

I Teach More Than Gym:

Skill Development in 4-Sq Striking & Basketball Dribbling for Elementary Students

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@MoreThanGym

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A Typical 50-Minute Class

Entering The Gym (1-2 minutes) - The classes enter and are either walking or skipping (teacher's choice). From here, we move into our fitness section of our class.

Fitness Section (15-17 minutes) - The classes complete about 5 minutes of interval walking and jogging (we typically do this as boys and girls). The students then participate in a variety of fitness activities designed to increase their heart rate and engage the major muscle groups. This may include student or teacher-led activities, partner activities, and or large group activities. When completed with the exercises, we all move to the stage and have a 1-2 minute health/fitness tip.

Lesson (25-30 minutes) - We will spend about 25 minutes on the standards-based physical education lesson. It may be a demonstration and then working through a skills progression or a large group activity (depending on the unit).

Clean-Up & Exiting The Gym (1-2 minutes)

4-Square Progression (two-hand, underhand striking with a playground ball) for 3rd-5th grades:

TN State PE Standards

MS.18.3 Strike an object with a short-handled implement sending it forward using an underhand pattern with accuracy.

MS.18.4 Strike an object with a short-handled implement sending it forward using a forehand pattern with side to target and implement back in preparation.

MS.18.5 Consecutively strike a ball with a short-handled implement against a wall using a mature forehand pattern.*

1. **Drop, hit, bounce, catch (DBHC)**: This is the serve in 4-square. The focus is on the initial hit that is dropped and then hit to a partner who is straight across.
Critical Elements of the DBHC:
 - TSW drop the ball straight down from waist level.
 - TSW step forward with one foot as striking.
 - TSW strike it underhand with two hands (fingers pointing to the floor).
 - TSW make contact with their finger pads [similar hand contact as the basketball dribble (striking the ball upward versus pushing it down)].
 - The ball should move to their partner with a medium level arch.
 - The ball should bounce one time followed by the partner catching it.Common Mistakes of the DBHC:
 - TSW carry the ball rather than striking it.
 - TSW not take a step.
 - TSW hit the ball with too much or too little force.
 - TSW hit the ball with their hands in the overhand position.
 - TSW strike the ball with only one hand.
2. **Drop, hit, hit, hit, catch (DHHHC)**: The focus is now on the second and third hits that come from a partner who is straight across. They now have to track the ball, react, and strike it back to their partner. This step purposely has three hits to allow the person who serves it to change each time.
 - Critical Elements of the DHHHC: same as above plus the students should move up/back/sideways (if needed) to strike the ball
 - Common Mistakes of the DHHHC: same as above plus the student standing still and not moving up/back/sideways
3. **Drop, hit, hit... (DHH...)**: This is a continuous hit. The focus is now on the second, third, and additional hits that come from a partner who is straight across. That is, are the two consistently striking it back and forth (4-6 hits in a row)?
 - Critical Elements and Common Mistakes of the DHH...: same as above

4. **Multiple Partners:** The students are placed in groups of 4 on a 4-square court. The focus is now on receiving and striking a ball to and from different angles. There is no mention of rules or boundaries. The students simply focus on how many hits in a row their group can get before it bounces twice.
- Critical Elements of Striking with Multiple Partners: same as above plus each student can now hit it to different people
 - Common Mistakes of Striking with Multiple Partners: same as above plus not paying attention as the ball may or may not come to them
5. **Modified 4-Square:** The focus is now on learning the rules, boundaries, and strategical errors of the activity as well as the basic rotation. I usually introduce one or two rules at a time in order not to bombard them.

I define the rules as, "If you...then your turn is over," or "If this happens in your square...then your turn is over."

Rules: If any of the following occur, your turn is over:

- If you hit it airborne (i.e., way out of bounds)
- If it bounces twice in your square
- If you hit it overhand/one-handed
- If you cause it to hit the center line
- If it bounces once in your square and you do not hit it

6. **Traditional 4-Square:** The focus is now on applying the rules, boundaries, and strategies of the activity.

I prefer to put the students into groups of 5. I have found that requiring one student to momentarily wait a turn helps to keep the entire group on-task. We typically use an 8.5" playground ball (PGB). In our gym, the 4-square courts are 8' x 8', and we have 20 of them to accommodate our large classes. Having this many [4-square courts can be useful for other things as well.](#)

Our squares are labeled #1-4 with #4 being the king/queen of the court. The rotation can be confusing to some students. If your turn is over, you then move to the end of the line while the others move up.

