SCREENING BASICS

Let's start with some simple guidelines that even young and inexperienced players can grasp with proper teaching. An on-ball screen, in which one player screens for a teammate with the ball, is a good place to start. For this situation, we'll look at rules for both the screener and the player receiving the screen.

Screener Rules

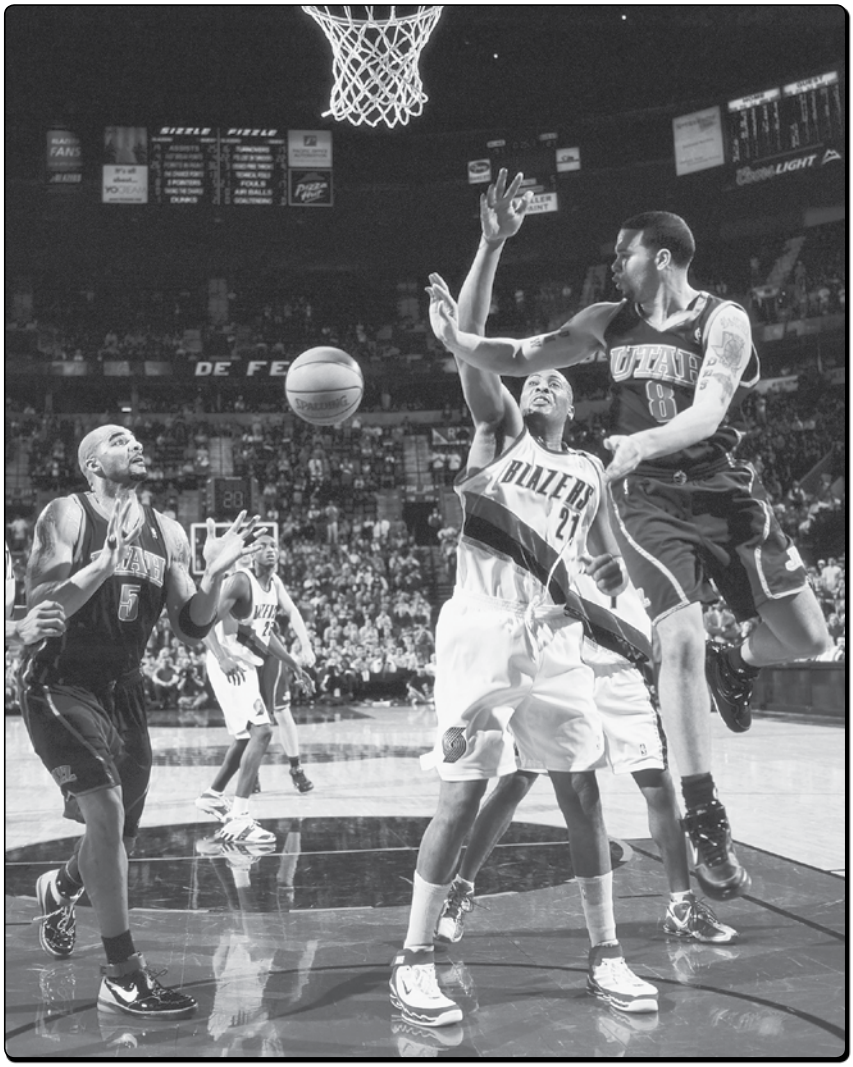
- See the teammate with the ball to best time the screen.
- Establish a solid stance (wide and low) at the proper angle for the ball handler to use an advantage against the defender.
- After setting a screen, pivot to face the ball and present a target for the ball handler.

The screen's angle is of foremost importance because the angle influences whether the defender has an easy or difficult time fighting the screen. As a rule, try to present the screen to the defender at a 90-degree angle, which gives him the widest space to cover when chasing the screened player.

Screen Receiver Rules

- See the screener, and either stay stationary or move in a way that helps the screener set a good screen.
- Use the angle and placement of the screen to your best advantage—get an open shot or drive toward the basket.
- Read the defense. Is the defender covering the ball stopped or slowed by the screen? Has the player guarding the screener switched to help out his screened teammate to defend you? Whatever the case, sense the defense's reaction and move accordingly.

