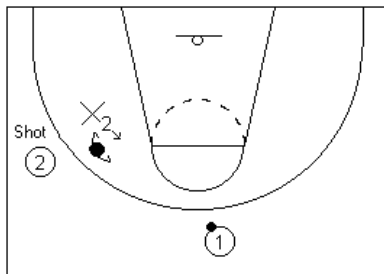


Diagram 4

The Back Screen

A back screen is when the screener moves up away from the offensive baseline to screen a defensive player further away from the baseline (diagram 5).

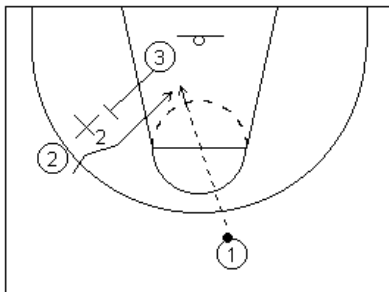


Diagram 5

When setting a back screen, the screener is usually outside the field of vision of the defender and therefore must give the defender at least one step of room. Otherwise any contact could be called as a foul on the screener.

When setting a back screen remember the following principles;

- The screener should have their back to the basket.
- Screener must watch the cutter as well as the defender to determine their next move which is often a “roll” to the basket.

Again the cutter must read the defense. The options are a tight front cut or to go back door (depending upon the reaction of the defender).

The Cross Screen

The cross screen is when one offensive player sets a screen moving across the court (roughly parallel to the baseline).

The cross screen is often used when a team has two big men playing “inside”. If unable to get open, the ball-side big man can screen across for the weak-side big man (see diagram 6).

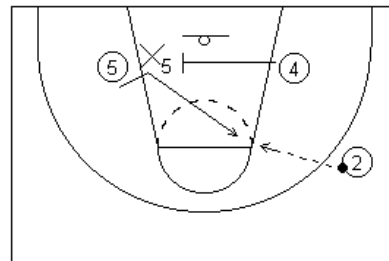


Diagram 6

Once again, depending upon the reaction of his defender, the weak-side big man can cut baseline to the opposite low post, or high side to the opposite high post.

Selling it to your players

Often, the role of the screener is seen as less important (or less glamorous) than the shooter or ball-handler and young players are reluctant to be screeners.

Praise the screeners – they deserve it!

Teach them to roll to the basket and they will quickly see that it is often the screener who gets open and gets the easy lay-up.

Teach your players the important fundamentals (be stationary as a screener, don't cut too soon as a cutter). If you don't they will pick up lots of fouls and quickly lose interest in screening.

Show them the advantages of getting a “switch” of defenders, which will often happen (accidentally at lower levels of competition). Your big man can have a height advantage and your

guard can have a quickness advantage as the result of a switch on a screen!

I think that you can start teaching your kids to screen as early as Under 10's. They may not use it much to start with, but teach them the principles and skills early and they will blossom later on!