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# Basic Skills, Strategy, and Drills

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# Introduction

This manual covers the fundamentals of Ultimate. Within the following chapters you will find skills and strategy which will provide you and your team a base for learning and developing more advanced aspects of the sport. The drills at the end of the book will be useful to your team in developing those basic skills.

The sport of Ultimate is still is always advancing, and teaching methods as well as strategies are still constantly changing. Most of these skills and strategies have stood the test of time and have become the standards for introductory Ultimate. Many of these skills and strategies are still used at the top level of the game as well!

There are many things you can do to improve your game beyond reading this manual- getting in shape and practicing the drills is a great place to start. You can also attend a tournament and watch experienced teams play. Instead of passively observing, try to determine what the teams playing are doing, what their strategies appear to be, and how well they are executing these strategies. There are also a number of videos available online that you can access for free.

Special thanks to Catherine Greenwald, Anne Wescott, Corey Young, Eric Simon, Robin Barney, Suzanne Fields, and Kyle Weisbrod for their work on developing the original versions of this manual. We'd also like to thank Tony Porter for the illustrations and Tiina Booth & Michael Baccarini for the use of the Conditioning and Flexibility material from their excellent book Essential Ultimate. The description of the basic throws can also be found in Ultimate: Fundamentals of the Sport by Irv Kalb and Tom Kennedy.

# Definitions

**Break Mark Throw** – A throw that goes to the area of the field that the marker is trying to prevent throws from going. It is a throw that “breaks the mark”

**Clear** – A cut with the intention of opening space for a teammate, not with the intention of getting the disc. This generally applies following a cut when s/he has not been thrown the disc, or after s/he has thrown a short pass to a nearby player

**Cagger/Dump/Reset** – An offensive player that sets up laterally or upfield of the player with the disc, with the purpose of getting the disc in a better position to throw downfield and gain yards

**Cut** – An offensive movement used to get away from the defender, often characterized by at least one sharp change of direction.

**Callahan Goal** – When a defensive player catches a pass made by the offense, and intended for another offensive player, inside the goal that the defensive team is attempting to score in.

**Defender** – Any of the six players playing defense not covering the thrower

**Downfield** – The part of the playing field in the direction of the offensive team’s endzone relative to the thrower.

**Dump or Reset Pass** – A short lateral or backwards pass. A pass not necessarily intended to gain yards, but to move the disc to a better position on the field, or reset the stall count.

**Fake** – A motion used by the thrower to make the marker believe that s/he intends to throw the disc in one direction (or from one release point), when, in fact, s/he plans to throw the disc in another direction.

**Field Sense** – The ability to perceive where one is on the playing field relative to all other players and field boundaries.

**Force** – The side of the field that the marker is trying to get the thrower to throw to. A marker does this by positioning himself on the opposite side.

**Foul** – Bodily contact by defensive players, usually to the hands or arms of offensive players, which clearly interferes with either the throw or the catch. Offensive players can also commit fouls. See rules for details.

**Leading Pass** – A pass which is thrown in front of a receiver in motion, taking into account her/his speed and direction.

**Marker** – The defensive player who is guarding the thrower. The marker must be positioned at least one disc’s diameter (approximately one foot) from the thrower and cannot straddle the thrower’s pivot foot (see the Rules of Ultimate).

**Offsides** – Crossing the goal line by any offensive or defensive player prior to the pull.

**Pick** – A violation that occurs when a defensive player cannot cover her/his opponent because of bodily interference by another player. Generally, it occurs when the offensive player runs so close to another player on either team that the defensive player must stop, slow down, or alter her/his course in order to avoid a collision, thus leaving the offensive player open to receive a pass. Although legal in basketball, it is a dangerous play in Ultimate because of the speed with which players are running.

**Pivot** – A technique used by the thrower whereby s/he rotates on the ball or toes of the pivot foot in order to change body position for greater throwing range of motion.

**Pivot foot** – The foot upon which the thrower pivots. Usually, it is the opposite foot of the throwing hand.

**Pull** – Each point begins with the defensive team throwing the disc to the offensive team. The throw is made by a defensive player standing on or behind the endzone line. A pull is similar to a kick off in American football.

**Receiver** – Any of the six offensive players in position to receive the pass from the thrower.

**Spirit of the Game™** – The underlying concept of fair play inherent in all sports, but made explicit in the rules of Ultimate. For complete text, see the introduction to the Rules of Ultimate.

**Stall** – A situation when the marker reaches the end of the stall count (ten) before the offensive player has released the disc.

**Stall Count** – The amount of time the offensive player with the disc has to throw. The stall count must be called aloud by the marker beginning with “stalling, one, two, three...” at one second intervals, being careful not to speed up towards the end of the count.

**Strip** – When the disc is forcibly knocked from the offensive player’s hands. The disc is returned to the offensive player’s possession and play is initiated with a check.

**Travel** – An offensive advantage gained by the thrower when s/he takes a step, accelerates or changes directions after a catch and before throwing, or picks up or drags her/his pivot foot during the throw. The disc is brought back to the thrower for a replay, except in the case where the throw resulted in a turnover.

**Upfield** - The part of the playing field in the opposite direction of the offensive team’s endzone relative to the thrower.

### Key for Diagrams

- Thrower
- Receiver
- Previous Position of an Offensive Player
- Defender/Marker
- Previous position of a Defensive Player
- Cut
- .....→ Throw

# Skills

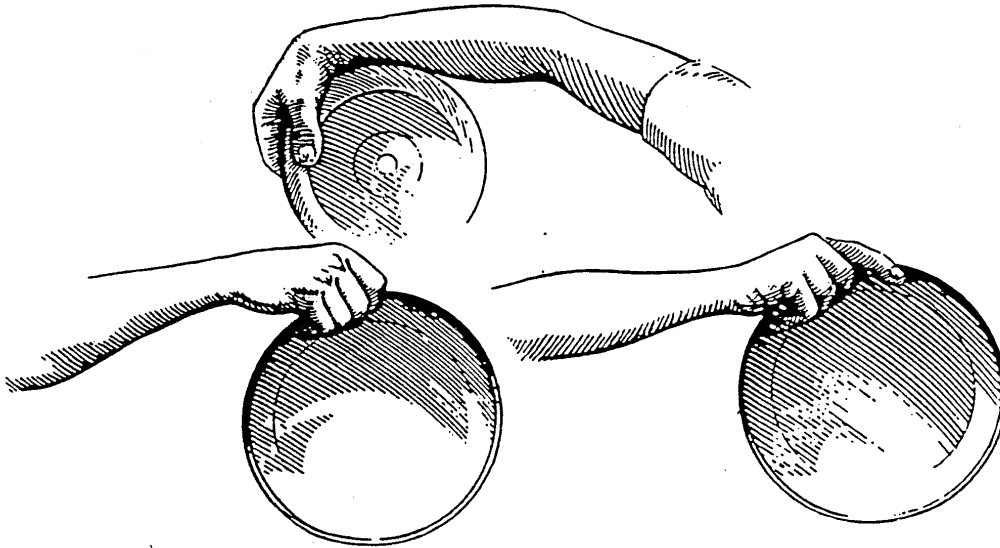
## Standard Throws

From Ultimate: Fundamentals of the Sport by Irv Kalb and Tom Kennedy

*All throws are illustrated and described assuming a right-handed thrower.*

### Backhand Delivery

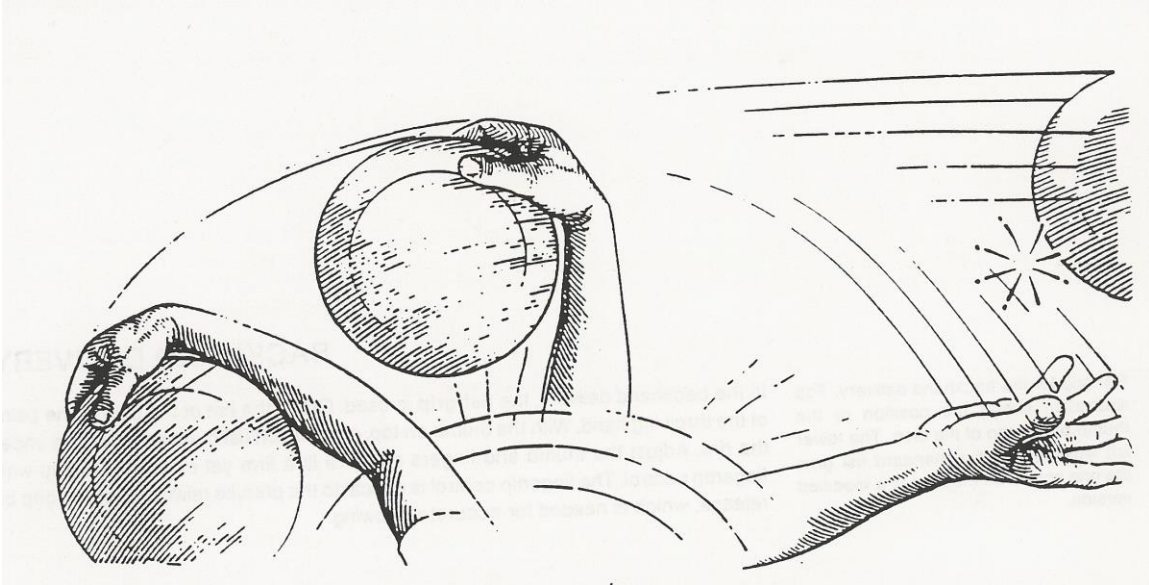
In the backhand delivery, the **fist grip** is used. Grasp the rim of the disc in the palm of the throwing hand. With the thumb on top, make a soft fist curling the fingers under the rim. Adjust the thumb and fingers so there is a firm yet comfortable grip with fingertip control. The fingertip control is critical to the precise relaxation of the grip on release, which is needed for accurate throwing.



**Fig. 1a The Backhand: Grip**

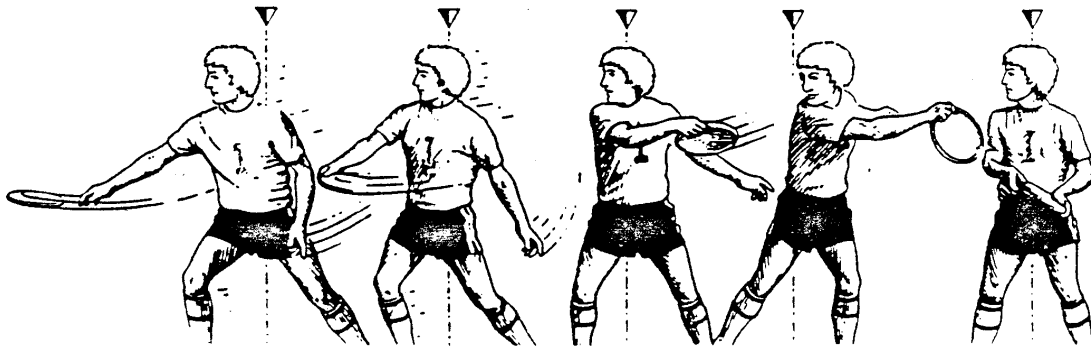
Assume a stance with the balls of the feet shoulder-width apart in line with the target. The direction in which the feet point is up to the individual. The body should face in a direction perpendicular to the target (ninety degrees to the left), with the weight distributed evenly on both feet. Next, swing the arm across the body, rotating the right shoulder away from the target while shifting most of the weight to the left foot. The upper body rotation, forward arm swing, and cocking of the wrist should all begin just as the weight is shifted to the right foot. Body rotation is initiated by turning the hips then shoulders to the right. The arm should swing forward in a smooth continuous movement. In the cocked position for the backhand, the wrist is curled in toward the body.





**Fig. 1b The Backhand: Arm Motion**

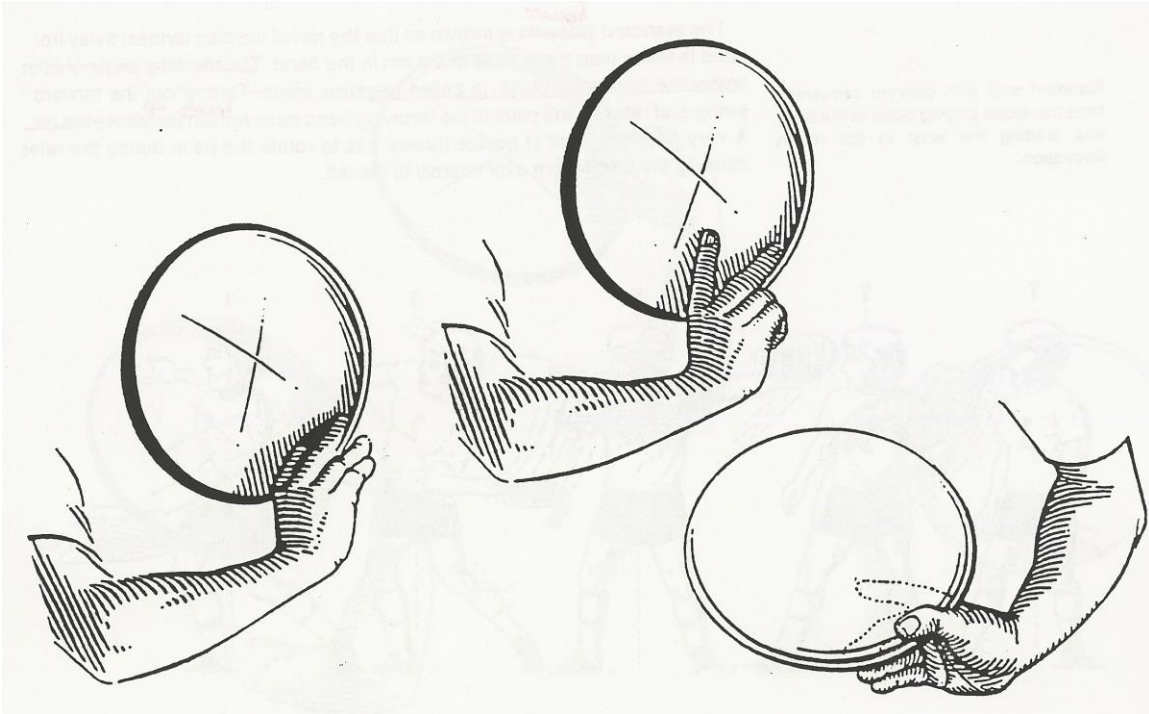
The standard backhand is thrown so that the rim of the disc farthest away from the hand is lower than the portion of the rim in the hand. Throughout the forward swing and release the palm of the palm of the throwing hand should remain perpendicular to the ground. A very common fault of novice throwers is to rotate the palm during release, causing the disc to turn over sharply to the right.



**Fig. 1c The Backhand: Body Motion**

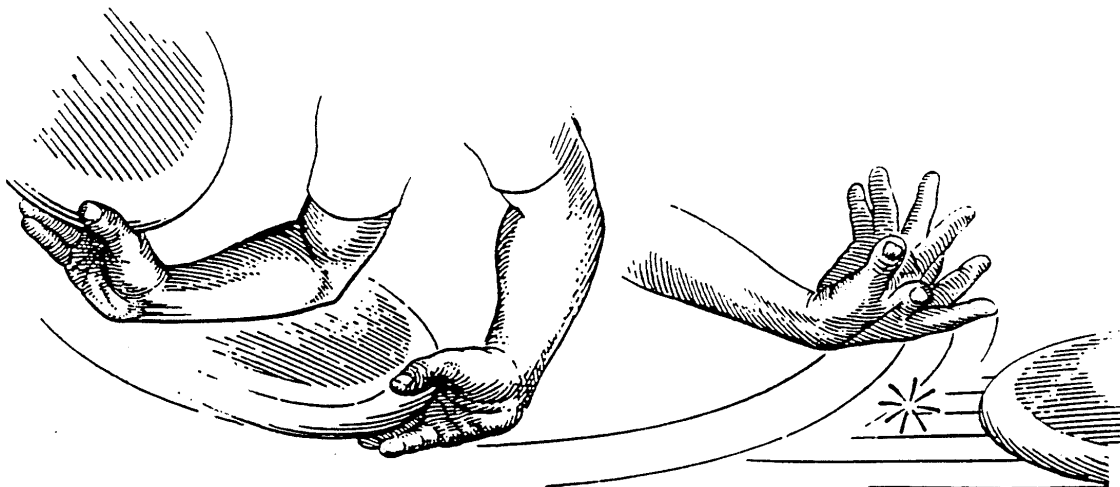
## Forehand Delivery

In the forehand delivery, the **two finger grip** is used. Grasp the disc in the throwing hand with the thumb on top so that the rim of the disc makes contact with the web between the thumb and index finger. While maintaining contact with the web, rotate the disc clockwise until the pad of the middle finger makes full contact with the inside of the rim. Place the index finger along side the middle finger for support. Pinch the disc with the thumb in such a manner that the grip is firm yet comfortable. The top of the disc may bend slightly under the pressure of the thumb.



**Fig. 2a Forehand: Grip**

Assume a stance with the balls of the feet shoulder-width apart. The direction in which the feet point is up the individual. The body should face the target with the weight distributed evenly on both feet. Next bring the arm back away from the target and place most of the weight on the left foot. The upper body rotation, forward arm swing, and cocking of the wrist should all begin just as the weight is shifted to the right foot. Body rotation is initiated by turning the hips then shoulders to the left. The right shoulder is lowered as the forward arm swing begins. In the cocked position for the side arm, the wrist is curled away from the body.



**Fig 2b Forehand: Arm Motion**

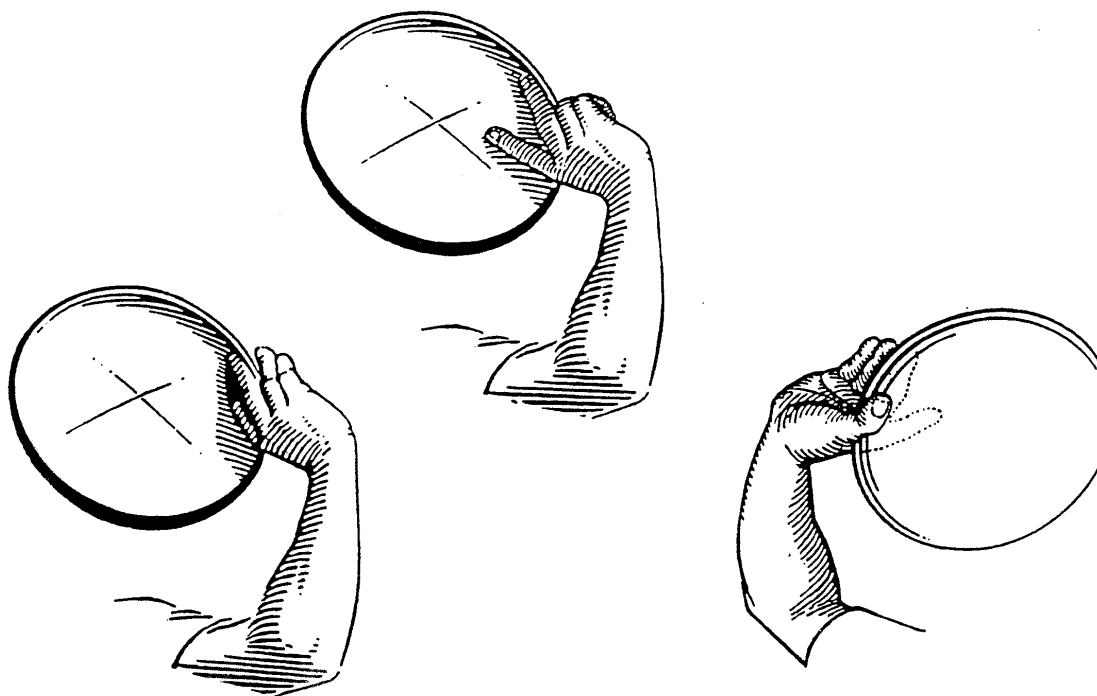


**Fig. 2c Forehand: Body Motion**

The standard forehand is thrown so that the rim of the disc farthest away from the hand is lower than the portion of the rim in the hand. Throughout the forward swing and release, the palm of the throwing hand must remain facing up. A very common fault of novice throwers is to rotate the palm during the release causing the disc to turn over sharply to the left.