#4	#3
#1	#2

Pro-Tip: I remind the students to only rotate if there is a square open in front of them. For instance, if the student in square #3 makes a mistake, they go to the end of the line while #4 stays put, #2 moves up to square #3, #1 moves up to square #2, and the next person in line enters to square #1.

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The initial steps of this progression (#1 DHBC & #2 DHHHC) may be introduced in 2nd grade as a challenge with the latter steps being further developed when the students reach 4th and 5th grade. Items #5 & #6 in the progression are skill dependent. That is, we may or may not progress to them with the 3rd graders. It all depends on their skill level. Since I do not have much turnover of students from year to year, the 5th graders may begin at step #4. If so, I check with any new students to make sure they have steps #1-3 under control.

To add some variety, I sometimes allow the students to use a 5" PGB, a 24" ball, or to play on their knees.

Aerobic Striking (DHH... with a team):

- Variation A (Continuous Striking): Each 4-square court should have 5 students. A group of 3 (in a line) should be at one corner while a group of 2 (in a line) should be at the opposite corner. The goal is for the two corner groups to work together to execute the DHH... for as long as possible. The group of 3 starts with the ball and begins the DHH... sequence. As soon as the first person hits the ball, they should rotate to the end of their line. The first person in the group of 2 then strikes the ball back and rotates to the end of their line. This back and forth striking continues until a mistake is made.
- Variation B (Switching Sides): Same as above; however, as soon as each person hits the ball, they should rotate to the end of the OPPOSITE line.

4-Square Tournament: The gym is divided into 3 levels with all students beginning at level 1.

- Level 1 - If you serve the ball 3 times in a row, you get to move to level 2.
 - Level 2 - If you serve the ball 2 times in a row, you get to move to level 3. If you get out 2 times, you move back down to level 1.
 - Level 3 - If you serve the ball 2 times in a row, you get 1 bagel (a sliced pool noodle) and start all over. If you get out 2 times, you move back down to level 2.
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Basketball Dribbling Activities (K-5th):

TN State PE Standards

MS.13.0 Dribble in self-space using one or two hands.

MS.13.1 Dribble continuously in self-space using finger pads and appropriate force.

MS.13.2a Dribble in self-space using a mature pattern.*

MS.13.2b Dribble with preferred hand while walking.

MS.13.3 Dribble with preferred hand while jogging with control of the ball and body.

MS.13.4a Dribble with preferred hand using mature pattern while jogging.

MS.13.4b Dribble while increasing and decreasing speeds.

MS.13.5 Combine dribbling and passing skills.

Basic (K-2nd): Drop catch (K only), stationary dribbling, and progress to dribbling in general space

Dribble Freeze (K-2nd): This activity allows the students to dribble and move at their own pace; however, if they lose control of their dribble then they are frozen. They simply stand with the ball above their head and wait for a peer to dribble by and tap them on the shoulder. The structure of this activity requires them to look up to make sure they do not bump into anyone and to see who they can unfreeze.

Dribble Tag (K+): This activity allows the students to dribble while moving around in general space. The teacher can use a half pool noodle to attempt to tag the student's ball. If a student loses control or their ball is tagged by the teacher, they must then move to the perimeter of the gym and complete 10 basketball jumps (hug the basketball and jump up and down). The structure of this activity requires them to look up to make sure they do not bump into anyone, to look for the tagger, and to quickly change directions to get away from the tagger.

Follow the Leader (1st +): This activity allows the students to spread out, face the middle, and follow the leader. As the leader, the teacher can dribble with either hand, alternating hands, go down on one knee, or lay down while dribbling. If you want to have some fun, let them try dribbling under their knees or allow them to spin the ball on their finger. I was surprised last year when one student who usually lacks motivation was the best ball spinner in the entire school! You may also consider allowing a few minutes of freestyle dribbling. This may provide you the opportunity to locate students who can serve as the leader. The structure of this activity requires them to occasionally look up to make sure they are following the leader.

Take That Cone (1st +): This activity allows the students to dribble a ball while moving through traffic and attempting to collect cones. The students are divided in half and placed at opposite ends of the gym. A whole bunch of small cones are then spread out in the middle of the gym. As long as they are maintaining their dribble, they can bend down, collect one cone, and return it to their end of the gym. Similar to Dribble Freeze, if a student loses control of their dribble they are frozen. They simply stand with the ball above their head and wait for a peer to dribble by and tap them on the shoulder. After a few minutes, all of the cones will end up at either end of the gym. The students will then be walking around and dribbling with no cones left in the middle. Don't say anything! One or two perceptive students will soon ask if they can take the other team's cones. At that point, simply restate the goal, "You may collect any cone and take it to your area." The frenzy then begins as a handful of students will begin to take the other team's cones. In an instant, the speed of the activity picks up with the students dribbling longer pathways, dribbling faster, and weaving in and out of the other students. The structure of this activity requires them to look up to make sure they do not bump into anyone, to look for peers to unfreeze, to change levels, and to pick up an item all while maintaining their dribble.