When receiving the screen, don't move too quickly before the screen is set, and don't cut the screen off at full speed. Sometimes the screened player can beat the defender getting off the screen at full speed, but many other times, reading the defense, using a change of pace, and going the opposite way of the defender is the best way to exploit the screen.



Sam Forencich/NBAE/Getty Images Sport

Deron Williams gets picked up by teammate Carlos Boozer's defender and dishes the ball to him for a basket.

Often the ball hander who has used the screen is picked up by the help defender or the original defender, who recovers quickly after being screened. In such a case, an open shot or drive to the hoop is probably not possible, so at this point the ball handler becomes a passer.

Passer Rules

- See the full court and all teammates, but be especially aware of the screener.
- Read the reaction of defenders involved in the screen.
- Make a good, crisp pass away from the defender.
- Use the lob pass if necessary.

READING THE DEFENSE

Now we need to get deeper into the tactical decisions and actions necessary to make screens effective. The game of basketball is extremely fluid, with the pace of the action, player matchups, types of defenses employed, and a host of other variables changing all the time. Thus, offensive players must constantly examine the current situation and choose their tactics accordingly.

Such is the case when determining how best to set and use a screen, based on the defensive personnel, their positions on the court, and their actions. A keen awareness of the present defense and proper execution of the following countermoves will increase chances for success.

Screened Player's Reads

Setting up a defender to be screened and then capitalizing on the defense's response to the screen are underappreciated offensive maneuvers. Let's look at several options for using a screen.

Curl. If his defender trails, the screened player circles, or curls, around the screener and cuts to the basket to receive the ball (figure 4.1). He cuts as close as possible to the screener (brushing his shoulder) to avoid giving the defender a chance to get through the screen.

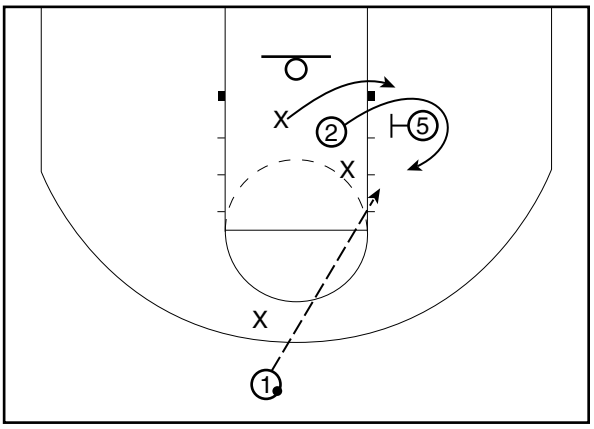


Figure 4.1 If his defender trails, the screened player curls around the screener.

Curl and slip. If the screened player curls around the screen and his defender trails, and the screener sees that his defender leaves him to help out (figure 4.2), the screener cuts (slips) to the basket to receive the ball.

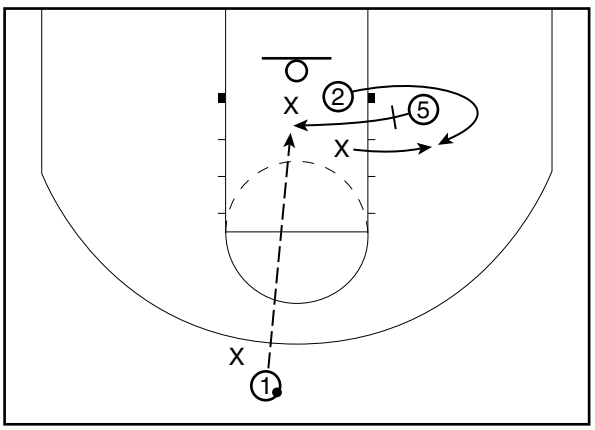


Figure 4.2 If the screener's defender helps out on the curl, the screener (5) slips to the basket.

Bump and pop. If, during the curl around the screener, the screened player sees his defender going over the screen to beat him on the spot (figure 4.3) while the screener adapts his screen by making a drop step, the screened player executes a "bump"—that is, he pushes himself off the screener and pops away. By popping out, the screened player can elude the defender, pushing with his hand against the back or the hip of the screener and taking a step or a hop away.