### Hammer Delivery

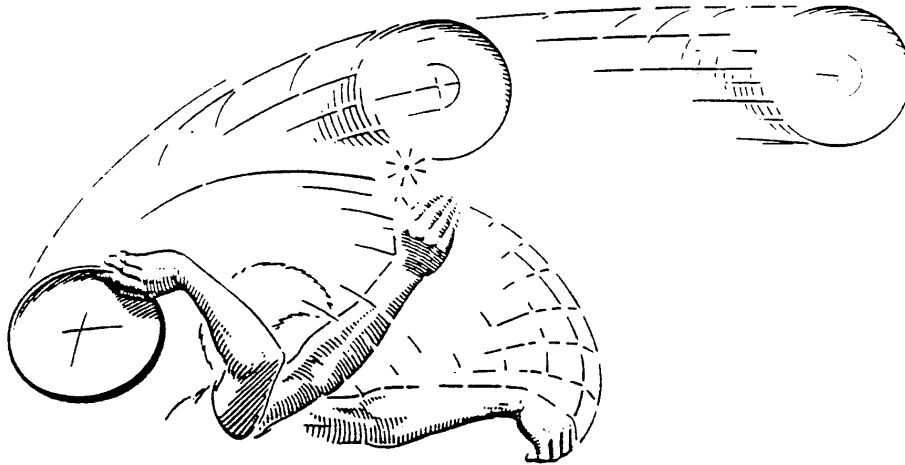
The two finger grip used for the forehand delivery is also used in the upside down delivery. (For a description of the two-finger grip, see the forehand delivery.)



**Fig 3a Hammer: Grip**

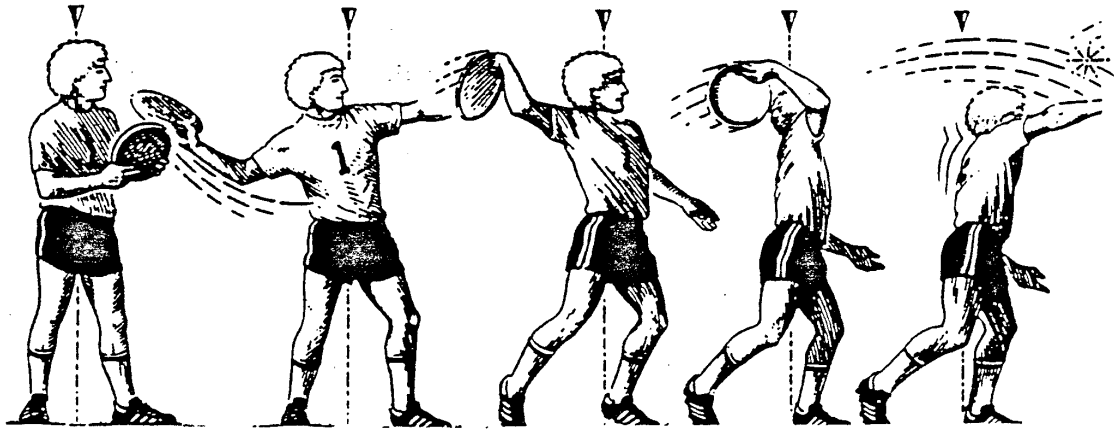
Assume a stance with the balls of the feet shoulder-width apart approximately in line with the target. The direction in which the feet point is up to the individual. The body should face slightly to the right of the target with the weight evenly distributed on both feet.

Using the two finger grip, bring the throwing arm back so that the disc is above and behind the right shoulder. The disc should be held in a near vertical position. In this position, most of the weight is on the right foot. The upper body rotation, forward arm swing, and cocking of the wrist should occur just as the weight is shifted to the left foot. The upside down delivery closely resembles an overhand throw of a baseball. As with the other deliveries, the snapping of the wrist is critical as it imparts spin which stabilizes the disc in flight.



**Fig 3b Hammer: Arm Motion**

The disc exhibits more instability than usual while flying upside down. During flight, the disc tends to turn over quickly to the left. When deciding the angle of release, the thrower must take into account the amount of turn over inherent as the disc flies upside down. Many upside down passes are delivered with a vertical angle of release; others are delivered just past vertical so they are slightly upside down at the moment of release.



**Fig 3c Hammer: Body Motion**

**Drills for Throwing:**

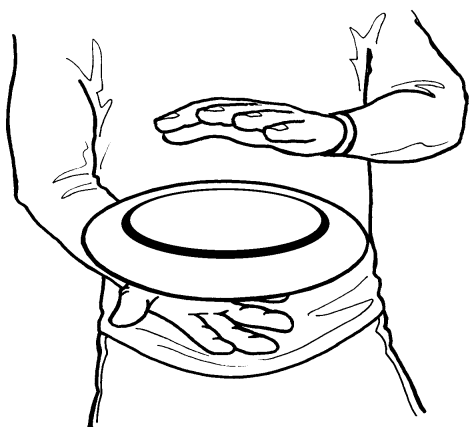
- Warm – up Toss
- Speed Flow

## Standard Catches

### Pancake Catch

The Pancake Catch is the safest catch in Ultimate. It is best used when the disc is between waist and chin height or when it is possible to jump or slide to catch the disc between waist and chin height. The pancake is the safest catch because it allows for slightly mistimed catches and discs that change height due to wind.

As the disc approaches extend your arms forward. Your arms should be slightly bent at the elbows. One arm should be below the other arm and the palms of both hands should be facing each other. Your hands should be no more than 1 foot apart at the most.



**Fig. 4a The Pancake**

Clap your hands together around the disc. Ideally the bottom hand should be in the center of the bottom of the disc. Pull the disc into your body as you catch it to soften the impact.

### Two-Handed Rim Grab

The two-handed rim grab is particularly suitable for catches above chin level or below waist level. Because you can extend and catch the disc further from the body while making this catch it can also be used when a defender has a play at the disc. The two-handed rim grab is not as reliable as the pancake catch and should only be used as catching skills become more advanced.

To make a two-handed rim grab, extend your arms toward the disc. If the disc is above shoulder level extend your thumbs down. If the disc is below shoulder level, your thumbs should be extended up. Your elbows should be slightly bent.



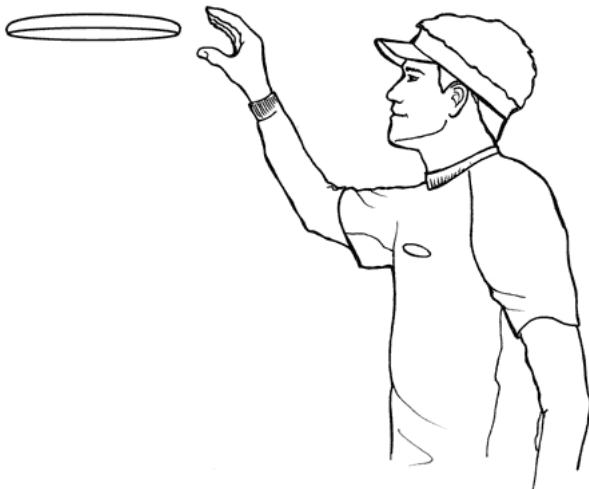
**Fig. 4b Two-Handed Rim Grab**

Grab the disc with both hands simultaneously. Pull the disc into your body to soften the impact.

### One-Handed Rim Grab

The one-handed rim grab should be used only for catches for which both hands can not be used. These situations include very high throws, very low throws, and throws behind the receiver. Most layout catches are also made with either the one-handed or the two-handed rim grab.

To make a one-handed rim grab, extend your arm toward the disc. If the disc is above shoulder level extend your thumb down. If the disc is below waist level, you should extend your thumb up.



### Fig. 4c One-Handed Rim Grab

Grab the disc as it reaches your hand. Your hand should not necessarily be positioned on the point of the disc nearest you. Depending on the spin and angle of the disc you should grab the disc so that it spins into your hand. A disc that is coming at you with clockwise spin should be caught slightly to the left of center, while a disc with counter-clockwise spin should be caught slightly right of center.

#### Drills for Catching:

- Warm – up toss
- Stack Drills
- Line Drills
- Big Man Drill

### Cutting

Cutting, an essential offensive skill, is the process of creating space between yourself and your defender. A cut is like a race between two people. As an offensive player you must remember that you get to decide when the race starts and where the finish line is. Even better, at any point you can change the finish line!

There are several different ways to make a cut, most involve a change of direction and/or a change in speed. The following cuts can be used in combination. It is best to use multiple different cuts so that cuts do not become predictable.

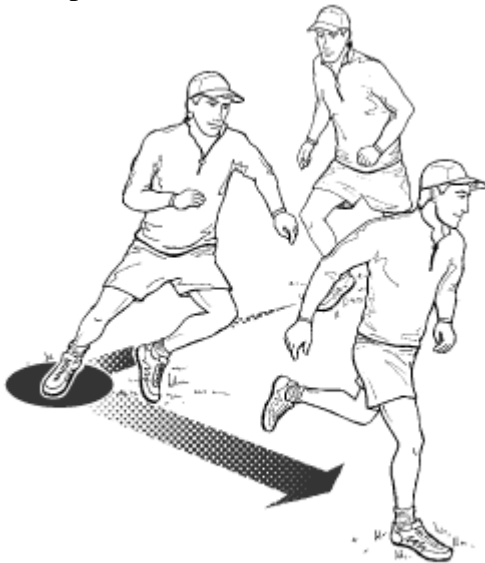


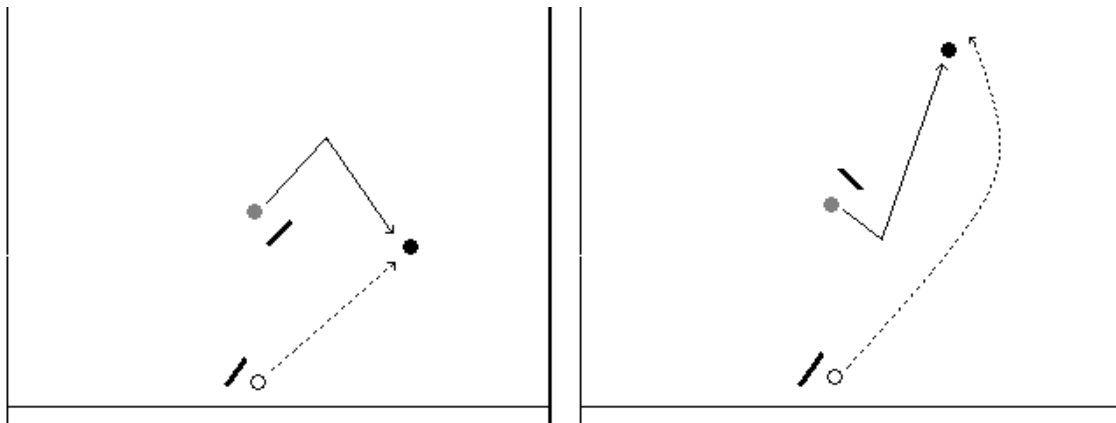
Fig. 5a The Cut



## Full Cuts

The full cut is the most effective cut to get open. It is also the cut that requires the most effort. This cut is best used for downfield cuts back to the disc or cuts deep for hucks.

To set up a full cut, run in the opposite direction of where you want your cut to go. You should sell this cut as if it is a real cut and get up to full speed. After five or six steps, or when your defender has reached full speed, plant with your outside foot and run in the opposite direction.



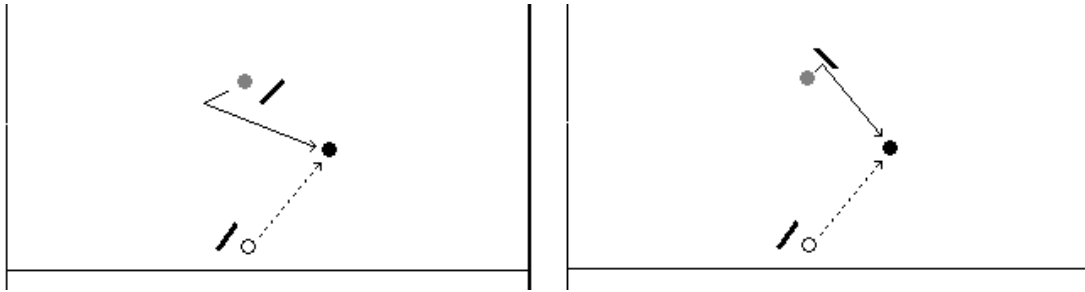
**Fig. 5b The Full Cut**

This cut takes time to set up and requires good timing and anticipation on the part of the cutter. As you make this cut you must be aware of where the disc is and where it is going. You must also be aware of where the other receivers are. When done correctly will almost surely create a large gap between yourself and your defender.

## Two-Step Juke

The two-step juke can be used for short handler or middle cuts back to the disc as well as deep cuts. It is a great cut for beginning Ultimate players. It does not require the same anticipation as a full cut.

To set up the two-step juke, take one or two steps towards or away from your defender. This will cause your defender to either lose balance or turn his hips, committing himself to covering the direction that you are faking. At this point, plant on your outside foot and cut to where you want to go.

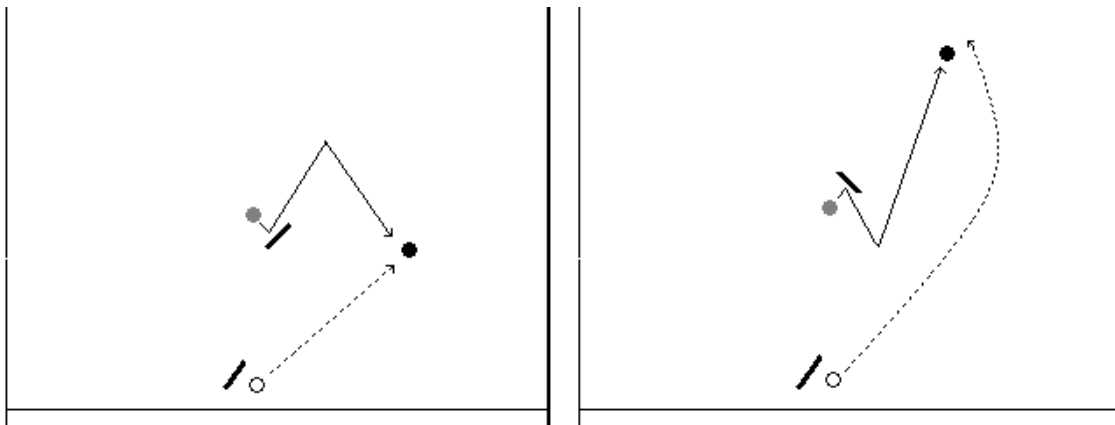


**Fig. 5c The Two-Step Juke**

An experienced defender can reduce the effectiveness of this type of juke-and-go cut by anticipating your actions and refusing to commit to moving in a direction until you have committed as well.

## Double Cut

The double cut is a combination of the full cut and the two-step juke. It takes advantage of the defenders anticipation of the two-step juke. This cut is best used for large, yardage-gaining cuts back to the disc and cuts deep for hucks.



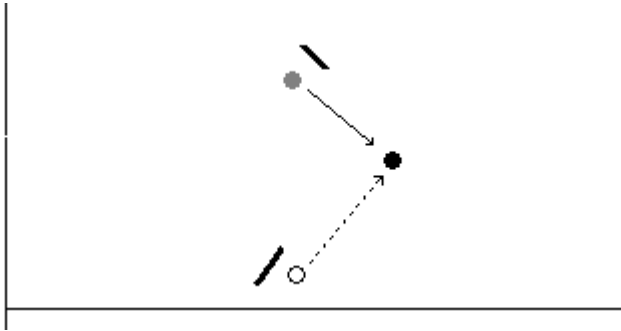
**Fig. 5d The Double Cut**

To set up the double cut, take a couple steps at your defender, just like in the two-step juke. Also like in the two-step juke plant on your outside foot and change directions. Your defender will believe that this is your cut and follow you hard. After three or four steps, or when your defender has reached full speed, plant on your outside foot again and cut to where you want to go.

Like the full cut, this cut requires a great deal of anticipation and effort by the offensive player. When using a double cut to get open for a pass, timing is particularly important so that you get open just as the thrower is prepared to throw an up field pass. Proper timing will also help prevent a miscommunication between the thrower and cutter.

## Straight Cuts

A straight cut is an opportunistic cut that can be highly effective. These cuts can be made when the defender is on the opposite side of where you want to go. Straight cuts are best used for players with a quick first step.



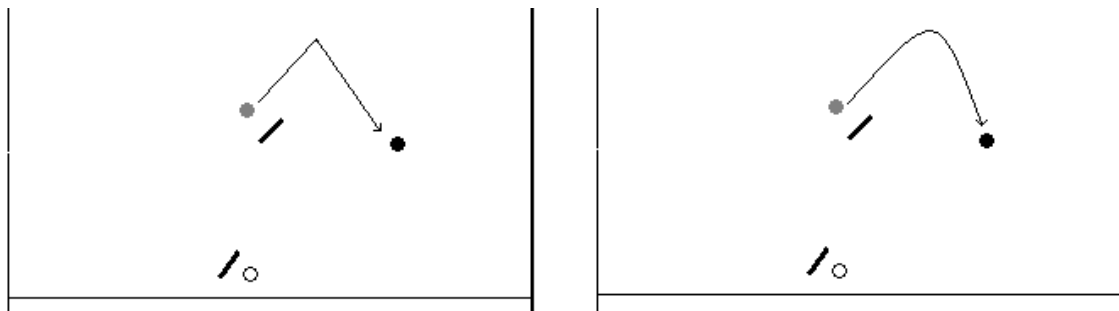
**Fig. 5e The Straight Cut**

To make a straight cut, make sure that your defender is on the wrong side of you or the thrower is in a position to get the disc to you, and simply run where you want to go.

