



Tickle Trunk

I recently did a clinic for Basketball Ontario on making practice fun, especially for the younger players, although I think there should be an element of fun for all ages. When I travel, I take with me a bag that contains my toys. I call it my tickle trunk, a tribute to Ernie Combs, Mr. Dress Up. In the tickle trunk there are many items that I have collected over time and use to make practice fun.

Why do we have to make it fun? My coaches certainly did not use toys when I was taught to play:

- The Basketball Development Model, the first LTAD model, from the early 1980 had children starting to play basketball at age 12. Today children as young as five years old are beginning to play. Young children do not have the attention span for repetitive drills.
- When I was growing up, we had limited choices. Only 24 boys played basketball at a junior high level (two teams, one in the county, one in the town), at high school only 12 boys played. If you did not play, there was no other school sport during that season. Only one sport was offered per season. Today, with the growth of club basketball more people play basketball at a given time. However, there are also option for other sports that are offered year round. If you find basketball boring there is always something else to do.
- Flow theory states that people are in the moment when their skills equal the challenge. If their skills are greater than the challenge, the child becomes bored with the activity. If the challenge is greater than the activity, the child experiences frustration. In drills, it is often hard for a coach to match skill to challenge for each child. In a game, the children can find their own challenge that matches their skill level.
- The length of a team's season may not be longer, but athletes are playing year round because they play on multiple teams. It is easy to get stale.
- Players will work hard and learn many things when the activity is presented in a games approach. The players have to think of strategies and learn to compete.
- Not everyone learns the same way. Toys and a games approach sometimes teach without the child knowing.
- Because it is FUN! One of my mentors was Richie Spears. We were at a meeting considering legal action against a coach who failed to return six basketballs and a training kit used in the summer. Richie's words of wisdom have always stayed with me; "IT IS A GAME FOR KIDS!"

Here is a list of some of the items I have in my tickle trunk.

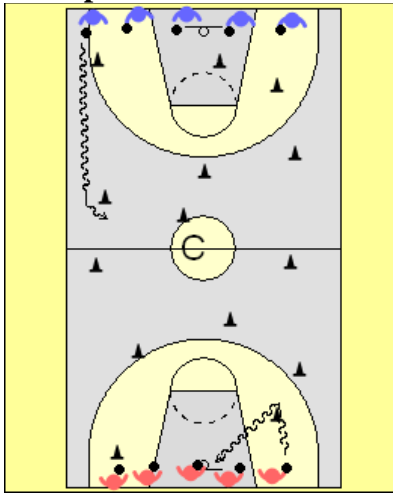
Wos markers –These are plastic pylons that can stack one on top of the other. They are very flexible and do not break if stepped on. I like to have a variety of colours (12 pylons of four different colours, 48 in total, would be ideal). I also can write on them with a permanent marker. The orange traffic style pylons are fine, but they take up more space and are heavier. To be

creative you can use water or pop bottles and fill them with sand. If you can only get one item this would be my recommendation.

Uses:

- They are excellent for marking spots or spaces on the floor. It creates boundaries for the players.
- For keep score in shooting games. You score a basket take a pylon.
- For obstacles for dribbling.
- To check if players are scanning the floor when dribbling. Hold up a pylon the players call out the colour.
- As hats to make the players keep their head up when dribbling.
- When numbers are written on the wos markers they can be used in matching games.
- As objects that you moved in a shuttle relay.

Example:



Memory chain

The group spreads out along the respective baselines. Each player has a ball. The first player must dribble to a pylon and perform some action (Around the neck, around the waist etc.). Then dribble and score a basket. The second person must go to the first pylon, repeat what the first player did, then go to a second pylon, and perform a new task. Each successive player must remember what the players in front performed.

It helps young players pay attention to detail. In addition, it reminds them when standing on the sideline they still need to pay attention.

Beanbags – I like beanbags because they do not roll around. I have also used tennis balls or little plastic balls that you can buy at the Dollar Store (I must admit that I have a gold members card at the Dollar Store). You can always use balled up paper with a little masking tape to make beanbags.

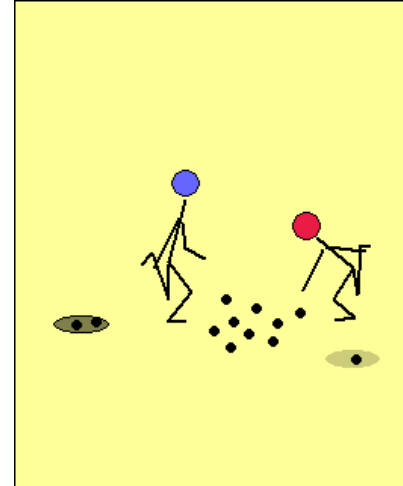
Uses:

- They can be tossed by younger children at targets. They are also easier to catch since they do not roll away.
- With older players, they can dribble while tossing a beanbag.
- Placed on the head they make the player keep the head up when dribbling.
- When you number the beanbags, they can be used with the wos markers in matching games.
- Keeping score in balance games and shooting games.
- Shuttle relays

Example:

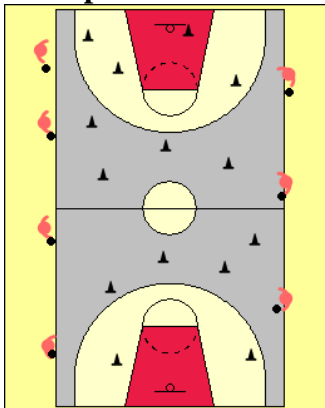
Feeding chickens

Each player has a home base, a spot on the floor, a hoop. A number of objects are placed in a defined area. The players bend one leg up and grasp it at the ankle. By hopping and bending over the players must collect the chicken feed and place it in their home. Go a second time and use the other foot. This could be done individually or in a team. Be careful not to make the distance too big with younger players
You could add penalties for touching the ground with the raised foot.



Rubber ducks – I have an extensive collection of rubber ducks and plastic bath animals. When you pull these out with younger children it is hard to get them all back in the bag. I use these in place of beanbags. They fill all of the same roles they just make in more fun. I do have a number of team building activities I do with blind folds, the ducks and animals.

Example:



Memory

The ducks are placed randomly on the basketball court. When the leader says, “go” the players dribble around the court looking at the numbers on the bottom of the ducks. Give them a set amount of time. When the time elapses, the players go back to the sideline. They can work individually, in pairs or in a team depending on the number of players. The leader now calls out a number. The first player (partner or teammate) to find right the duck and squeeze it wins a point.

Puzzles – I prefer wooden puzzles because they are more durable, but you can get some good cheap ones at the Dollar Store. They are usually not as difficult to put together. I like ones with between 12 – 20 pieces.

Uses:

- To keep score in relays or in games. In order to win you must build the puzzle. You get puzzle pieces by performing the required activity.
- I have also pulled these out to entertain younger brothers/sisters who have been dragged along to watch their older sibling at practice. It can get boring for them also.

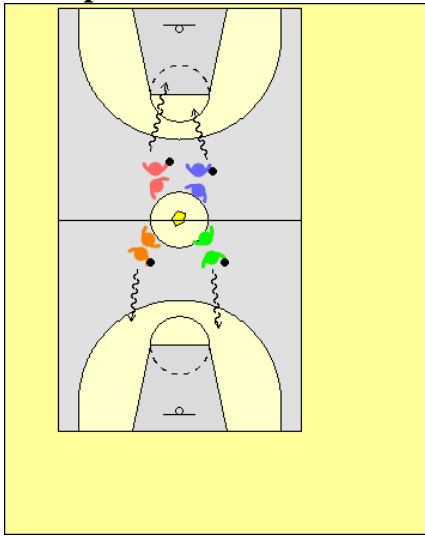
Dice – I purchased a 12 sided dice from T. Litzens Sports out of Dundas, Ontario. The players love to use the dice. It is the size of a handball and is made of soft foam.

You can use two regular six sided dice; it is just not as easy to see or as fun to throw.

Uses:

- By rolling the dice, you create a target number that the team must score. The randomness keeps the players alert.
- To determine the number used for matching or who gets to participate in an activity.

Example:



Dice Shooting

The players partner up with one ball per pair. All players must start at centre. One player throws the dice. The first pair to score the **exact** score shown on the dice wins.

For example:

- 1- a foul shot
- 2- two fouls shots or one field goal
- 3- three foul shots, one foul shot and a field goal or one three point shot.

The players must work together and learn to play to their strengths.

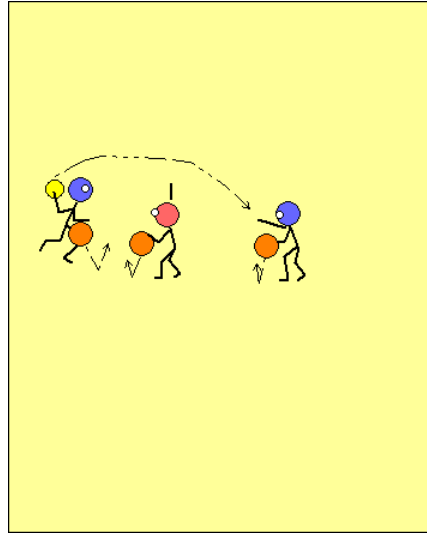
You must decide how many attempts they get before they must return to centre.

They must alternate turns.

Foam dodge ball – These balls are made of dense foam. They do not hurt when you are hit with one.