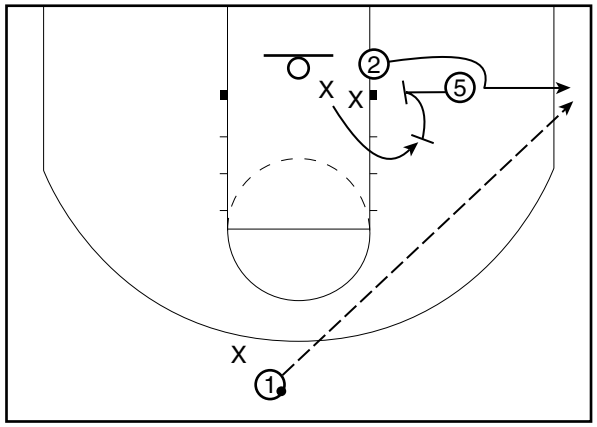


Figure 4.3 If his defender goes over the screen, the screened player bumps the screener and pops away.

Bump and slip. If the screener's defender jumps out (also called showing or hedging) to cover the screened player who has bumped and popped away from the screen and then received the ball (figure 4.4), the screener (5) quickly slips to the basket to receive a pass from the screened player.

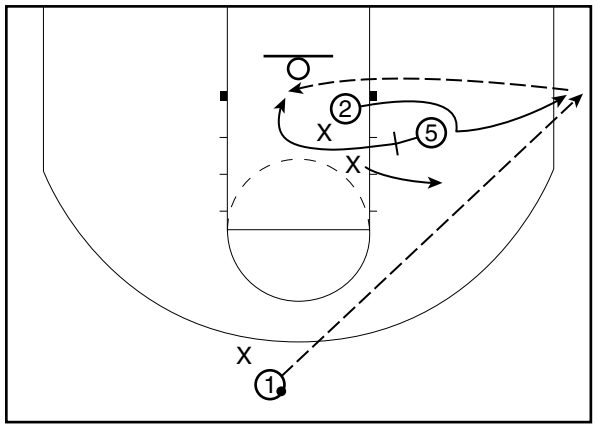


Figure 4.4 If the screener's defender jumps out to slow down the screened player, the screener slips to the basket for a pass from the screened player.

Screener's Reads

On all screens, the screener must offer a passing option to the ball handler, either rolling to the basket, popping out, or going in the opposite direction of the screened player. Thus, the screener must watch the reactions of the screened player, as well as watching his defender and the screened player's defender, and move accordingly. In general, the screener should go the opposite direction of the screened player. For example, if the screened player goes to the baseline, the screener goes high in the opposite direction. We'll review the screener's reads while describing the different types of away and on-ball screens.

SCREEN PLAYS

The proper choice of screen to use depends on the player's location on the court and the number of offensive players involved. The four categories to select from include off-the-ball screens, on-the-ball screens, high-post rub cuts, and special screens.

Off-the-Ball Screens

These screens involve three players: the passer, the screener, and the player for whom the screen is set.

Back Screen

This screen is also called a blind screen because the screener comes from behind the defender so that he can't see the arrival of the screen. Here are the options for the screened player based on the reaction of the defender:

- If his defender runs into the screen (figure 4.5), the ball handler (1) makes a lob pass to the screened player (2) while the screener (5) rolls to the ball.
- If his defender slides high on the screen (figure 4.6), the screened player cuts low while the screener pops out.
- If his defender slides low on the screen (figure 4.7), the screened player cuts over the top of the screen while the screener pops out.

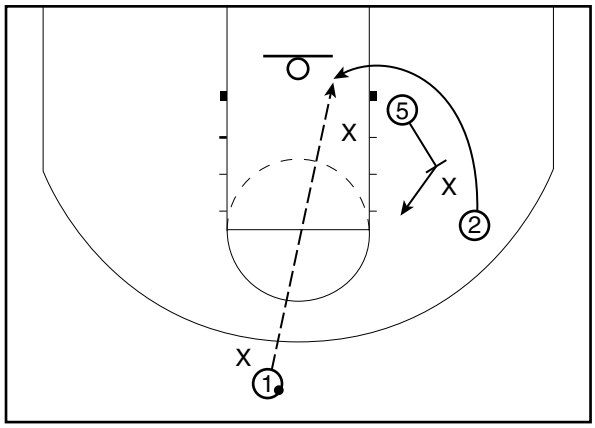


Figure 4.5 If his defender runs into the screen, the screened player receives a lob pass.