These cuts require awareness and field sense. You must know where the disc is and where the thrower wants to throw it. Most importantly you must know where your defender is. A straight cut will seem easiest when you are tried, especially if you cut directly behind the mark. But remember that this puts a lot of pressure on the thrower to break the mark, and lots of straight cuts will likely result in a turnover.

## Notes on Cutting

- In general, any time you are on the field your changes of direction should be sharp, not rounded because this makes it more difficult for a defender to keep up.



**Fig. 5f Sharp vs. Rounded Cuts**

- Do not slow your cut down after the change in direction, that will allow the defender to get the block
- Generally, do not make cuts directly toward the sideline (Horizontal cuts). Cutting at an angle with respect to an imaginary line of scrimmage allows the thrower to

- throw the disc to space and the receiver to position herself in such a way as to prevent the defender from making a play at the disc.
- Make your cuts off of your outside foot (e.g. your left foot if you are turning to the right)
  - Always be ready to stop or readjust your cut if the situation on the field changes (e.g. if the disc is thrown to a different position on the field)
  - After each cut, clear hard so that your teammates will have space to make a cut
  - Try to set up your cut so that as the thrower catches the disc, you have already made your change of direction, gotten open, and are ready to receive a pass

#### Drills for Cutting:

- Line Drills
- Stack Drills
- Endzone Drills
- Defensive Positioning

## Pivoting

A good pivot is essential to throwing accurate (and complete) passes. For best results, the pivot should be a smooth, controlled, and calculated motion. You will sometimes see beginners pivoting wildly out of control (and traveling at the same time); if anything, this makes it even more difficult to complete a throw. Ultimate players use the leg opposite their throwing arm as the pivot leg to gain the most reach and balance.

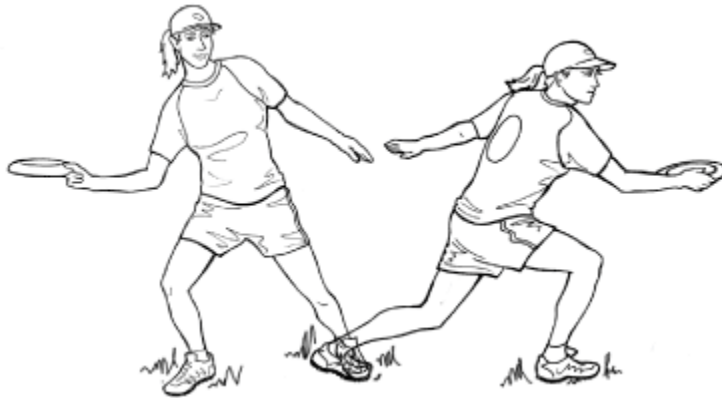
### Balance

Balance is a critical part of pivoting. Keep your weight centered and your knees bent. As you move from the forehand position to the backhand position and back again make sure to maintain this balance. Losing your balance is often a result of pivoting too far out to your backhand. Players will place most of their weight on their right leg and will be unable to pivot back to the forehand.

### Face Downfield

As you pivot be sure to keep your head facing the direction you want to throw. Most of the time, this will mean facing downfield. If you are looking to throw to your dump, turn and square up your shoulders in their direction, indicating that you are now committed to throwing to that player. If you always face the way you want to throw, you will be able to see what is happening and where your receivers are cutting. A common problem with newer players is that as they move from the forehand to the backhand they want to turn all the way around (turn to the right for right handed players). This is a problem for two reasons. First, when you get into position you have to take the time to see what happened

while you weren't looking. Second, spinning 270 degrees is disorienting and may make you lose your balance.



**Fig. 7 The Pivot**

### Extension

As you become more comfortable with pivoting and your throws, you will want to add more extension to your pivot. This will help you to get around the mark better. Practice throwing from points further away from your body – extend your elbow further on the forehand and backhand. As you do this make sure that as you extend that you are balanced and capable of pivoting back to the other side.

## **Faking and Pivoting**

The purpose of faking and pivoting while you have the disc is either to set yourself to break the mark, or else to give yourself more room to throw to the open side (forced side). A good fake makes the marker think you're going to throw one way and gets them to move to block that throw. This leaves you with more room to throw your pass.

Generally, a fake consists of a wrist snap and/or arm motion that simulates a throw. Be sure that you have a good grip on the disc, so that it does not pop out of your hand on a vigorous fake! The motion of your fake should look as similar to the motion as your throw as possible, otherwise good markers will not believe your fakes.

A good pivot is essential to a good fake. You want to try to keep the marker guessing as to which side you are going to throw on. However, it is not essential to pivot fully – in fact, sometimes it is better not to. Simply pick up your outside (non-pivot) foot and shift your weight as if to pivot and then return to the throwing stance on the same side. Ideally, the defender has taken the bait and has moved over considerably in an attempt to block a throw to the other side.

### Drills for Pivoting and Faking:

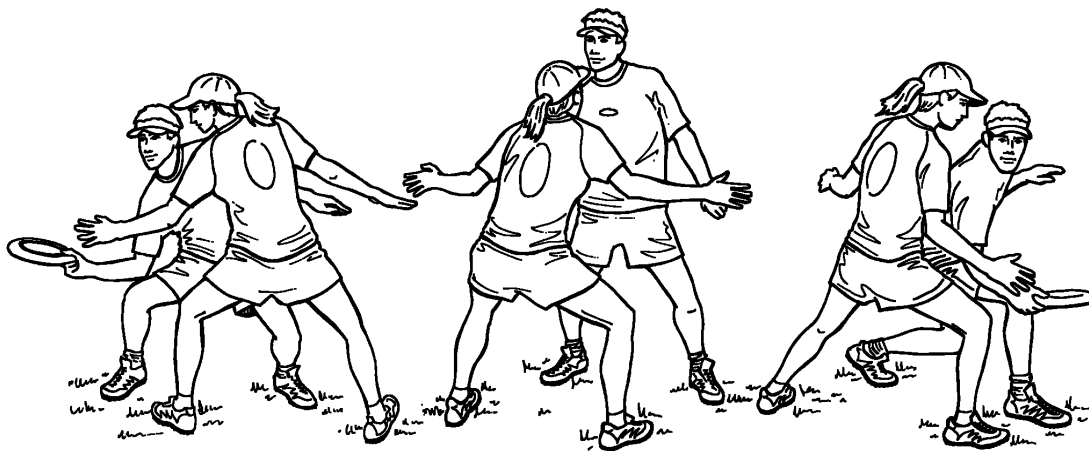
- Speed Flow
- Marking line Drill
- Marking Drills
- Circle D

## Marking

A good mark is one of the most important yet underrated skills in Ultimate. All defensive sets start with the mark. As soon as the player you are defending gets the disc, set up your mark. Your primary responsibility as the mark is to limit the range of directions (or part of the field) to which the thrower is able to throw. You will not be able to stop every throw, nor should you try. If the mark can deny the thrower the ability to throw to one side of the field, and the downfield defenders can deny the cutters from getting open on the other side, you'll have a very successful defensive play!

### Balance

Balance is critical on the mark. If you get off balance the thrower will be able to get around your mark for an easy throw. While on the mark you should stay on the balls of your feet. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart. Your knees should be bent and your butt low to the ground. As the thrower pivots and fakes move with them while maintaining your balance by keeping your feet close to shoulder width apart. The best way to do this is shuffle your feet to get into position. Do not lunge. Lunging will result in you committing all of your body weight to one side and the thrower will quickly adjust and throw to the opposite side before you can likely recover.



**Fig. 8 The Mark**

### Approaching the mark

Many defenses count on the marker to stop the ‘flow’ of the offense. As a result, the way in which you approach the mark is particularly important in having an effective mark. When approaching the mark, it is important to approach in such a way as to limit the throwers options to the break mark side. Often this involves over pursuing on the mark slightly, and then closing on the thrower once the ‘flow’ has been contained.

### Arms and Hands

As the mark, your priority should not be attempting to get handblocks, but rather to prevent break mark throws. The position of your hands is very important. Your arms should be bent at the elbows, because it is easier to move your arms out than it is to move them in. Similarly, your hands should be low, because it is easier to move your hands up than it is to move them down.

### Distance

The rules require that you maintain a distance of one disc space from the thrower. Sometimes it is advantageous to move even further away than that. Different distances will prevent and allow different throws. Often times a close mark may rattle a thrower into making a poor choice. On the other hand, if you are a few feet away you will be able to prevent inside-out throws easier. It is best to vary your distance from the thrower during a game or even during a stall count! That way the thrower will not “know” which throws she can throw on you.

### Knowing the Thrower

Many throwers like to throw the same throws over and over again. Often these throwers have specific release points (height of release, distance from their bodies) that they use. If you guard a player for a whole game, try to determine where those release points are and work to defend them. For example, if a thrower utilizes a high right handed back hand, keep your right hand high on the mark.

### Stalling

Remember that as the marker, another job is to stall. As soon as the player you are covering catches the disc begin the stall count by saying “Stalling 1...” Proceed to count out loud to ten at one second intervals.

### Communicating

When the thrower has thrown the disc, let your teammates know. As soon as it is released yell “UP!” or “AIR!” This will alert your fellow defenders to turn and find the disc. Good communication between defenders may result in a block.

### Drills for Marking:

- Marking Line Drill
- Marking Drills
- Circle D

## Downfield Defending

Good person-to-person defense requires speed, stamina, field awareness, and good anticipation. As a defender, you need to know your own speed and agility to be able to judge how close you need to stay to the player you are defending. The main component of person-to-person defense is position. It is essential to know where the ideal position is and where it is going to be soon. Another component is the speed, endurance and effort required to get to that position. There are many factors that determine where you should be in relation to the player you are guarding. Be advised that these factors may change from one second to the next and you must be ready to change your position. Below are the most important factors to consider when determining your position:

### The Force

Where the mark is forcing is the first piece of information you need to position yourself well. The force will be covered further in the Defensive Strategy section

### Your abilities

Be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. What are you good at? Are you tall and able to jump high? Are you short and quick? Determining what area of the field you are better able to defend will help you determine where you position yourself.

### Your Opponent's Abilities

Also be aware of your opponent's strengths and weaknesses as well as her habits. Does she make the same cut every time? Is she taller than you? Is she a good handler? You will want to position yourself to make it easier to cover the area of the field that the receiver wants to cut to and is most dangerous.

### The Environment

The environment will play an important role in where you position yourself. Perhaps the most common environmental factor encountered in Ultimate is wind. The lighter the wind, the closer you should be to the receiver. If your opponent is going into a strong wind you will probably want to maintain a position between the thrower and the receiver since the wind will make longer throws more difficult. Other environmental factors



include rain, snow, fog, mud, sand, high grass, a slanted field, and even over-hanging branches.

### The Thrower's Abilities

Knowledge of the thrower's abilities can greatly help you determine your position. If the thrower has an accurate 60-yard forehand you should be wary of the deep throw and adjust your downfield defense accordingly. Of course the thrower can change rapidly, so you must always be aware.

### Receiver Location

This may seem like an obvious one. Of course you want to be near the receiver you are guarding. But how near and in what position changes depending on both the receiver's position on the field and the receiver's location in relation to the thrower. If the receiver is on the break mark side or out of throwing range you don't need to be as close. If the receiver is standing on the sideline you should be positioned towards the field.

If you are guarding the deepest receiver on the field it is good to be aware of all of the receivers on the field. If one of your teammates is getting beat deep you can help them out by picking up their player. This is called playing "last back."

### Triangulation

One good basic defensive positioning strategy is to position yourself so that you can always see both the disc and the person you are defending. It is often necessary to work hard to maintain this triangulation, but it allows you to always be aware of what is going on on the field. It is often described as "having your head on a swivel."

### **Drill for Downfield Defending:**

- <b>Defensive Positioning</b>
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## **Pulling**

A good pull is a useful defensive tactic; the further downfield the pull lands, the greater the distance the offensive team must cover for a goal. Also, the longer the disc hangs in the air, the more time the defensive team has to get downfield and set up. Your objective as a puller is to throw the disc in bounds with as much distance and hang time as possible.

To develop your pull, first practice long backhand throws, slowly building your distance. Once you are ready to transform your backhand into a legitimate pull, consider the following ingredients for success:

### Approach

You will need to add a few more steps to your backhand to put more power behind your launch. It is normally a traveling violation when you move before throwing, but it is legal when pulling. Walk through your approach until you feel comfortable with the steps.

### Rhythm

Once you are comfortable with the steps of your approach, try to add some rhythm to your steps. When your rhythm feels smooth and coordinated, you can accelerate your approach from a walk to a run. Practice this a lot!

### Hips

To get more power behind your throw, consider your hips an important part of your whole body's rotation. As you do your run-up approach to the line, you are facing downfield. As you draw the disc back to prepare to throw, you will turn your right side downfield (assuming you're right-handed); keep moving by using a cross-step (right foot in front of left). As your right arm draws back it crosses your body at hip/waist height. To initiate the throw, begin rotating your whole body downfield. Begin the rotation by snapping your hips forward with your trunk, shoulders and arm following, and finally releasing the disc as your hand "points" downfield at your target. Your head rotates downfield just as or after you release the disc. Think of your arm as a whip, and the pull as a fluid, controlled movement that flows from the shoulder and snaps at your finger tips. Don't stop the motion once you've released the disc – continue to bring your throwing arm all the way across your body. A strong follow through is essential for maximum power.

### Grip

Most successful pullers use a "power grip." This is a tighter-than-usual hold on the disc with a fist grip (see section on Backhand). The tighter the grip, the more momentum is transferred from your run-up and rotation to the disc's spin. The faster the disc is spinning on release, the more stable and longer the throw.

### Wind Conditions

To determine the proper angle for release of the pull, first check the wind conditions. A strong crosswind, either right to left or left to right as you face downfield, will require you to change your position along the line to try to get the wind to your back.

If the wind is in your face, you will have to “slice” your pull through the wind by adjusting your angle of release. If you throw flat into the wind, chances are greater that it will be carried right back towards you. Practice throwing into the wind!

#### Angle of release/ Trajectory

Most pulls are best released with the outside edge (the edge furthest away from you) down towards the ground. This will allow you to most effectively use the strength from your hips and trunk. With adequate spin on your throw, the disc will eventually flatten out and carry for extra distance. If there is inadequate spin or a flat disc at release, the pull will “turn over” and float off the side without gaining distance downfield. Observing wind conditions and perfecting your angle of release are critical to a successful pull.

#### Accuracy

Once you have mastered all the previous steps, you will be able to place the pull just about anywhere you want to.

# Strategy

## Defense

Many individuals and teams, when first learning Ultimate, tend to focus exclusively on developing good offensive skills and strategy. This is natural, since you need offense in order to score. However, never underestimate the importance of establishing and developing good, solid defensive skills and strategy. In a way, this is the easiest way, as an individual, to become indispensable to a team. For a team, good defense is essential to winning games. While we will talk about what a marker needs to defend against and what a downfield defender needs to deny, it's highly unlikely that the defense can stop every possible option. But by forcing the offense to look to their second or third choice, you can increase the chance that the offense will make a mistake and the defense can get a block.

### Person-to-Person Defense – The Force

The force is the simplest defensive set used in Ultimate and it is used to great effect to win games from pick-up to the National Championships. A good person-to-person defense is one of the best defenses there is.

The basic idea of the force is that the mark takes away one side of the field by setting a good mark and not allowing the thrower to throw to that side. The downfield defenders are responsible for the other side of the field, positioning themselves to stop all throws to that side. Teams decide at the beginning of the point which way they are going to force and every player forces the same way.

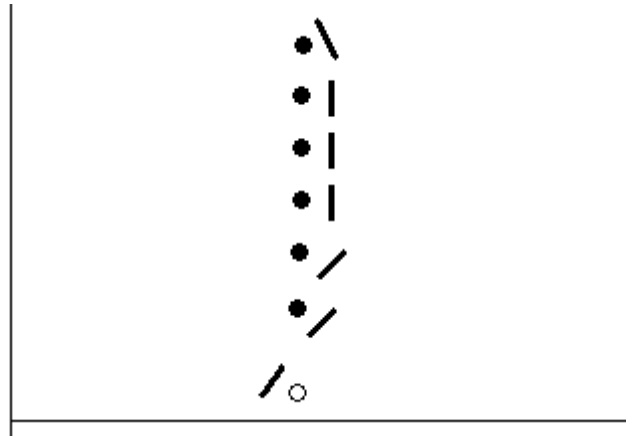
There are four ways to mark the disc that are often used. The marker can play force middle, force forehand, force backhand, or straight up. It is essential that the rest of the defenders on the field know which way the disc is being forced so that they can guard the receiver accordingly.

#### Force Forehand

In this defense the mark sets up on the right side of the thrower (All directional cues are from the marks perspective, i.e. the mark is on the thrower's left side). When forcing this direction your goal is to make the thrower throw a forehand. The mark should not try to get a handblock on a forehand throw. The mark's main job is to prohibit a throw to the backhand side of the field. It is important to note, that marks force left-handed throwers to the left side of the field as well (which would mean a lefty backhand).



**Fig. 9a Force Forehand**



Downfield defenders should be aware that throws to the backhand side of the field will be difficult and should set up on the forehand (force) side of the receiver that they are guarding. This does not mean that they should not cover the receiver to the backhand side of the field, but rather that they do not have to be as close. The downfield defenders main job is to shut down their receiver on the forehand side.

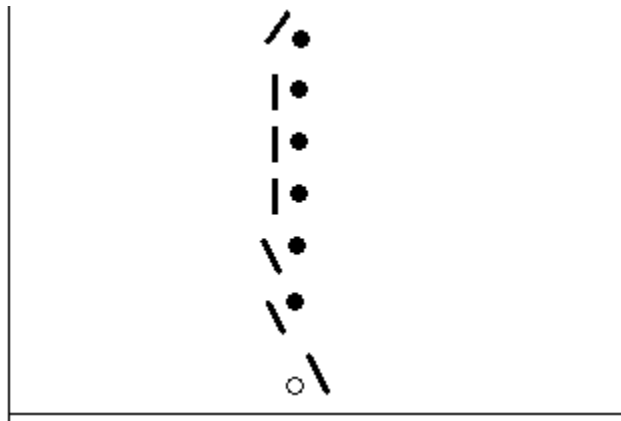
This defense is the most common in Ultimate. It is especially effective against teams that have weak forehands or when the wind is blowing right to left...

### Force Backhand

The force backhand set is just a mirror image of the force forehand. The mark sets up on the left side of the thrower and is responsible for preventing forehands.