Dribble Two at a Time (2nd +): This activity allows the students to attempt to dribble two basketballs at a time. I like to pair the students up. One partner will attempt to dribble two basketballs at the same time while the other partner will execute 25 jumping jacks. They will then switch. The structure of this activity requires them to use their peripheral vision as they try to watch both basketballs.

Scattered Square Dancing (2nd +): This activity allows the students to dribble while having them participate in scattered square dancing. This is a simple dance where you call out movements and the students find the closest person to complete them with. There are individual skills that include changing directions (amongst the chaos of people moving everywhere) and partner skills. Have you ever tried to perform the elbow trim with a partner while dribbling a basketball? The structure of this activity requires them to look up as they perform the individual and partner dance moves.

30 Second Test (3rd +): The students will retrieve a ball and return to the spread out spots around the perimeter of the BB and VB courts. I allow them to dribble as a "warm-up" on their spot. We scan to see who has control and who needs additional help. As the class begins to move one, we check in with those who need encouraging and corrective feedback.

Balance the Bagel (2nd +): This activity allows the students to progress based on their individual skill level. Each student will attempt to dribble a ball around the gym while balancing a bagel (sliced up pool noodle) on a ping pong paddle. As they successfully make a trip

around the gym, they can stop and add another bagel to their stack/tower. The structure of this activity requires them to use their peripheral vision as they try to watch their bagels and the ball. The last time we participated in this activity, anyone who completed a lap with 5 bagels was allowed to trade for a small rubber ball to balance while dribbling. ***Click for a free lesson plan - [Balance the Bagel](#)***

Dribble Stare (3rd +): This activity allows to students to challenge each other. The students will stare into the eyes of one another and count down from 3. At that point, they may begin dribbling while continuing to look in each other's eyes. If they remove their eyes from the other person's eyes, they lose that round. The structure of this activity requires them to continuously look up to make sure they are staring into the eyes of their partner.

Put a Ring on My Finger (4th +): This version of Dribble Stare allows the students an opportunity to progress through three different levels (the gym is divided into three sections). All of the students begin in one level. They can select any opponent and participate in a round of Dribble Stare. If you win, you move up a level and select a new opponent from within that new level. If you lose, you move back a level and select a new opponent from within that level. If you make it to and win at the third level, you can get a ring (sliced up pool noodle), put it on your finger, and return to the first level. The structure of this activity requires them to continuously look up to make sure they are staring into the eyes of their partner while trying to collect as many rings as possible. ***Click for a free lesson plan - [Put a Ring on My Finger](#)***

Dribble Tag – Good, Better, Best (4th +): This activity allows the students to select which level they want to participate in. I divide the gym in thirds and define each section as one for those who think they are good at dribbling (high school level), one for those who think they are better (college level), and one for those who think they are the best (professional level). The students then dribble around their area. If they lose control for **any** reason, they must go to the side and do 10 basketball jacks (see below). For example, if you lose control of the dribble while moving and changing directions or if someone strikes your ball away from you, you must then go to the side. This activity provides for self-assessment. If the students feel they over or under estimated their ability, allow them the opportunity to change sections after a few minutes. The structure of this activity requires them to continuously look up to make sure they are staying away from anyone who may try to strike their ball away.

Note: A basketball jack has the same footwork as a jumping jack; however, instead of taking their hands from their sides to over their head, they hold the ball at their waist and take it above their head.

Dice Basketball (Grades K-5)

Equipment: Dice (1per pair), basketball, basketball goals

Organization: The students will sit with a partner around the perimeter of the gym. - Each basketball goal should be numbered 1-6.

Procedure: Partner #1 will roll the dice. Partner #1 then dribbles to whichever goal corresponds to the number they rolled. They take one shot. If the make it, they retrieve their ball, go to the middle of the gym, get a half-cone or bagel, and then return to their partner. If the miss it, they simply retrieve their ball and return to the partner. Partner #2 then takes a turn.

Ready Set Go (Grades K-5th)

Equipment: 2 soft volleyballs per goal

Organization: The students are lined up in small groups at a basketball goal.

Procedure: Students #1 & #2 are the first "shooters" and #3 is the first "caller." Upon a signal to begin from the "caller," the 2 "shooters" simultaneously shoot the ball. They are both trying to be the first one to make a shot (they keep shooting until one of them makes it). Whoever makes it first gets to stay and the other person goes to the end of the line. The "caller" becomes the new "shooter."