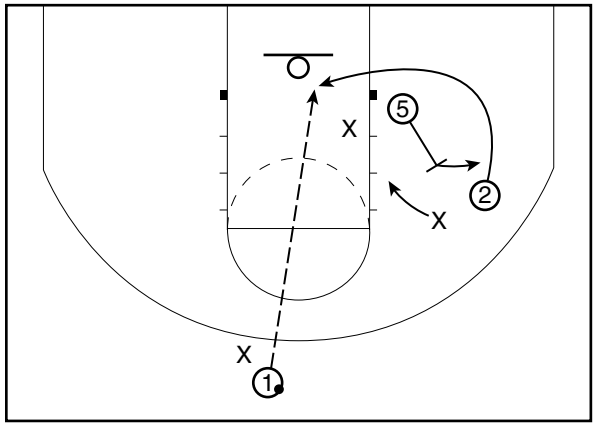


Figure 4.6 If his defender slides high, the screened player cuts low.

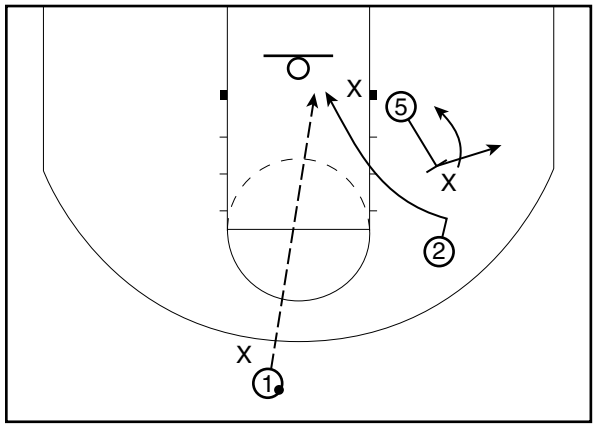


Figure 4.7 If his defender slides low, the screened player cuts over the top.

- If his defender anticipates the cut (figure 4.8), the screened player bumps and pops out away from the screen while the screener rolls to the basket.

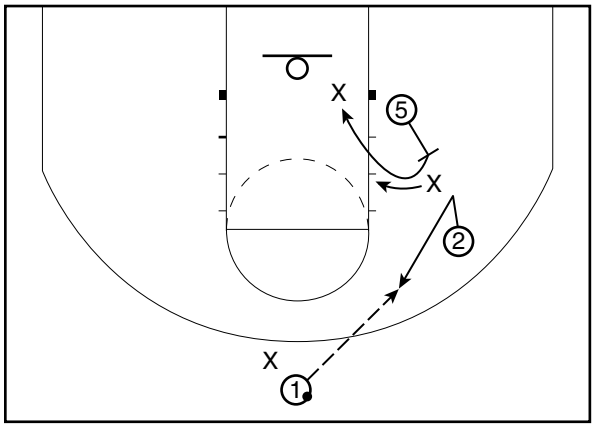


Figure 4.8 If his defender anticipates the cut, the screened player bumps and pops out.

- If the ball handler can't pass directly to the screened player (figure 4.9), the screener pops out, receives the ball, and passes to the screened player, who has posted up.

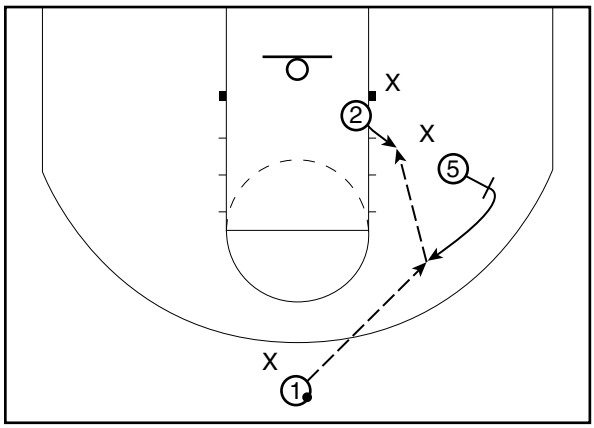


Figure 4.9 If the screened player can't receive the ball, the screener pops out, receives the ball, and passes to the screened player on the post.