**Fig. 9b Force Backhand**



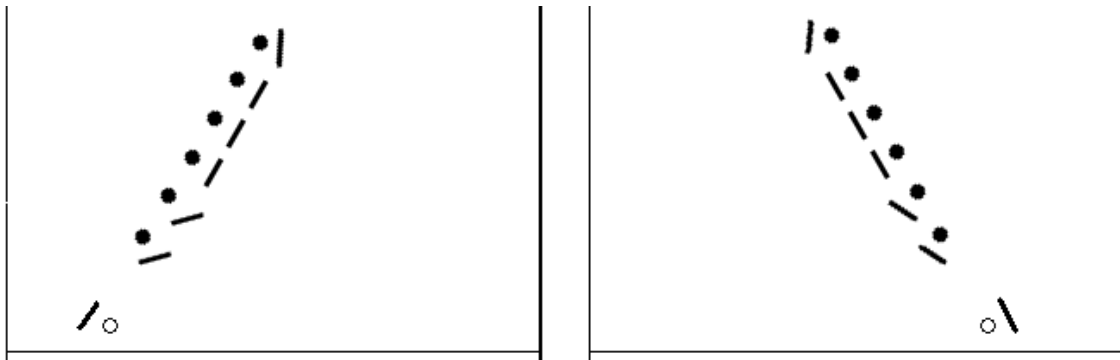
Downfield defenders position themselves on the right side of the receiver that they are guarding. They are responsible for preventing receivers from catching the disc on the backhand side of the field.

This defense is often used when the wind is blowing right to left or when the offensive team has strong forehands and hammers.

### Forcing Middle

In a force middle the mark is always forcing the thrower back to the middle of the field. When the disc is on the right side of the field the mark is forcing forehand and when the disc is on the left side of the field the mark is forcing backhand. It is very important for the mark to communicate the current direction of the force to the downfield defenders.

Downfield defenders need to be aware of where the disc is and which way the mark is forcing. When the mark is forcing backhand, the defenders should be on the right side of the offensive players. Similarly, when the mark switches to force forehand the defenders should switch to the left side of their player.



**Fig. 9c Force Middle**

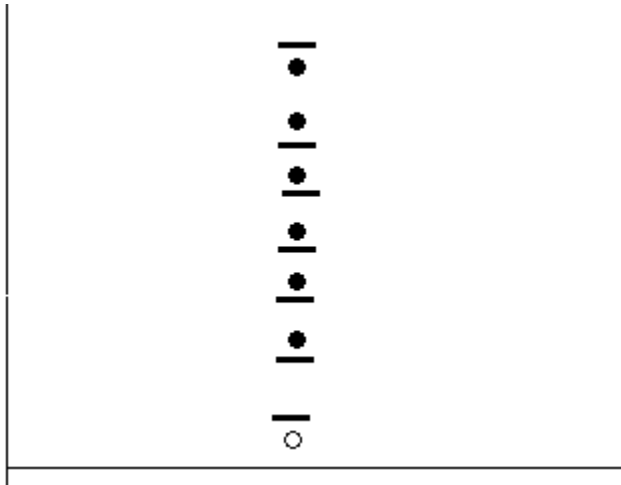
This defense is useful because it forces the offense into an area where there are several defensive players and prevents continuation passes. It requires good communication to work correctly. It can be useful to use terms like “home” or “away” when indicating what sideline you are forcing the thrower to throw towards. Teams often use the term “home” in reference to the sideline where the team’s gear was placed before the game, and “away” as the opposite sideline.

### Straight Up

The mark sets up directly in front of the thrower. The mark is not trying to stop a specific throw, but is trying to make it difficult for the thrower to throw straight downfield, and it also challenges the thrower to complete passes under pressure.

In a straight up force downfield defenders are responsible for throws to both sides of the field. This is a difficult job. Since the straight up mark makes deep throws more difficult but allows the thrower to throw short passes to either side of the field, the defender cannot provide the cutter with a cushion to the break side. The defender needs to be ready to stay on the receiver to both the forehand and the backhand side. Often, the best position for down field defenders in a straight up mark is playing slightly behind and ‘on

the hip' of the cutter. This allows the defender to see both the thrower and the cutter and sets up opportunities for blocks for the defender. Because the straight up mark makes the deep throw difficult, the defender can commit hard to guarding the underneath cut and not be afraid of being beat on a 'double cut' deep. The defender guarding the deepest receiver should stand behind ("back") the receiver and keep an eye out for other receivers cutting deep.



**Fig 9d Straight Up Force**

**Drills for Person – to – Person Defense:**

- Marking Drills
- Defensive positioning

## Zone Defense

### Why play a zone?

There are many different kinds of zone defense and they are used for many different reasons. Zone is most often used in adverse weather conditions when accurate throws are difficult. Many teams also will employ a zone in good weather as well, especially when playing teams with less experienced or less accurate throwers. You can also use a transition zone to slow down a team's play call off the pull. Once you get a zone down and get everyone in it working together, it can be a very effective defense.

Some zone defenses are used to stop quick plays or deep throws. Other zones are designed to lure the offense into a tough position. Some teams will just use the zone to give the offense a different look and get them out of their offensive rhythm.

Some of the ideas in this section may be difficult to grasp, so don't worry if everything is not perfectly clear. As you gain experience with zone defense, the concepts discussed below will begin to make more sense.

### The idea behind a zone

The objective of a zone defense is very different from a person-to-person defense. In the latter, the object of each defender is to stick to their offensive player and deny them the opportunity to get the disc – either through getting a block or forcing them to abandon their cut. In a zone, the idea is to guard an area and to shut down downfield passing lanes. The zone covers the areas where the most dangerous passes are likely to be thrown. This forces the offense to be patient and complete lots of (relatively easy) passes while waiting for an opportunity to strike up field. The more passes the offense has to throw, the better the chance that a turn over will occur.

Just about every team will have its own special modifications on each zone depending on the skills and talents of its players, its experience, or what just seems to work best. As stated before, the goal of a good zone is to allow certain passes but deny others. Varying which passes you are allowing, during the course of a game, or even a point, can keep the offense from getting comfortable and lead to turnovers. The following is a standard zone (a.k.a. “3-person cup zone,” or “Force middle zone”). The goal of this zone is to prevent as many yardage gaining downfield passes as possible.

There are four positions in the standard zone:

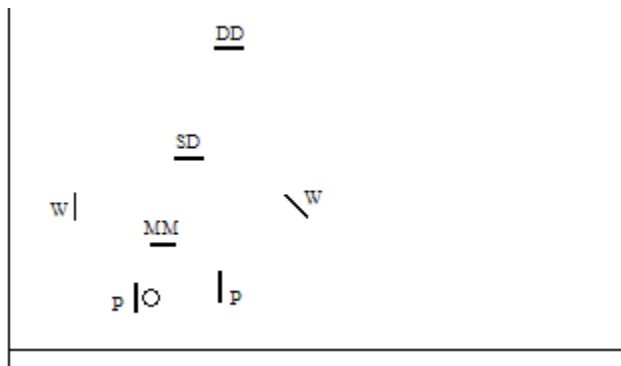
Two points: left and right (P)

One middle-middle: (M)

Two wings: Left and right (W)

Two deeps: A short deep (SD) and a deep-deep (DD) – Many teams have the deeps play side-to-side (i.e. Left Deep and Right Deep).

In game situations, the zone is generally set up as follows.



**Fig. 10a The Standard Zone**

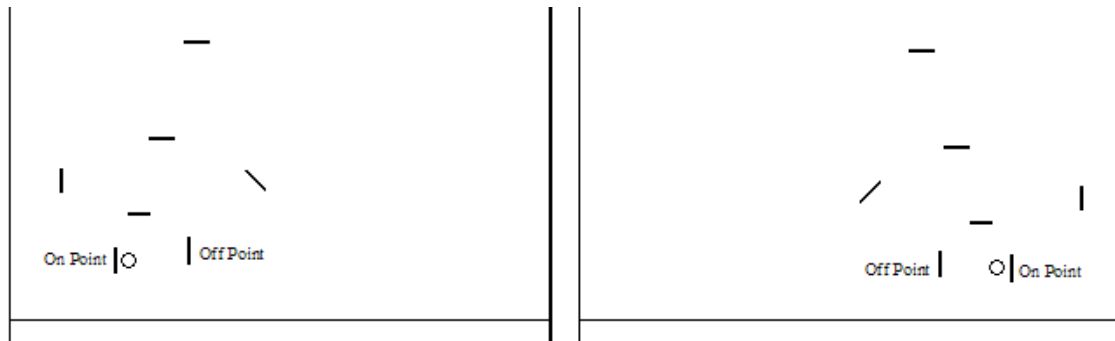
Definition: The strong side of the field is the side that the disc is on. The weak side is the other side.



## The Points

The position of point is best played by players that run hard and set good marks. Point is a tiring but essential position.

One of the points is always on the disc – that is, marking the person with the disc. Like with a force middle person-to-person defense, the marks should always be forcing the thrower to the middle of the field. A good rule of thumb for deciding who is on the disc is to mentally divide the field in half – if the disc is on the left side of the field, the left point is on the disc; if it is on the right side of the field, the right point is on the disc. Teamwork, communication, and coordination between the two points are critical.



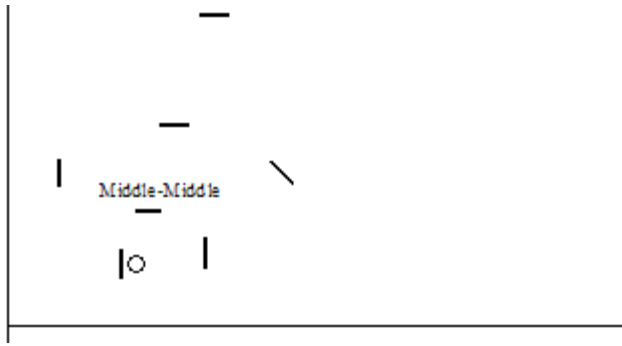
**Fig. 10b The Points**

The “on point” – the point that is on the mark at any given moment should always be forcing the disc to the middle of the field, back to the other point. The on-point’s job is to not allow any break mark throws.

The “off point” – the point that is not on the mark should be facing the on-point. The off-point’s job is to prevent throws straight across the field.

## The Middle-Middle

The middle-middle plays a difficult and critical role in a zone defense. The job of the middle-middle is to prevent throws up the middle of the field to downfield receivers. This requires a great deal of field awareness. It is very useful for the middle-middle to check over her shoulder and find open receivers and then move to cut that throw off by positioning herself between the thrower and the receiver.

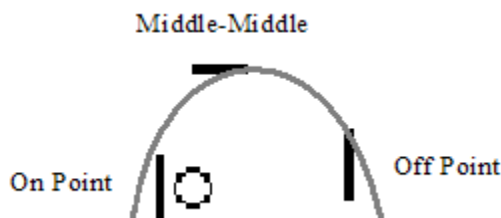


**Fig 10c The Middle-Middle**

### The “Cup”

The two points and the middle-middle form what is called the “cup.” In a conservative zone designed to force dumps and swings, the cup is most effective when it is “tight” – meaning that the off-point and the middle-middle are as close to the disc as they can be within the rules – 3 meters (about ten feet). A tight cup will prevent more downfield throws through it than a “loose” cup.

The three players in the cup need to work together to adjust their positions. It is essential that there are no big holes that the offense could easily exploit to move the disc downfield.



**Fig 10d The Cup**

### Behind the Cup

The four players playing behind the cup (the two wings and two deeps) have very different roles than the players in the cup. While this defense is a “zone” defense, defenders behind the cup will often be playing a person-to-person defense on a receiver within their zone.

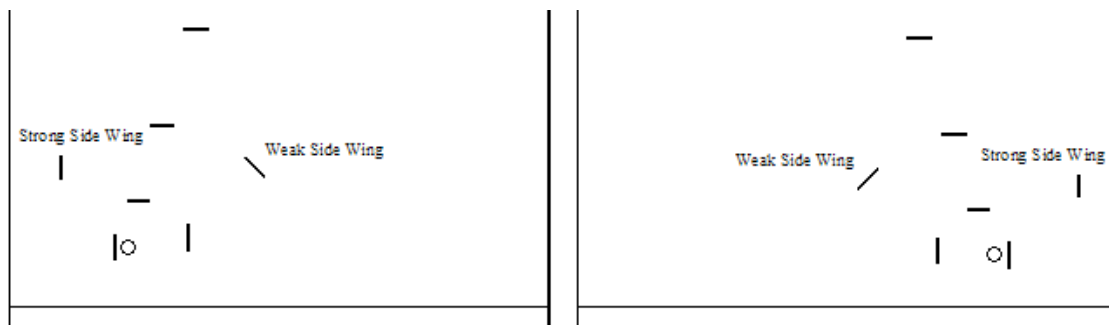
As offensive players move in and out of the downfield zones, defenders need to communicate with each other, make their teammates aware of where the receivers are going, and switch which players they are defending.

### The Wings

The wings also play a difficult role in the zone. They often have to cover a huge area of the field and these positions require tremendous amount of field awareness. To play this position effectively many wings set up with their backs to the sideline to increase their vision of the field.

The zone that wings will be covering is the area between the middle-middle and the sideline.

When the disc is stationary, the wings should be playing person-to person defense on a person who is in their zone and be aware of other players moving in and out of their zone.



**Fig. 10e The Wings**

The weak-side wing may have a greater area to cover than the strong side wing. However, throws coming into their zone will often be very difficult and/or take a long time to arrive; therefore the weak-side wing has more leeway to take a few steps off of his receiver.

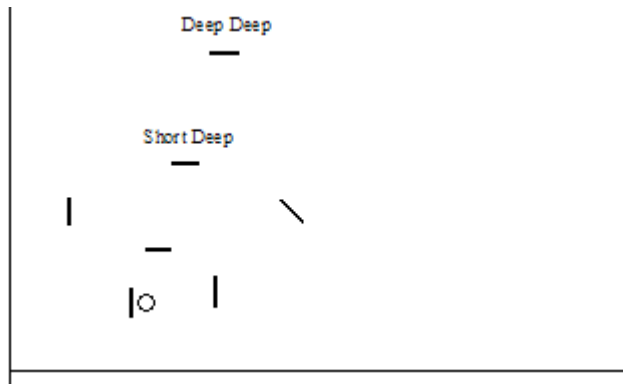
When the disc swings from side to side behind the cup it is the responsibility of the wing to prevent the continue pass up the sideline for positive yardage. This often involves sprinting across the field as the disc is changing sides and identifying the threatening offensive targets as you run. Once the cup catches up to the disc and the force middle mark is established, the wing can go back to filling the hole between the middle middle and the marker.

One of the hardest parts about playing wing is determining when you should try and get a block on a throw and when you should get in position to stop the next throw. Generally, zones are meant to be a conservative defense. An unsuccessful attempt by a wing to block the disc will result in the wing being out of position and a great opportunity for the offense to move the disc downfield. Generally, wings should not attempt to get the block unless they are sure they are going to get it.

### The Deeps

Deeps are generally tall players that will be able to run down and block deep throws. Depending on how your zone is set, the short deep and the deep deep might be interchangeable.

The short deep's job is to stop throws over the top of the cup. These throws will most often be hammers. Like the wings, the short deep should pick up an offensive player in her zone and play person-to-person defense.



**Fig 10f The Deeps**

The deep-deep is essentially the last line of defense. He should always be aware of players cutting deep from all sides of the field and cover them. His job is to not let players get behind him. This does not mean that the deep-deep should set up 20 yards behind the deepest offensive receiver. The deep-deep should be involved in the play otherwise the offense will be playing 7 versus 6, a distinct advantage.

The other function of the deeps is to keep an eye on the offense (since they generally have the best perspective) and help out the middle-middle and wing by communicating to them when there is someone open in their area.

To summarize, each defender in a zone has individual responsibilities

**On-side point**

- guards the thrower
- denies passing lanes 1 & 2

**Middle-middle**

- Denies lanes 2&3

**Off-side point**

- denies lanes 3&4

**Strong-side wing**

- denies lane 2
- Prevents throws up the side line

**Weak-side wing**

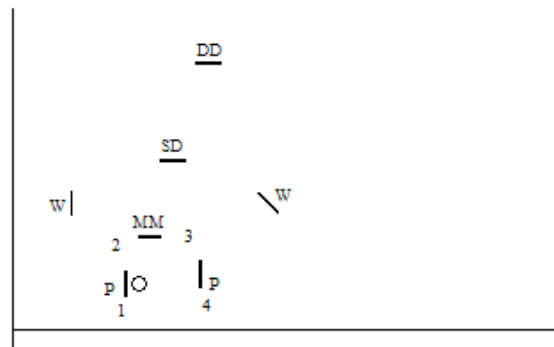
- stops all long throws, curves, overhands in the area.

**Short deep**

- Stops all long throws, overhands, in the area

**Deep deep**

- Stops long throws



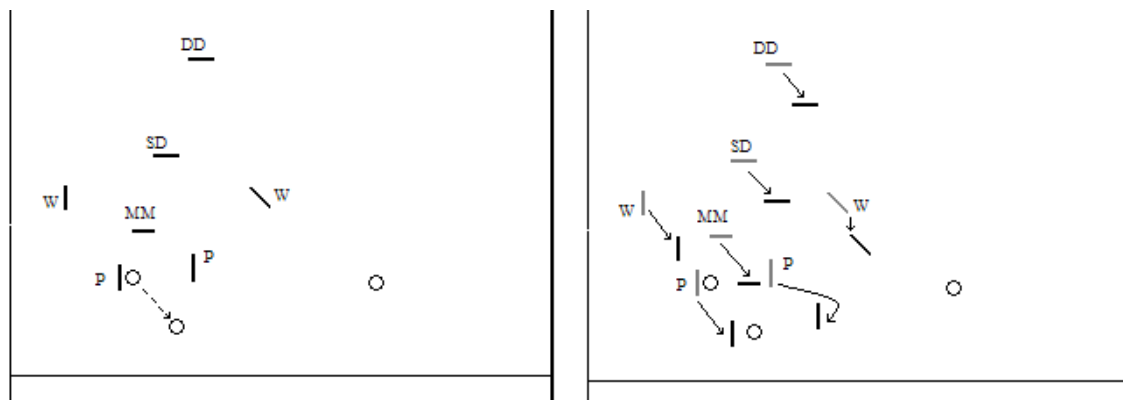
**Fig 10g Zone D: Defenders Responsibilities**

## Adjusting the Zone

As the disc moves, the zone has to adjust to cover the field. The most important job of the zone is to “contain” the offense. This means getting the zone set up around the new thrower and preventing downfield throws.

### Dump or Reset Pass

You will notice that the standard zone does very little to stop throws to the backfield “dumps.” A dump is not a big deal, which is why is often more positive to refer to it as a “reset” of the stall count. It does not change the strong side of the field – nothing changes except the position of the disc on the field. Everyone must shift quickly into position, and hopefully everything will be the same except the offense will have lost ground.