Uses:

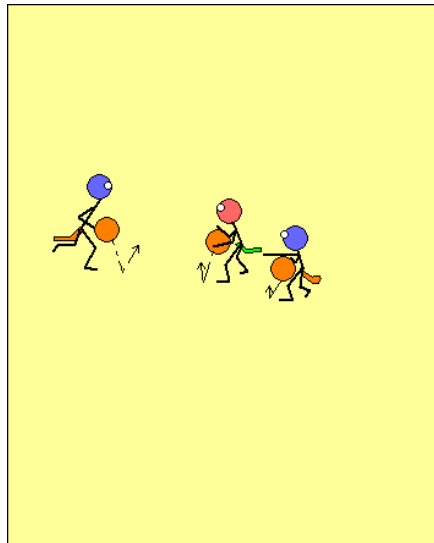
- These soft balls are great to use for young players to help with catching.
- Dodge ball, teaches agility, tactics and strategies.
- As a second ball to be passed when dribbling.



Flags – I have the plastic tails from football flags. You do not need the belt as the flags work fine tucked into the shorts. You can also use regular pinnies. Pieces of cloth would work also.

Uses:

- Dribble tag or capture the flag games.



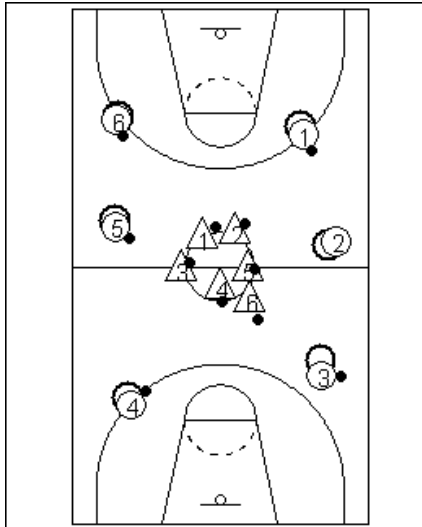
Hula-hoops – You can get the big ones at most department stores, but I have found ones that can be taken apart into five sections.

Uses:

- Mark a home or safety area.
- Placed over the rim they create a lower rim for younger children to shoot at.
- There are many team building games that you can do involving passing and moving in and out of the hula-hoop.

- Great rolling targets for players to pass through. Teaches the players to lead when passing to a moving target.

Example:



Castles

Player's partner up
Each pair has two balls, a hoop and some beanbags.

The player inside the hoop protects the bean bags. The player outside the hoop visits the other hoops and attempts to steal the beanbags.

If a player is tagged by the defender he/she must visit another hoop. If a beanbag is stolen she returns to his/her home and switches places.

The coach can also call switch forcing the players to switch positions.

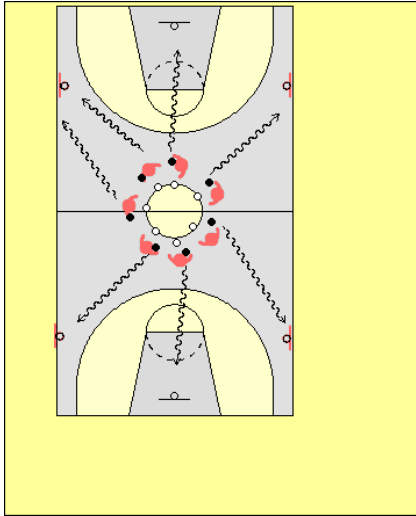
Note: To add more basketball skills make the players score a lay up when tagged before they can return to attempt a steal. Another addition is to add pinnies to the players as flags that they tuck into their shorts. The players can steal the flags and set them in their castle instead of beanbags.

Deck of cards – A simple deck of cards has many uses. I have purchased oversize cards to make it easier to see.

Uses:

- As markers when dribbling.
- For matching games.
- For team building activities.

Example:



Old Maid

You can take a number of children's card games and turn them into basketball activities. Remove three queens from the deck and deal the entire deck face down to each child. If a child has a pair, they place these cards face up in front of their hand. The object is to get rid of all of your cards and not be left with the old maid (the one remaining queen). In order to choose a card from another player the child must go score a basket. (You can have them do a number of basketball activities: foul shots at the end of practice, dribble, wall passing, Maravich drill etc.) After scoring the basket, the player comes back and chooses a card from a player's pile. If this card forms a pair, the child places the cards face up. If not, it goes face down in the child's pile.

Pool noodles – I usually cut them in half to make swords. To make an elaborate one that it sturdier I insert a dowel to make a handle. I then cover the dowel with pipe insulation from Home Depot. I a little duck tape keeps it all in place. You must be careful that players do not use these as weapons.

Uses:

- To distract dribblers who do not protect the ball.
- To simulate a defender reaching for the ball on a lay ups.
- To distract shooters.