HORSE/SANGO (Grades 3rd+)

This is the same activity we played in the 1900's in my driveway except we use our school name of SANGO. I allow them to participate in pairs and to use a poly spot to mark the placement of their shot. If the person in front of you makes their shot, then you have to copy it. If you are copying a shot and miss it, then you earn a letter. We usually have 3 pairs per basketball goal.

PASSING: Assess each one

Chest: Ready signal, chicken wings, step, pass

Bounce: Ready signal, chicken wings, step, bounce

Overhead: Ready signal, ball behind head, step, throw

Group Juggling (K-5th)

Equipment: 1 or more object per group of 5-6 students

Procedure:

Each group tosses an object around their group to establish a pattern. When establishing the pattern, each person should only catch/toss the object once and they should not pass it to a direct neighbor in the circle. Once the pattern has been established, the group should try to successfully toss and catch an object making two consecutive cycles through the pattern. If this occurs, the teacher may add another object and allow them repeat. Some groups can get three or more items going.

Note: I find that students typically get excited and careless when they participate. As a result, I like to bring the students close by and discuss the following:

- Did anyone toss the ball above your head?
- Did anyone toss the ball and it land at your feet?
- Did anyone toss the ball beside you?
- Did you turn to pass the ball and the other person was not ready or looking at you?

I then discuss what a good team player should do in this activity (e.g., make a good toss and then immediately get ready to catch the object)

Variations:

- Have the students rotate in a circle
- Have the students move in a random fashion around their area
- Have the students toss and catch in the same pattern as they move to four different points (wall, corner, cone) - This is a good activity as it simulates a defense being present because you have to toss around so many moving parts
- Have the students complete passing and trapping with a soccer ball
- Have the students complete striking a ping pong ball with paddles (or tennis)
- Have the students complete using basketball passes

Offense & Defense (3rd Grade +)

The students are put into groups of 4 at a 4-square court. One student will stand on a corner of the court and is the passer.

They can pivot or pass within a 90 degree area. The second student will stand in the middle and is the defender. They can have their hands up and move along the small "V." The third student will stand on the opposite corner from the passer and is the receiver. They can move along the large "V" toward either one of the two "open" corners. The fourth student will simply wait their turn. The passer gets two attempts to successfully pass an object to the receiver before they all rotate. This activity provides a slight advantage to the passer, while being guarded by a defender who is kept a few feet away.

This activity is used during our basketball as well as our tossing, throwing, and catching units. Like 4-square, I prefer to put the students into groups of 4. I have found that requiring one student to momentarily wait a turn helps to keep the entire group on-task.



Offense/Defense (360 Degrees) (4th Grade +)

This activity is very similar to the one above. However, the passer is moved to the center of the court, the defender is on the outside edge of the court, and the receiver is about 3 feet outside of the court. This set-up allows everyone to move in a full 360 degree circle.



If need be, you can use two receivers and two defenders as well.



3v3 Basketball (3rd Grade):

Students are divided into groups of 6 at each goal. Three will be on offense while three are on defense. Prior to class, use floor tape to put three X's on the floor near the goal. Each defender MUST keep one foot on an X at ALL times. This activity gives the offense the ability to move without having a defender all up on them. The offense must make at least 2-3 passes prior to shooting at the basket. If the offense makes a bad pass, misses a shot, makes a shot, or loses control of the ball, they may start all over. The teacher will tell the groups when to switch from offense to defense (we usually switch every 2-3 minutes). If need be, you may have 3 v3 with 3 waiting and rotate all 3 groups.

3v3 Paper Plate Basketball (4th-5th Grade):

This activity is identical to 3v3 Basketball except the defenders place one foot on a paper plate (slow motion button) instead of an X. They may move anywhere as long as their foot stays on the paper plate. We have found this to tame the defense, give the offense some freedom to move, and keep everyone under control so we can have multiple games at one time.

Additional Activities:

Mr. & Mrs. Noodle (K-5th)

We use two characters we created to lead the little ones in fitness exercises. The students will mimic the moves the Mr. & Mrs. Noodle perform. Sorry, this one is too hard to describe...

Please consider checking out Mark B's blog & eBook

<https://iteachmorethangym.wordpress.com>

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I Teach More Than Gym:
A Collection of Elementary
Physical Education Activities



This book contains complete lesson plans and easy to understand diagrams for 30 large group activities that my students love!

Available at:

<http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/I-Teach-More-Than-Gym>

You can also browse through other free or individually priced resources!