**Fig. 10h Adjusting the Zone for a dump pass**

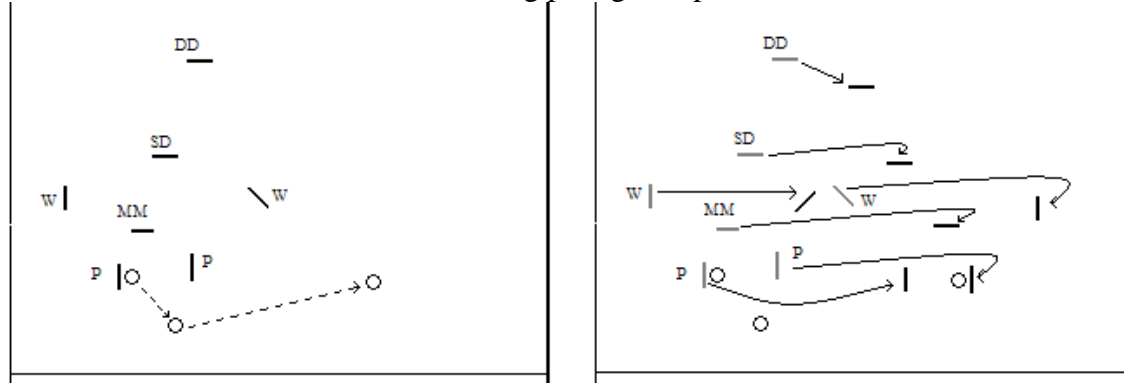
*The key is to stop the swing pass (a pass across the field) for positive yardage, which generally follows a dump pass. The offside point must move to block this passing lane and prevent that throw. It is important for the off-side point to be aware of where the swing is set up. The other defenders move to re-set their positions.*

### Swing Pass

The swing pass that follows the dump pass is a difficult pass to stop. As this pass is thrown the defense must quickly move to “contain” the offense and then re-set up the zone.

Remember that a swing pass will change the strong side of the field. Everyone must shift accordingly. A swing pass will open up one side of the field. In order to contain this, many defensive players should be sprinting slightly past, or overrunning, where they are

going to set-up and then snapping back into position. It is especially important to aware of where the receivers are when the swing pass goes up.



**Fig. 10i Adjusting the zone for a swing pass**

**A. Weak-side wing**

1. becomes the strong side wing
2. Moves laterally to the sideline to prevent a pass up the sideline while glancing downfield to identify cutters who are threats to receive the disc.
3. assumes normal position when the point arrives

**B. Off point**

1. becomes on point
2. sprints laterally past the disc to cut off sideline throws
3. gets to disc and begins stalling

**C. Middle-middle**

1. Shifts laterally
2. Looks over her shoulder to be aware of where receivers are
3. covers the middle to make sure no throws get off there

**D. On point**

1. becomes off point
2. Cuts off throw back to the cagger who just released the disc
3. assumes position, checks for offensive players in the area

**E. Strong-side wing**

1. fills in behind the middle-middle
2. Settles into position, becoming the weak side wing.

**F. Short Deep**

1. Sprints across field to cut off long pass up the sideline, and then settles into place.
2. keeps an eye on offensive players in the area.

**G. Deep Deep**

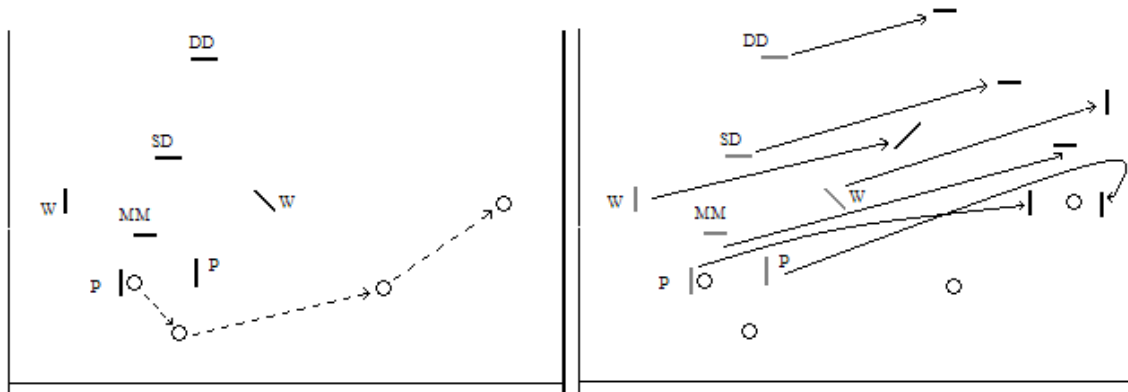
1. Keeps an eye on offensive players in the area.

It is important to remember that you can't outrun the pass across the field; HOWEVER, you can try to cut off the next pass to contain the disc. This takes hustle and anticipation. Speed is on your side in the zone – the offense tends to slow down to a standstill, while the defense is, ideally, running to cover receivers.

### Downfield Throw

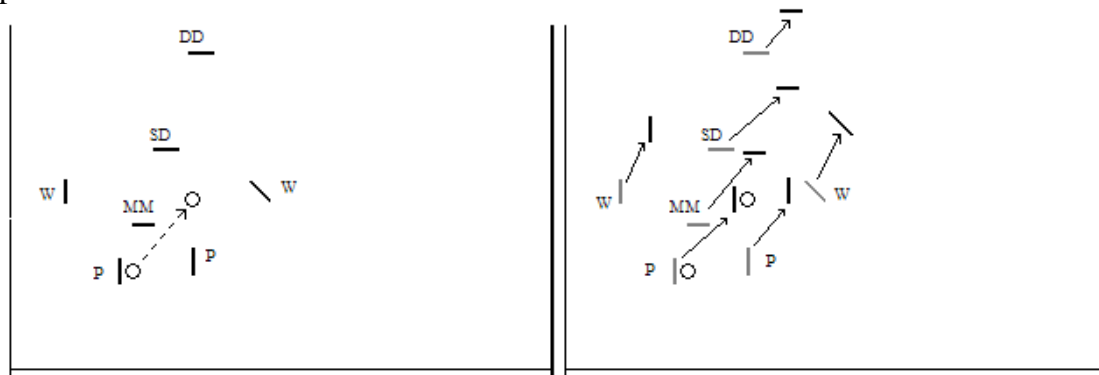
Wings and deeps sprint to guard downfield receivers.

The points and the middle-middle must sprint to reestablish the cup. Getting into position quickly is critical; they set the tone for the whole defense – once they get into place, everyone can set up accordingly. Until then, everyone's "winging it."



**Fig 10j Adjusting the zone for a pass up the line**

Once the cup is reestablished, defenders behind the cup should return to their normal positions.



**Fig. 10k Adjusting the zone for a pass through the cup**

Many teams will switch from a zone to a person-to-person defense when the zone is broken and the disc gets pretty far downfield near the endzone. Usually a deep will make the decision and will yell "man," "force flick," "force home" or any word that your team knows means "play person-to-person defense." Other players or people on the sideline should repeat the call so that everyone on the field knows what's going on.

If you do switch defenses, there are priorities for picking up people; the person closest to you is not necessarily the person who you should pick up. These rules also apply when you have turned the disc over while against a zone defense and must quickly set up a person-to-person defense.

- People who have a good chance of catching the disc in the endzone are the top priority. Deeps are usually covering these people since they are furthest downfield.
- Wings should check for anyone else who is open downfield and sprint for them.
- Throwers are the next priority, once the people downfield of them are covered.

When you transition to person-to-person defense, your team needs to be on the same page for the force. Establish on the line what the force is on a transition. If you do not have a pre-determined force, yell it out and have the sideline repeat it.

#### Communication in the zone

Communication is key in order for a zone to be successful. Points must communicate with each other as to who will be marking, since sometimes it's not so obvious (such as when the disc is in the middle of the field). Have one point be the dominant talker.

The middle-middle, the wings, and the short deep are generally facing the disc with their backs to offensive players; they need help in determining where the threats are. The short deep should talk to the middle-middle. Players on the sidelines should talk to the wings. The deep deep should talk to the short deep. For example, if there is nobody on the strong-side wing's side of the field, let her know so that she can pull in closer and make the thrower's job more difficult.

The sideline should also talk to the deep. It is important to let him know when he can move closer and when there is somebody cutting up the sideline.

BEWARE, however, of too many people talking at once. Each player on the field should have one person responsible for talking to them, either a deep or a person on the sideline. Players should be listening closely for that person, because it can make a difference. That advantage is destroyed when many people on the sideline are yelling at players at random.

#### Other notes

- Except for the point marking the thrower, every other member of the zone should be continually glancing around to locate offensive players. Don't just rely on people telling you where to move.
- Watch out for double teaming. If anyone besides the point on the disc is less than three meters (three big steps) away from the thrower, they are in violation



of the rules. However, if another offensive player moves into the cup (and is closer than three meters to the thrower), another defensive player can move into the area with them.

- Like other aspects of Ultimate, the zone must work as a unit. Everyone must move instantly, as a unit, as soon as the disc is thrown.

#### Drills for Zone Defense:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Circle D</li><li>- Zone D is best practiced by actually playing it</li></ul> |
|--|

## Offense

The most important aspect of offense is that everybody on your team is on the same page. Everybody needs to understand their position or role as well as the full offensive strategy and set. This will help prevent confusion on the field and make your offense look highly organized.

### Person-to-person Offense

#### Thrower

- Throw a pass that you will complete
- Be patient and smart.
- Throw to the first open person to whom you can safely get the disc – keep the disc moving.
- Fake and pivot with the disc to open up more throws.

#### Receiver

- Catch the disc with two hands whenever possible. Watch the disc all the way into your hands and pull it into your body to make sure you have it.
- Cut hard to the disc, and continue running towards it when it's thrown to you (don't wait for it to get to you).
- If you're not cutting, stay out of the way, keep your defender occupied, and try to anticipate where the second or third cut will be needed.
- If you are standing in the cutting space, you are "clogging." When you are clogging, not only will your defense get the block if it is thrown to you, but you are keeping anyone else who may be cutting hard from getting the disc. When clearing, sprint as hard as if you were making a cut.
- Try to establish eye contact with the thrower.
- Beware of repeatedly calling out the thrower's name if you believe that you are open – it may frazzle them to the point of throwing a turnover!

## Positions

Many teams and players find it useful to designate positions for the players. This will help everybody stay on the same page, know when to cut, and know their own role. Since Ultimate requires all players to have all the skills (offense, defense, throwing, catching, etc), ideally, positions do not have to be used. Following is a typical break down of positions. Teams should allow their new players to learn and play all positions – this will help them develop into complete Ultimate players.

**Handlers** – The handlers main responsibility is to get the disc moving when it is stopped. They utilize short, quick cuts (usually a straight cut or a two-step juke) from about 8-15 yards away to get open. The handler cut is typically used to start the offense or to reset the stall if it gets high. It is important for handlers to be aware of cutters further downfield; those cutters are making cuts for more yardage and they should not cut them off.

**Middles** – Middles are the glue of the offense. Middles must time their cuts off of handlers to continue the movement of the disc. They start their cuts from 15-30 yards away from the disc and can utilize any cut to get open. Most of their cuts should be going back toward the disc. After they receive the disc they should look downfield for deep cuts.

**Longs (or Deepes)** – Longs are responsible for making big, yardage gaining cuts. They can time their cuts off both middles and handlers. Longs should begin 15-30 yards away from the disc and use the full cut and the double cut to get open. Most of their cuts should be away from the disc. If they do not get the disc on the away cut, turning it back underneath is a great way to get open for a yardage-gaining throw.

## Offensive Sets

The goal of an offensive set is to create space downfield from the disc. This space will be utilized for receivers to cut into and receive the disc. A good offensive set is one that creates and maintains a space where the throwers are able to throw to and one that the whole offense can conceptualize easily.

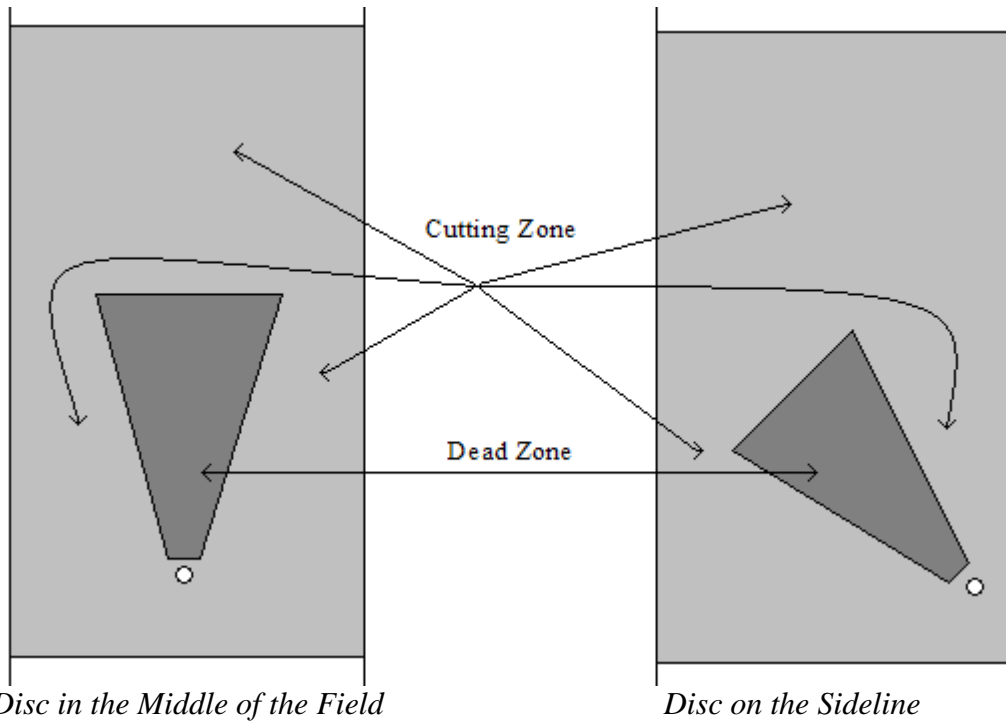
In any offensive set there is a “dead zone” and a “cutting zone.” Cuts are generally initiated in the dead zone and go towards the cutting zone. Each cutter is expecting the disc somewhere in the cutting zone. Throws should not go into the dead zone because there are defenders there ready to get the block. If you finish your cut in the cutting zone and you haven’t received the disc, clear back to the dead zone.

## The Stack

The most basic offensive set and one that is utilized by both beginning and top-level teams is the vertical stack. It is important to not only learn the vertical stack but to also

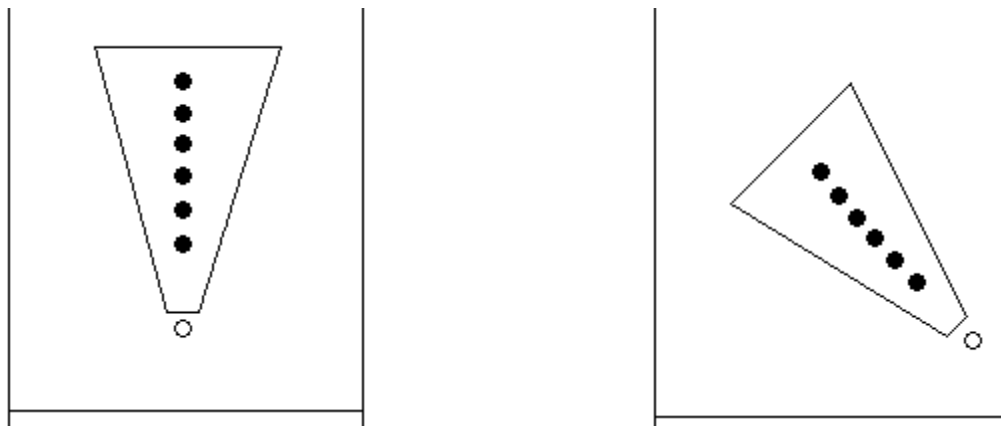
understand why it works. Understanding the concept behind the vertical stack will help you to understand different offensive sets.

In a vertical stack offense, the dead zone extends in a V shape downfield from the thrower in the middle of the field.



**Fig. 11a The Dead Zone and the Cutting Zone**

On a stopped disc all of the receivers should be set up in a line, or stack, in the middle of the dead zone. The closest one to the disc should be no closer than 8 yards away. Each receiver should be 3 – 5 yards away from the next, to avoid picks. The stack should be as narrow as possible in order to prevent defenders from poaching.



**Fig. 11b The Stack**

The cutting space is the space on both sides of the disc and the space beyond the stack. This is where receivers should be attempting to get open and receive the disc. Once your cut is done, quickly get back into the dead zone and into the stack so that the next receiver can cut into the cutting space.

### A word about clearing

Overall, clearing well is just as hard as cutting well. Nothing slows an offense down more than having the cutters running into people who are being lazy about clearing. Clear as hard as you cut. Cutting is as much about getting open to receive the disc as it is about making space so that a teammate can find an even better position to get the disc.

### On the goal line

Offense becomes much more difficult on the goal line. The biggest problem is that you have a lot of people in a small space and there are no deep options. Often the thrower gets so excited by the prospect of scoring that he throws something that he really shouldn't.

Following are some general rules of thumb that will help you score:

- Stay clam. Do not think you have to score in one pass.
- Spread the small field out as much as possible. Be sure your stack goes to the back of the endzone.
- Cuts should be staggered. One cutter allowed into the cutting zone at a time.
- Scoring cuts should typically come from the back of the stack.
- Clear hard. In the endzone it is even more important that you clear hard if you don't get the pass.
- Resets are a good option, especially when the offense is "stuck" and the stall count is getting high.

In addition to the vertical stack, there are also horizontal and split stacks. You can position players anywhere on the field and identify open space to keep clear, and design your own offense. For more detailed descriptions of a variety of offensive sets, pick up a copy of Essential Ultimate from Human Kinetics publishing.

### Drills for Person – to – Person Offense:

- **Stack Drills**
- **Endzone Drills**

## Zone Offense

You have seen how a conservative zone defense works. It allows certain inconsequential passes and attempts to deny passes of consequence. The offense must work as a unit to beat the zone defense.

### Throwers

- Throw passes that are almost surely going to be completions. It's going to be harder if it's windy.
- Remember the reset pass – it's often your best option
- Be patient and smart
- Fakes are especially important. You want to make the defense move around and open up passing lanes for you.

### Receivers

- Catch the disc. Follow it with your eyes into your hands; don't get too eager and look for your next pass until you're sure you've completed the catch.
- Move toward the disc when it's thrown to you – this is especially important in a zone, because the defender often comes up behind you. Also move towards the disc; this will help you to catch it in windy conditions.
- Spread the zone out; don't cluster near fellow offensive players
- Keep moving and keep the disc moving.
- Create 2-on-1 matchups with a defensive player in a 'zone' and take advantage of them.

### Positions

Every team sets up their zone offense differently and some teams use different offenses depending on the type of zone defense they are facing or the weather conditions. For example in heavy winds, it is often helpful to have four handlers. The following positioning for zone offense is the most common set-up. These are the positions in the standard zone offense:

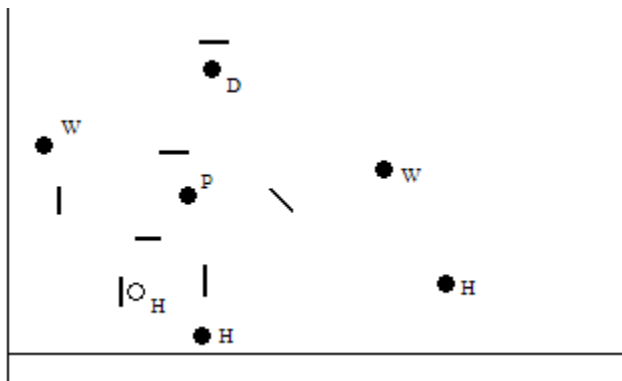
Three Handlers: Two swings and a cagger (H)

Two Wings: Left and right (W)

One Popper: (P)

One Deep: (D)

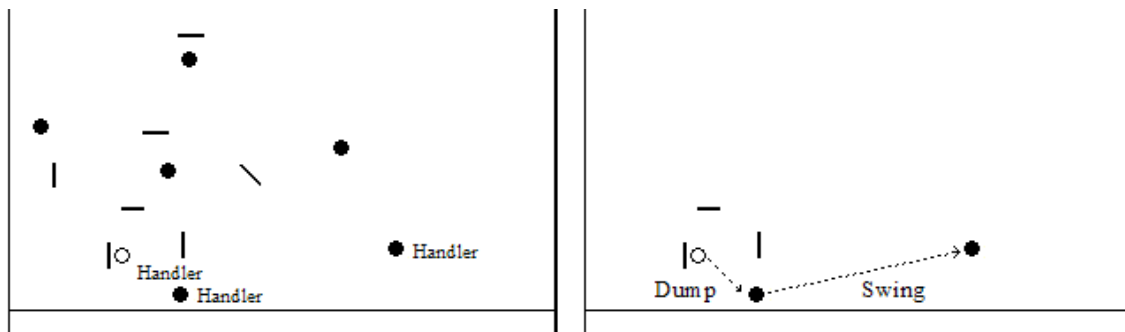
In game situations, the zone O is generally set up as follows.



**Fig. 12a Zone Offense**

Handlers – There are three handlers. Usually they are broken in to a cagger and two swings. The handlers should have very good disc skills because they will touch the disc a lot. One handler will have the disc. The other swing should set up near the far sideline from the disc even or behind the thrower. The cagger should set up between the two swings in a position where it is easy for the disc to be dumped to him and where he will be able to throw it around the off point.

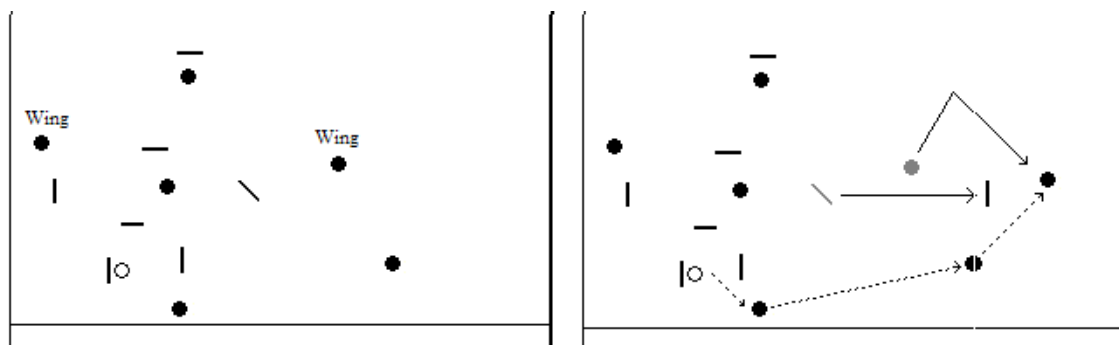
The process of the dump to the cagger and the throw to the other swing is called a “dump-swing.” The dump-swing is the base of the zone offense. Whenever the cagger receives the disc he should immediately throw it to the other swing. The swing should hold the disc for no more than four seconds before throwing back to the cagger.



**Fig. 12b Zone O: Handlers**

By keeping the disc moving, your offense will achieve two things. First, the defenders in the cup will become tired chasing the disc back and forth across the field. When the cup gets tired it will become less tight and there will be more opportunities to throw through it. Second, as long as the disc is in motion the defense will not be able to get set up and there will be opportunities to move the disc downfield.

Wings – There are two wings, one on each side of the field. The job of the wings is to spread the field. They should be timing their cuts so that they are open when the disc is moved to the swing on their side or if it goes through the cup to the popper.

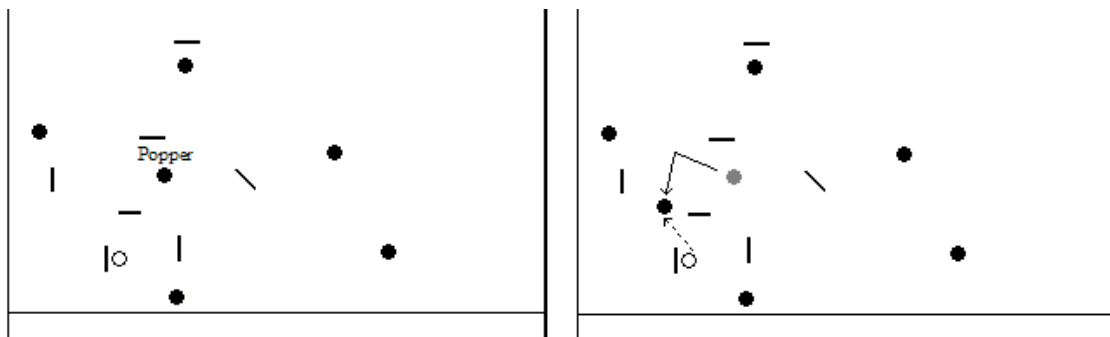


**Fig. 12c Zone O: Wings**

As soon as the wing gets the disc she should look downfield to the deep or the popper. If one of those cuts is open she should hit it. If the cup gets set up again she should turn and throw the disc to her dump.

Popper – There is one popper. His position is in the middle of the field behind the cup. The popper is probably the hardest zone offense position. This position relies on superb timing.

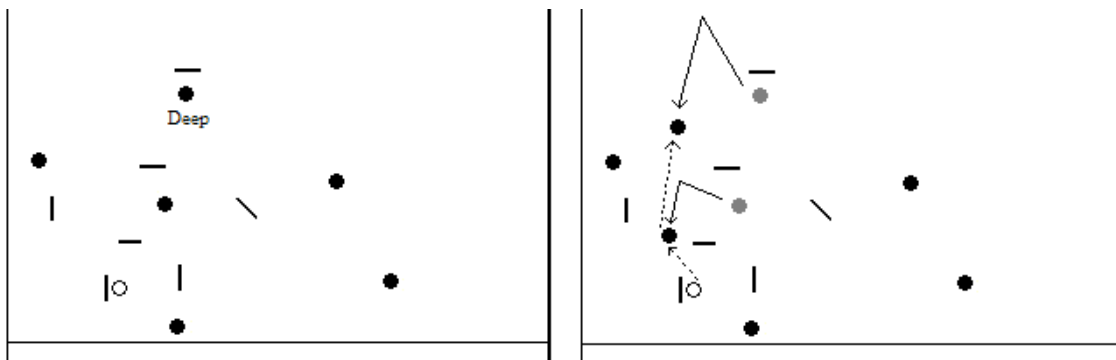
The job of the popper is to find the holes in the cup and fill them. These holes may only exist for a moment and so it is important to anticipate the movement of the middle-middle and go in the opposite direction of her. As the cup becomes tired (after two or three dump-swings) the holes in the cup will become bigger and the popper's job will become easier.



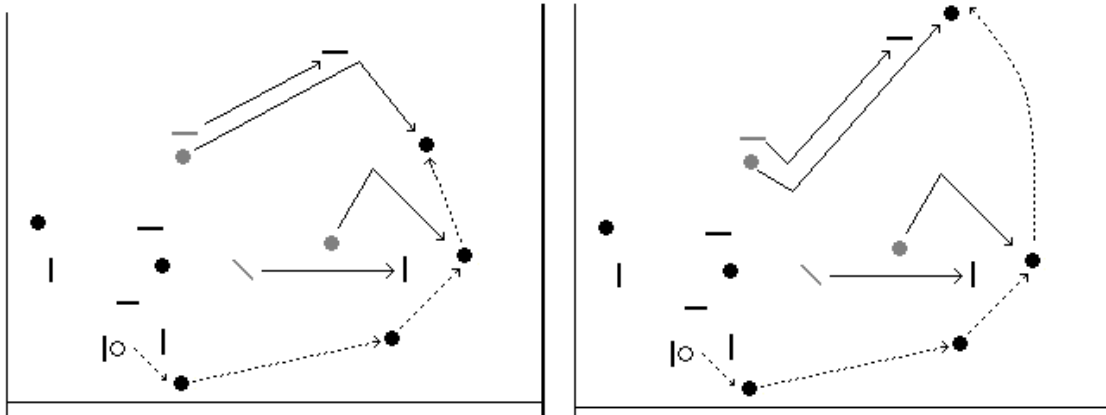
**Fig. 12d Zone O: Popper**

When the popper gets the disc she should look downfield for the deep and then at the wings. If all three are covered and the cup is set back up, she should turn around and throw a dump pass.

Deep – There is one deep, and her position, like the popper, relies a great deal on timing. The deep needs to time her cuts so that when the disc does move downfield, either to the wings or the popper, she is cutting back into them. If she sets up her cut properly she can likely gain many yards on that cut.



Many deeps will see disc get past the cup and run for the long cut. While this is occasionally effective, it is still a difficult cut to throw to and the deep in the zone is ready for it. It is much easier for your teammates if you cut back towards the thrower.



**Fig. 12 Zone O: The Deep**

As a deep, when you get the disc, you will likely have time before the cup sets back up. Be patient and take an open throw if you have it. If you do not have an open throw, wait for a dump and hit it.

#### Drills for Zone Offense:

- Circle D
- Zone O is best practiced by actually playing it



# Practicing Ultimate

The following information is provided to help you structure your practice, give you new and alternative ideas, and help build skills and knowledge of Ultimate.

## Practice Formats

These will vary depending on your schedule, the length of time you have the field. Experiment – determine what seems to work best for the team, what keeps people motivated and interested. It's important to keep developing skills along with having fun. As long as players can see themselves progressing they will continue to be interested

### Traditional format

#### 1. Warm-up

- a. Toss – Throw a few passes to warm-up your throws. Try to throw and catch realistically while warming up; extend out as if you were being marked; if the receiver is jogging, imagine yourself in a game situation when a similar throw is necessary.
- b. Jog - Be sure to warm up your muscles before you stretch. Jog two laps around your field at a minimum.
- c. Light Plyometrics – Butt kicks, high knees, skips, shuffles, and karaokies will help your muscles warm up as well.
- d. Stretch – Make sure to get all of the muscles that are used in Ultimate stretched: Hamstrings, Groin, Butt, Back, Calves, Quads. Stretch together as a team and catch up on the week's event or discuss tournament results and future plans.

#### 2. Drills

Drills are the best way to focus on specific skills and improve them and as you improve your skills the game will be more fun. It is not important to know a lot of drills. Instead your whole team should know a few drills and run them well. Pick one or two drills that focus on a skill that you are hoping to work-on during that practice. The drills included in this book help players develop skills such as throwing, cutting, marking, and reading the disc, to name a few.

#### 3. Short Scrimmage

Play a game to 5 focusing on the specific skill that you have been working on in earlier drills. For example, if you are working on your deep game, make goals on throws of over 35 yards worth two points. Or, if you are working on breaking the mark, play a game to 15 with every break mark thrown on a scoring drive worth one point.

#### 4. Conditioning

Try to do some sort of conditioning at every practice. Conditioning before your scrimmage will allow for a couple of things. First, it is nice to play knowing that you will not have to do additional conditioning after the scrimmage is over. Second, scrimmaging after conditioning will be good practice for your team to learn how to play when tired.

#### 5. Scrimmage

#### 6. Warm-down and stretches

Jog a lap and stretch all of the important muscles. This will increase your flexibility and reduce soreness the next day.

### New player's practice

You might want to structure things a little differently when you're organizing a practice in the beginning of the season when there are several or many inexperienced players in attendance.

#### 1. Warm-up and introductions

- a. Begin by stretching and introducing yourselves.
- b. Have handouts of rules and any other information they might find helpful, ready for them to take home.
- c. Arrange to have a few players who can teach throwing to help out.

#### 2. Drills

- a. Begin with simple throws and catches, explaining the throws and grips by giving demonstrations.
- b. Have members pair off and practice throws and catches.
- c. Introductory drills – line or stack drills

#### 3. Play Ultimate and have fun!

#### 4. Conditioning drills – Make them fun if you can; you don't want to scare people off, but help them understand that it's good to be in shape for Ultimate.

### Practice before a big tournament

Right before a tournament, it is best not to introduce a lot of new material. Try to anticipate what the team needs to learn and introduce it the week before the big tournament. The last practice should focus on building confidence, scrimmaging, and fine-tuning. Try not to get hung up on getting it “just right” rather, aim for a general flow and building up anticipation for the weekend.

If your last practice is less than two days before the start of the tournament, don't push too hard physically – you want to give your bodies a rest so they'll be fresh.

### Practice after a big tournament

Many times after a big tournament there is a feeling of let-down, regardless of how it went. It is especially important to warm up and stretch, since you're likely to be tired and sore. Playing and stretching will help alleviate the soreness. Do some drills and light scrimmaging.

# Drills

## Key for Diagrams

○	Thrower
●	Receiver
●	Previous Position of an Offensive Player
—	Defender/Marker
—	Previous position of a Defensive Player
→	Cut
.....→	Throw

## Throwing Drills

### Warm-up Toss

**Purpose:** To warm up and develop disc handling skills.

**Level:** Beginner-advanced

**Number of Players:** 2

**Number of Discs:** 1

**Description:**

Divide into pairs and line up across from each other approx. 10 yards (10 long strides) apart. Throw with your partner 10 backhands and then 10 forehands in succession. As you get more comfortable with your throws, try to throw as if you were being marked.

**More difficult variations:**

- Try to throw a certain number of passes with no turnovers
- Add more complicated throws such as hammers, scoobers, and inside-outs.
- Throw to each other while cutting up and down the field. Practice hitting a receiver in stride and catching without slowing down.
- Make it a group game – see which pair can throw the most completed passes in a minute.

## Speed Flow

**Purpose:** To isolate and improve the arm and upper body motions in backhands and forehands and improve pivoting.

**Level:** Beginner

**Number of Players:** 2

**Number of Discs:** 1

**Description:**

- Stand 7-10 yards apart and begin throwing backhands (B/H)
- After throwing 10 throws each drop to one knee and throw 10 more.
- Now stand back up and, for 10 throws, try to step out to the pivot side, attempting to get the same sort of extension on release as when down on one knee.
- Proceed to forehand (F/H), again throwing to partner for 10-15 throws.
- Now drop again to one knee, but this time to the forehand side, and throw 10.
- (this only works on the F/H side) sit down facing partner and throw 10. This isolates the action of the upper body - shoulder and trunk rotation, arm motion and wrist snap.
- Rise back up to one knee and throw 10, still somewhat isolating upper body but enabling more of the butt to get involved.
- Finally, rise all the way up to both feet and throw 10-15 F/H's.

**Variations:**

- Shout out the throw (B/H or F/H) you want to see, switching randomly
- One whistle and partners drop disc, sprint to switch sides with partner, pick up disc and continue with instructed throw
- Double whistle and partners drop disc, sprint away from each other 10 strides and return, pick up and continue with instructed throw
- Mix up and add to above (i.e., double whistle followed by instruction to switch throw to F/H upon return to disc OR one whistle signaling a switch sides w/partner followed by instruction to do 10 pushups before continuing to throw)

**Notes:** Be sure to encourage stepping out and lowering of body - as in the progression to simulate a lower and wider release point. Emphasize periodically why it is important to extend away from the body to develop various release points.

### Back and Forth (AKA “Yo-Yo’s”)

**Purpose:** To develop accurate passing to a moving target, catching while running, and conditioning (focus on making accurate and crisp passes and catches even when tired)

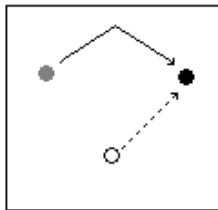
**Level:** Intermediate – Advanced

**Number of Players:** 2

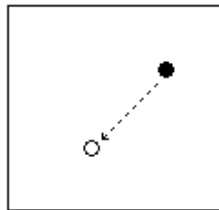
**Number of Discs:** 1

**Description:**

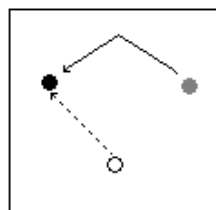
- Players begin 7-10 yards apart
- One player is stationary (thrower) while the other player is making cuts
- The cutter runs three steps to the right and away from the thrower and then cuts back sharply (Fig. 13a)
- The thrower throws the correct throw to the cutter (Backhand if the cutter is cutting to the thrower’s left, forehand to the right) (Fig. 13a)
- The cutter catches, sets a pivot foot and throws the correct throw back to the thrower (Forehand if the cutter has just cut to his right) (Fig 13b)
- The cutter then cuts back in the other direction (Fig 13c)
- The cutter continues this for 1 ½ minutes and then the thrower and cutter switch



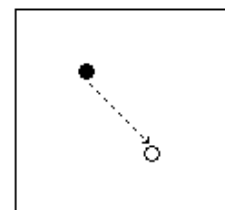
**Fig. 13a**



**Fig. 13b**



**Fig. 13c**



**Fig. 13d**

**Variations:**

- When the cutter receives the disc he fakes the outside throw, pivots, and throws the inside throw
- Cutter makes cuts towards the thrower and then away from the thrower

## Line Drills

### Go-to Drill

**Purpose:** To practice throwing to a moving receiver, straight cuts, and catching while running.

**Level:** Beginner – Intermediate

**Number of Player:** 5+

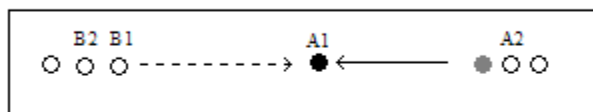
**Number of Discs:** 3+

**Description:**

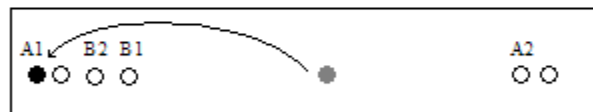
- Establish two single-file lines facing each other at least 50 feet apart. Set cones at the front of each line to help people remember where to start. (The lines try to sneak in on each other without the cones.) (Fig. 14a)
- The first person from line A (A1) makes a straight cut towards line B. (Fig. 14b)
- The first person from line B (B1) throws it to A1 (Fig. 14b)
- After A1 receives the disc he runs to the back of line B (Fig. 14c)
- B1 makes a straight cut toward line A (Fig. 14d)
- A2 throws the disc to B1 (Fig. 14d)
- Continue ad infinitum



**Fig. 14a**



**Fig. 14b**



**Fig. 14c**



**Fig. 14d**

**Variations:**

- Specify backhands or forehands
- Give your group a goal of total complete passes. Yell and count out loud to keep the non-players involved.

**Notes:**

- Make sure to continue running until you catch the disc

## Cutting Line Drill

**Purpose:** To practice throwing a leading pass to a receiver, the two-step juke, and catching while running.

**Level:** Beginner – Intermediate

**Number of Players:** 5+

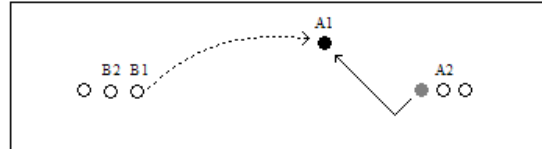
**Number of Discs:** 3+

**Description:**

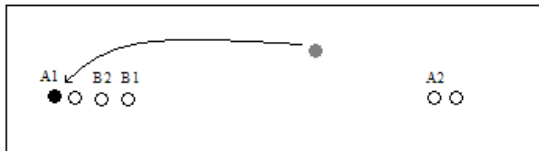
- Set up like the go-to drill (Fig. 15a)
- A1 makes a two-step juke starting to the left and going to the right (Fig. 15b)
- B1 throws a leading backhand to A1 (Fig. 15b)
- A1 runs the disc to the first person in line B without a disc (Fig. 15c)
- B1 makes a two step juke starting to her left and going to the right (Fig. 15d)
- A2 throws a leading backhand to B1 (Fig. 15d)
- Continue ad infinitum



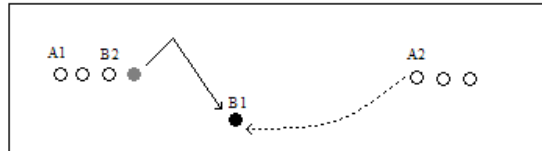
**Fig. 15a**



**Fig. 15b**



**Fig. 15c**



**Fig. 15d**

**Variations:**

- Switch to forehands – cutters now juke to the right and cut to the left
- Throw inside outs to the cutter



## Marking Line Drill

**Purpose:** To practice marking skills, pivoting, faking, and throwing, while facing an active marker, the two-step juke, and catching while running.

**Level:** Intermediate-advanced

**Number of Players:** 6+

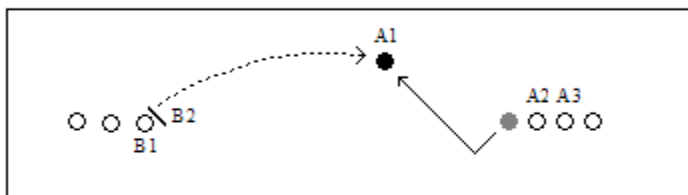
**Number of Discs:** 3+

**Description:**

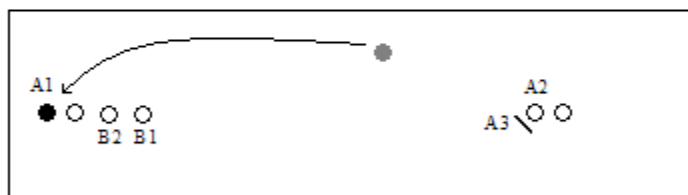
- Set up as above (Fig. 16a)
- B2 sets up on the backhand side of B1, forcing her forehand (Fig. 16a)
- A1 makes a two-step juke starting to the left and going to the right – behind the mark (Fig. 16b)
- B1 throws a break mark throw to A1 (Fig. 16b)
- A1 hands the disc to the first player without a disc in line B (Fig. 16c)
- A3 sets up forcing A2 forehand (Fig. 16c)
- B1 makes a two step juke starting to her left and going to the right (Fig. 16d)
- A2 throws a break mark throw to A3 (Fig. 16d)
- Continue ad infinitum



**Fig. 16a**



**Fig. 16b**



**Fig. 16c**



**Fig. 16d**

**Variations:**

- Throw forehands – have the mark set up on the other side and the cutter cut to the other side.

## Full Defense Line Drill

**Purpose:** To practice throwing to a defended receiver, Making a straight cut, and catching while being defended.

**Level:** Intermediate-advanced

**Number of Players:** 8+

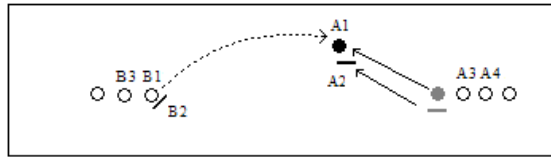
**Number of Discs:** 3+

**Description:**

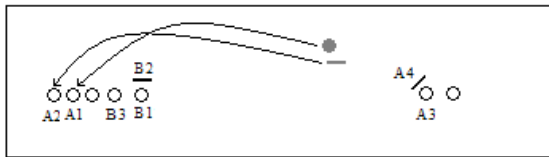
- Set up as above (Fig. 17a)
- B2 sets up on the forehand side of B1, forcing her backhand (Fig. 17a)
- A2 sets up a step behind A1 on the break side (Fig. 17a)
- A1 makes a straight cut for a backhand (open-side) throw from B1 (Fig. 17b)
- B1 throws to A1 while A2 defends (Fig. 17b)
- A1 hands the disc to the first player without a disc in line B (Fig. 17c)
- A4 sets up forcing A3 backhand (Fig. 17c)
- B2 sets up a step behind B1 on the break side (Fig. 17c)
- B1 makes a straight cut for a backhand (open-side) throw from A3 (Fig. 17d)
- A3 throws to B1 (Fig. 17d)
- Continue ad infinitum



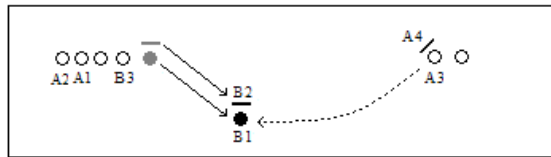
**Fig. 17a**



**Fig. 17b**



**Fig. 17c**



**Fig. 17d**

**Variations:**

- Throw forehands – have the mark set up on the other side and the cutter cut to the other side.

**Notes:**

- This drill teaches bad defensive positioning for A2. Emphasize that A2 may be setting up on the wrong side of the 'stack' but that this is an O drill and not a D drill.

## Stack Drills

These drills are designed to work on various cuts, the timing of those cuts from locations on the field, and throwing to a moving receiver

### Four Line Stack Drill

**Purpose:** To practice the two-step juke, full cut, double cut, throwing to cutters, timing cuts. To understand the concept of the stack.

**Level:** Beginner-intermediate

**Number of Players:** 8+

**Number of Discs:** 3+

#### **Description:**

- Set up four lines in the middle of the field. (Fig. 18a)
  - o The first line should be on the goal line with all of the discs
  - o The next line should be 8-10 yards away
  - o The last two lines should be about 6 yards apart
- B1 makes a two step juke starting left and then going right (Fig. 18b)
- A1 throws a backhand to B1 (Fig. 18b)
- C1 makes a full cut starting away and then coming toward B1 (Fig. 18b)
- B1 throws a backhand to C1 (Fig. 18b)
- D1 makes a full cut coming in toward C1 (Fig. 18b)
- C1 throws to D1 (Fig. 18b)
- D1 runs the disc to line A and hands it to the first person without a disc in that line (Fig. 18c)
- A1 goes to line B, B1 goes to line C, and C1 goes to line D (Fig 18c)

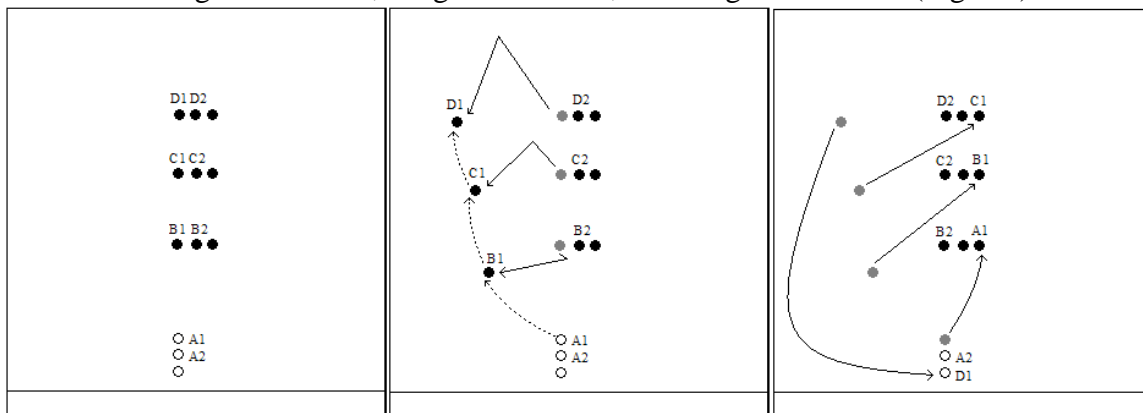


Fig. 18a

Fig. 18b

Fig. 18c

#### **Variations:**

- Switch the cuts to the forehand side
- The cutters in line D make a double cut going away

#### **Notes:**

- Make sure the thrower takes the time to set his/her feet before making the next pass.

### Four Line Stack Drill with Huck

**Purpose:** To practice the two-step juke, full cut, throwing to cutters, timing cuts, timing deep cuts, throwing to deep cuts. To understand the concept of the stack.

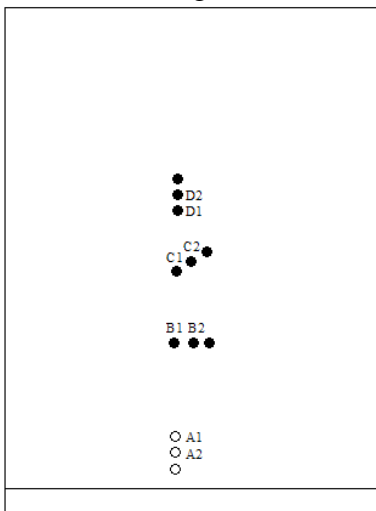
**Level:** Intermediate

**Number of Players:** 9+

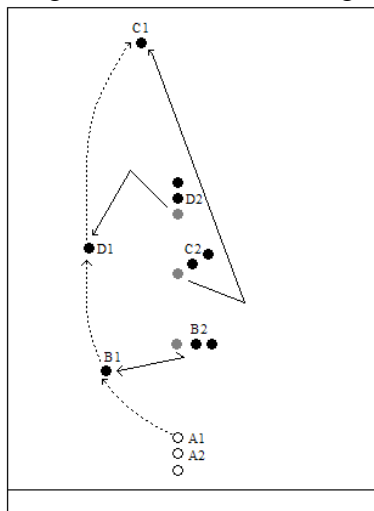
**Number of Discs:** 4+

**Description:**

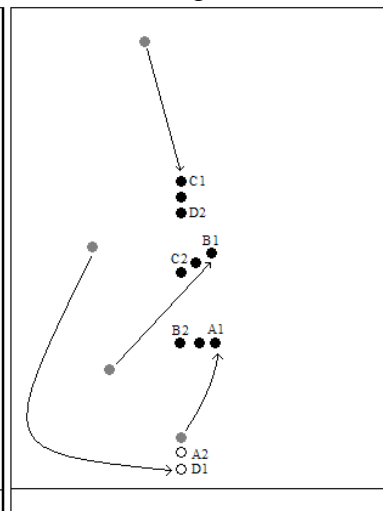
- Set up as above (Fig. 19a)
- B1 makes a two step juke starting left and then going right (Fig. 19b)
- A1 throws a backhand to B1 (Fig. 19b)
- D1 makes a full cut starting away and then coming in toward B1 (Fig. 19b)
- B1 throws a backhand to D1 (Fig. 19b)
- While D1 is making his cut, C1 starts a full cut that goes in and then out deep behind line D (Fig. 19b)
- D1 throws a deep backhand to C1 (Fig. 19b)
- D1 steps out of the cutting lane and C1 throws the disc back to him
- D1 runs the disc to line A and hands it to the first person without a disc in that line (Fig. 19c)
- A1 goes to line B, B1 goes to line C, and C1 goes to line D (Fig. 19c)



**Fig. 19a**



**Fig. 19b**



**Fig. 19c**

**Variations:**

- Switch the cuts to the forehand side

**Notes:**

- This is a good drill for practicing the timing of deep cuts/throws. Encourage C1 to make their cut later than they think so that they have to sprint all the way to the catch. This will force D1 to learn to throw to space.

## Double Huck

**Purpose:** To practice the two-step juke, full cut, throwing to cutters, timing cuts, throwing to deep cuts, throwing and then cutting. To understand the concept of the stack.

**Conditioning.**

**Level:** Intermediate - Advanced

**Number of Players:** 9+

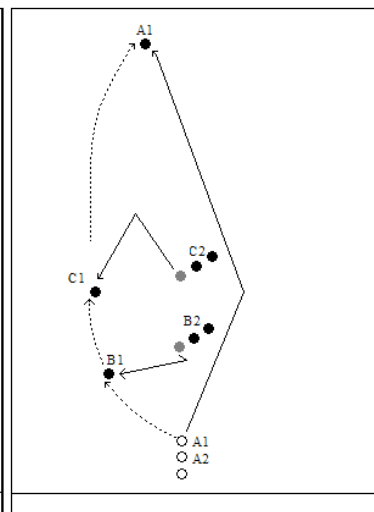
**Number of Discs:** 4+

### **Description:**

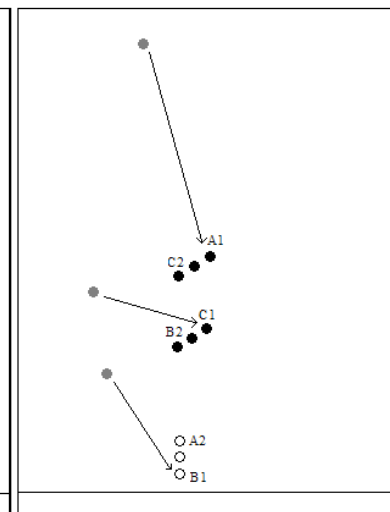
- Set up three lines in the middle of the field (Fig. 20a)
  - o The first line should be on the goal line with all of the discs
  - o The second line should be 8-10 yards downfield
  - o The third line should be 8-10 yards away from the second line
- B1 makes a two step juke starting left and then going right (Fig. 20b)
- A1 throws a backhand to B1 (Fig. 20b)
- As soon as A1 releases the disc he sprints downfield behind the stack (Fig. 20b)
- C1 makes a full cut starting away and then coming toward B1 (Fig. 20b)
- B1 throws a backhand to C1 (Fig. 20b)
- C1 throws a backhand huck to A1 who is cutting deep (Fig. 20b)
- B1 steps out of the lane and A1 tosses the disc back to him
- B1 runs the disc to line A and hands it to the first person without a disc in that line (Fig. 20c)
- A1 goes to line C and C1 goes to line B (Fig. 20c)



**Fig. 20a**



**Fig. 20b**



**Fig. 20c**

### **Variations:**

- Switch the cuts to the forehand side

## **Marking Drills**

These drills are focused on the skills of marking and breaking the mark.

### **3-Man Break Mark Drill**

**Purpose:** To practice marking and breaking the mark. Conditioning.

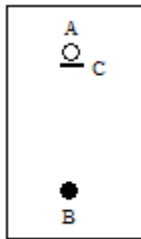
**Level:** Beginner – Advanced

**Number of Players:** 3

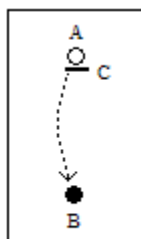
**Number of Discs:** 1

**Description:**

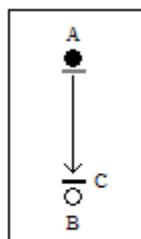
- Two players stand facing each other 12 yards apart (Fig. 21a)
- The third player, the marker, marks the player with the disc straight-up (Fig. 21a)
- The marker starts the stall at “stalling 5.”
- The thrower fakes and pivots, in order to throw to the receiver (Fig. 21b)
- The marker attempts to block the throws and stall the thrower (Fig. 21b)
- Once the throw goes up the marker sprints to mark the new thrower (Fig. 21c)
- Continue for 1 ½ minutes
- Switch markers



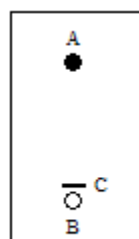
**Fig. 21a**



**Fig. 21b**



**Fig. 21c**



**Fig. 21d**

**Variations:**

- Once the thrower has thrown she sprints to become the new marker
- The marker must keep his hands behind his back – this will help him work on moving his feet.
- You can expand this drill to incorporate by the entire team into an elimination drill by forming two lines, where the players throw, then run across and mark. If your throw isn't completed, you have to force an incomplete throw to stay in the game. If you throw a turn over and the person you are then marking throws a completion, you are out.

**Notes:**

- Over the head throws, like hammers, are usually discouraged.

## Moving Break Mark Drill

**Purpose:** To practice marking and breaking the mark to a moving receiver.

Conditioning.

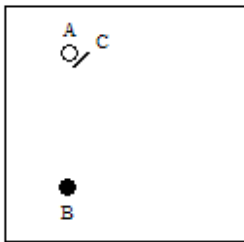
**Level:** Intermediate-advanced

**Number of Players:** 3

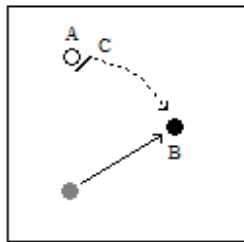
**Number of Discs:** 1

**Description:**

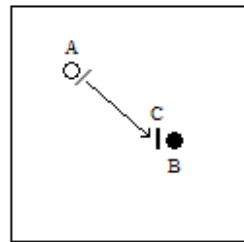
- Marker sets up forcing the thrower forehand and initiates the stall at “stalling 5” (Fig. 22a)
- Receiver sets up 15 yards away and cuts to the break mark side (Fig. 22b)
- The thrower attempts to break the mark with a break around backhand or an inside-out flick (Fig. 22b)
- Once the receiver catches the disc he stops (Fig. 22c)
- The marker sprints over and forces the new thrower forehand (Fig. 22c)
- The new receiver makes a cut to the break mark side (Fig. 22d)
- Continue for 1 ½ minutes
- Switch markers



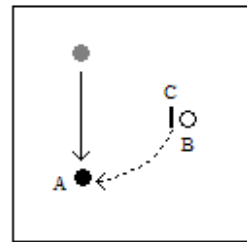
**Fig. 22a**



**Fig. 22b**



**Fig. 22c**



**Fig. 22d**

### **Variations**

- The marker forces backhand and the receiver cuts to the break mark (forehand) side
- Once the thrower has thrown she sprints to become the new marker

## Endzone Drills

### Mushroom

**Purpose:** To practice dumping and swinging and throwing to a moving receiver.

**Level:** Beginner

**Number of Players:** 6+

**Number of Discs:** 1

**Description:**

- Set up one line in the front middle of the endzone (Fig 23a)
- A starts with the disc 10 yards away from the front of the line (Fig 23a)
- B makes a two step juke cut to the forehand side (Fig 23b)
- A throws a forehand to B (Fig 23b)
- C makes a two step juke cut to continue the pass (Fig 23c)
- Once a player catches a disc in the endzone the next cut is a dump cut in the opposite direction (Fig 23d)
- Continue back and forth

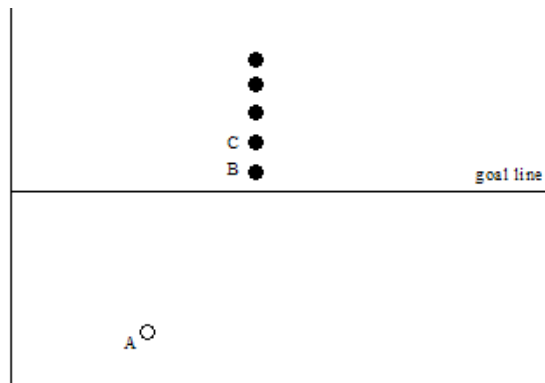


Fig. 23a

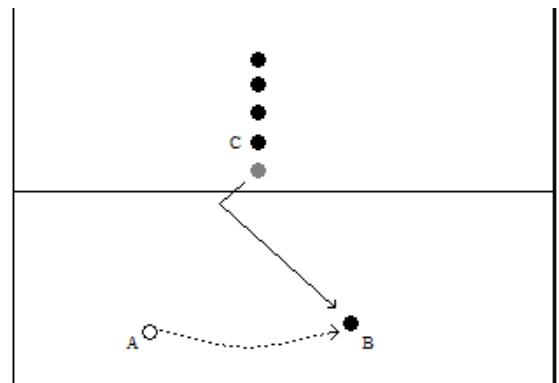


Fig. 23b

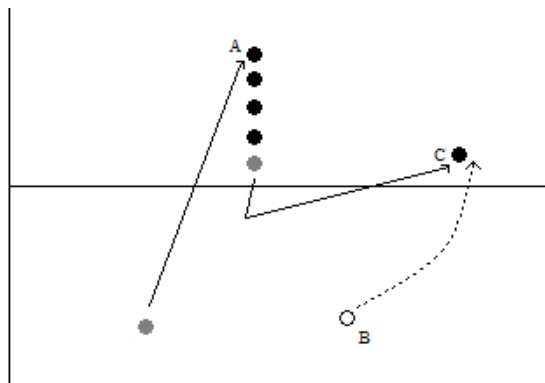


Fig. 23c

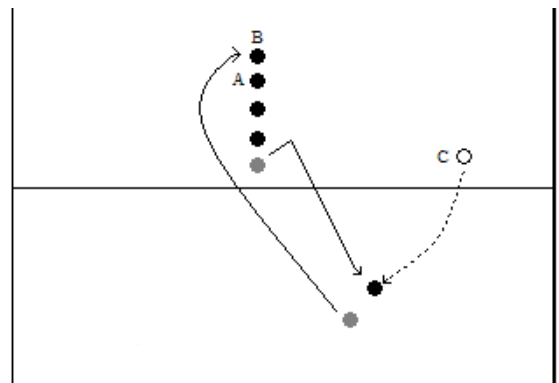


Fig. 23d



## Endzone

**Purpose:** To practice endzone offense, dumping and swinging, endzone cuts, and throwing to a moving receiver.

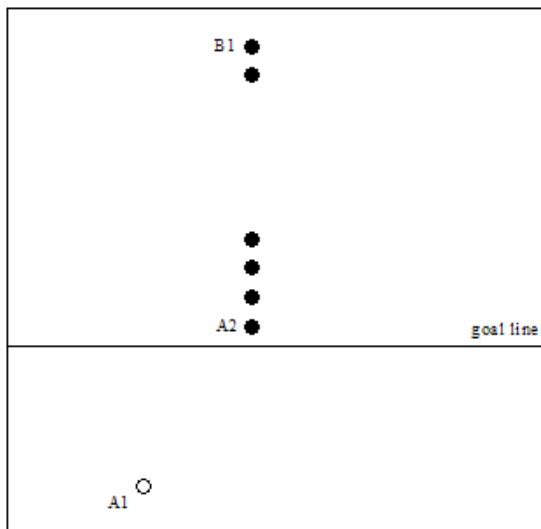
**Level:** Beginner-intermediate

**Number of Players:** 7+

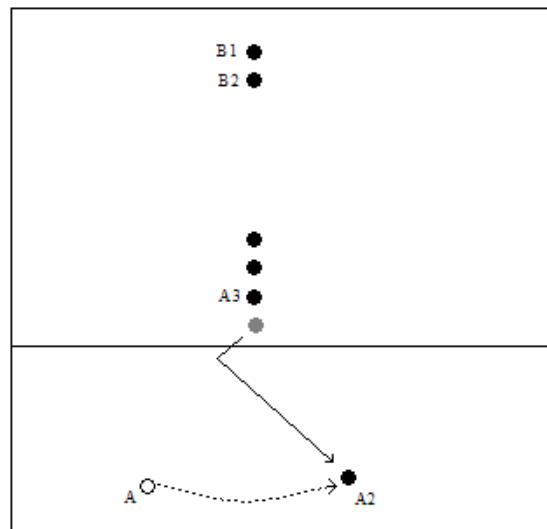
**Number of Discs:** 1

### **Description:**

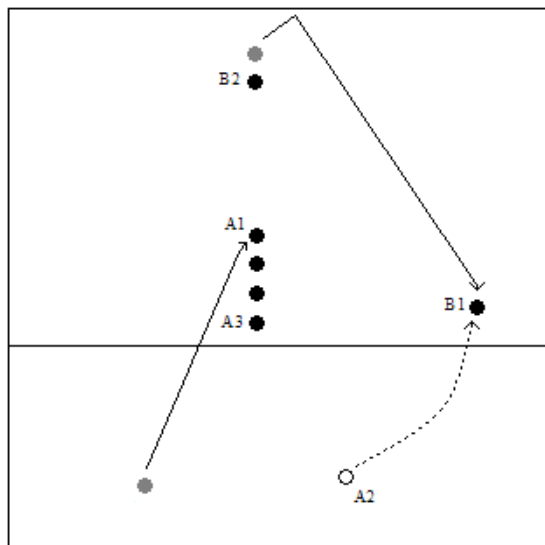
- Set up two lines – one in the front middle of the endzone, the other in the back middle. (Fig. 24a)
- A1 starts with the disc 10 yards away from line A (Fig. 24a)
- A2 makes a two step juke cut to the forehand side (Fig. 24b)
- A1 throws a forehand to A2 (Fig. 24b)
- B1 makes a full cut or a straight cut toward the front corner of the endzone (Fig. 24 c)
- A2 throws a forehand to B1 (Fig. 24c)
- A3 makes a dump cut for B1 (Fig. 24d)
- B1 throws a backhand dump to A3 (Fig. 24d)
- Continue scoring in each corner
- After catching a score recycle into line A
- After throwing a score recycle into line B
- After catching a dump pass, recycle into line A (otherwise the lines will get uneven)



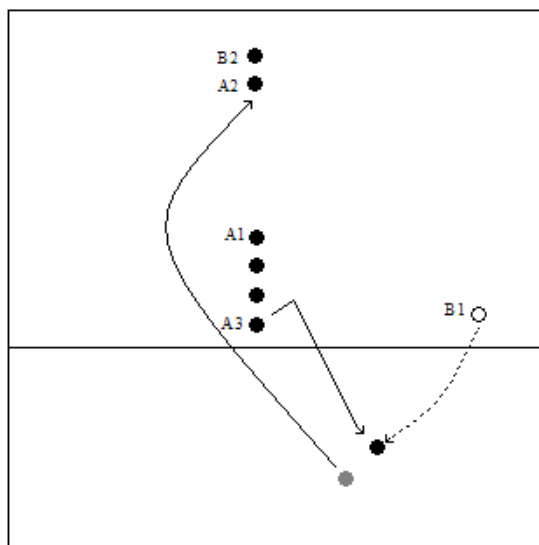
**Fig. 24a**



**Fig 24b**



**Fig. 24c**



**Fig. 24d**

### **Variation**

- With fewer players: after throwing a goal that player makes the dump cut for the player that caught the goal
- Add a defender to the B line cut and give the thrower the choice to look the scoring pass off and go back to the swing if it is not open. This forces throwers to work on decision making as well as throwing skills.

## **Other Drills**

### **Big Man drill**

**Purpose:** To practice reading and positioning for a floating disc. Conditioning.

**Level:** Beginner – intermediate

**Number of Players:** 7+

**Number of Discs:** 3+

**Description:**

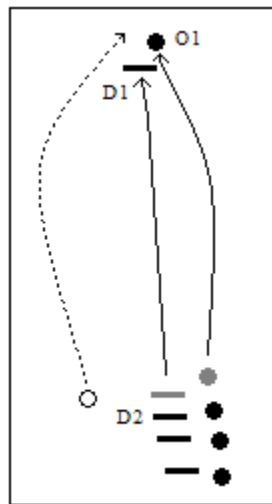
- There is one thrower with all of the discs (Fig. 25a)
- There are two lines (Fig. 25a)
  - o The defensive line is about two yards away and even with the thrower
  - o The offensive line is about two yards away and two yards ahead of the defensive line
- When the thrower says “go” the first person in each line sprints down the field (Fig. 25b)
- The thrower throws a floaty pass about 35-40 yards downfield allowing time for the defensive player to get to it (Fig. 25b)
- Both players try to establish position and get the disc (Fig. 25b)
- The offensive player should have a slight advantage due to the lead
- The players jog the disc back to the thrower and switch lines

**Notes:**

- Only have players that can consistently throw floaty passes be the throwers



**Fig. 25a**



**Fig. 25b**

## Circle D

**Purpose:** To practice containing in the cup (zone D), faking and pivoting. Conditioning.

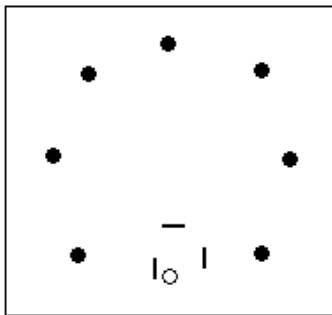
**Level:** Beginner – Intermediate

**Number of Players:** 10+

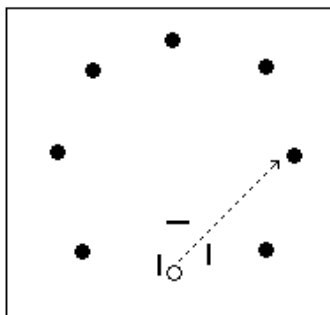
**Number of Discs:** 1

**Description:**

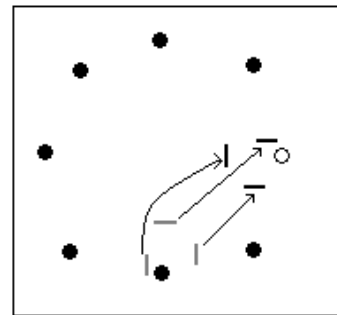
- All but three players form a circle with a diameter of 25 yards (Fig. 25a)
- The three defensive players set up a cup around the player with the disc (Fig. 25a)
  - o One point should be forcing to the other point and stalling – initiating the stall count at “stalling 4”
  - o The Middle-middle should be stopping throws through the cup
- The thrower must fake and pivot in order to throw to another player in the circle (Fig. 25b)
- The thrower can not throw to the receivers immediately on his right or left
- Once the thrower throws, the cup moves to set up on the new thrower
- The first defensive player should set up a mark that stops the continuation pass and forces the disc back to the other defensive players (Fig. 25c)
- If there is an incomplete pass – the defense gets to set up and initiate play with a check
- Continue for a set time or to a specific number of blocks and then rotate the defense out



**Fig. 26a**



**Fig. 26b**



**Fig. 26c**

**Variations:**

- Players that commit a turnover must sprint around the outside of the circle

## Defensive Positioning

**Purpose:** To practice defensive positioning, cutting, and catching while being defended.

**Level:** Intermediate – Advanced

**Number of Players:** 8+

**Number of Discs:** 3+

**Description:**

- The thrower starts with all the discs within 1 yard of the sideline (Fig. 26a)
- The marker forces the thrower towards the sideline (Fig 26a)
- There is a line of defenders 10 yards across and 15 yards downfield of the thrower (Fig. 26a)
- There is a line of receivers 2 yards downfield of the defender line (Fig. 26a)
- The first receiver steps out from the line (Fig. 26b)
- The first defensive players sets up in a position to force the receiver either – deep or back to the disc and announces which way he’s forcing the receiver to go (Fig. 26b)
- The thrower checks the disc in
- The receiver makes any kind of cut in whatever direction she wants trying to get open (Fig. 26c or 26e)
- The defender tries to cover the cut
- The thrower throws to the receiver
- The receiver brings the disc back to the thrower (Fig. 26)
- The receiver and the defender switch lines
- Every player is the thrower for five passes

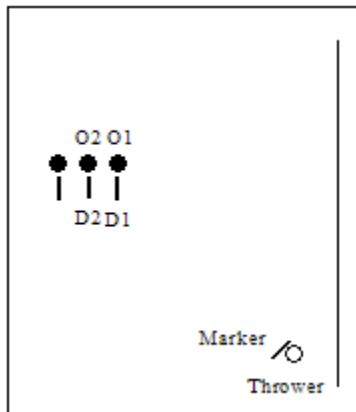


Fig. 26a

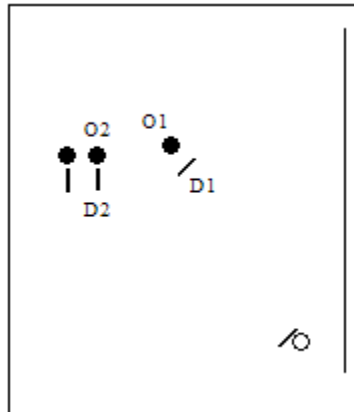


Fig. 26b

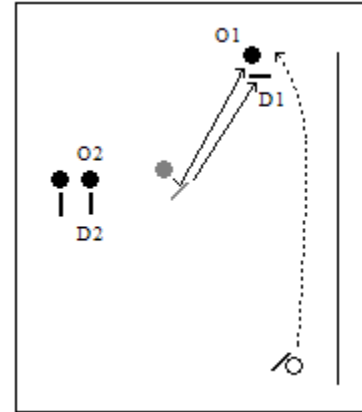


Fig. 26c

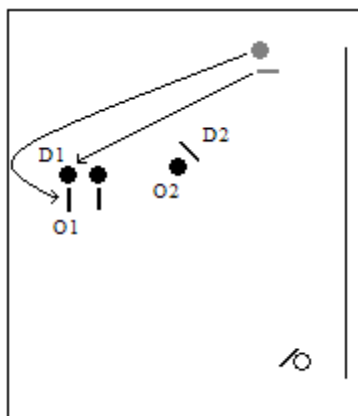


Fig. 26d

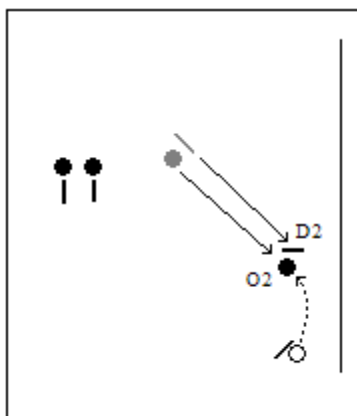


Fig 26e

# Conditioning and Flexibility for Ultimate

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As children grow and mature some enjoy natural physical advantages during the process. They may be taller, faster, stronger or more coordinated than their peers at any given point. This is, however, always a fraction of the population. And, we are doing the children we coach a disservice if we assume that living active lifestyle or playing a certain sport will assure them comprehensive physical development and success. In order to optimize an athlete's growth and maturity, it is critical for youth leaders to stress a well-rounded approach to physical training. This will foster appropriate fitness habits, healthy attitudes toward teamwork, minimize injury, while maximizing performance and satisfaction, and should be the approach with any opportunity where working physically with children

The athletic age (physical maturity) of your players will help determine the intensity level and the frequency of training sessions. In general, children under the age of 14 should focus on developing **multiskill** movement patterns, ones that would enhance participation in a variety of sports and games, while keeping interest high. Studies have shown that children who specialize before an age appropriate to do so (14-16) report high rates of injury and burn out, with either leading to the other. So for middle school ages and below, try to avoid too much sport specificity, instead stressing fun and variety aimed at the development of a rich **movement portfolio** that will prepare children for success in all manner of activities.

Once working with more mature athletes, those of high school age, it is appropriate to take a more focused and specific approach to training, yet keeping in mind that enhancing the quality of movement and variety of instructional tactics will also be of significant benefit. Ultimate requires a tremendous array of explosive locomotor patterns, while learning the manipulative skills unique to disc sports. Be mindful of these demands, while constantly changing and enhancing the manner in which you challenge your athletes' development. Whether your players choose Ultimate as their life-long passion or compete at the highest levels of the sport is secondary to the importance of ensuring they chose an active lifestyle, for a lifetime.

Conditioning programs should contain the following:

- Warm Up and Cool Down
- Flexibility Training
- Speed, Agility and Quickness Exercises
- Functional Strength Development

## Warm Up and Cool Down

An adequate warm up is an important component of a game, practice, or training session that should never be overlooked. If that is allowed, poor performance and injury may well occur. Playing Ultimate to warm up is NOT warming up. Too many injuries result from this approach to physical preparation, and to get the most out of a training session athletes will want to be more thorough in readying their bodies for the demanding work ahead. A cool down should also be included to allow the body's muscles and joints, as well as the mind, to decompress from the demands of training or competition.

## Key Principles of an Effective Warm Up

- Activities of Low Intensity for 5-10 Minutes
- Increase Circulation and Core Body Temperature
- Target Major Muscle Groups
- Add Exercises Warming up Muscles, Tendons, Ligaments Involved in Stability and Lateral Movement

Suggested warm up routines should include at least two of the following:

- Jog at slow to moderate pace 2-4 minutes
- “Follow the Leader” runs (weaving, zigzags, etc.)
- Agility Movements (side to sides, carioca, skipping, backpedaling, etc.)
- Light plyometric exercises (high knees, high heels, skates, straight-legged bounds, retro-runs) over 25-30 yard distances
- Low-medium intensity accelerators covering 40-60 yards (i.e. 50%/70%/50% of sprint capacity)
- Straight ahead, side and diagonal (45 degree) lunges – one set of each 4-8 reps with each leg
- Medicine ball throws w/partner(s) – chest push passes, two hands overhead, side to side and underhand throws all helpful in developing core strength and stability
- Light tag games or relays, perhaps utilizing various locomotor skills (i.e. skipping, galloping, hopping, bounding)

Cooling down is as essential to training and competition as warming up for activity. Coaches have a responsibility to make sure that athletes do not end physically demanding sessions abruptly. This is important to restore the body and mind to a normal and relaxed state, prevent lactic acid pooling, and the subsequent shortening of muscles and tendons following work. To gain greater flexibility, taking full advantage of the relaxed and pliable condition of these soft tissues, lengthen them with a thorough stretch routine.

A cool down might include a 2-4 minute jog, followed by low intensity agility movements or accelerators, even a light game of tag or keep away. Be certain to take the time to finish with stretching, for flexibility effects movement and range of motion (ROM) -- increased flexibility increases ROM, and an increase in ROM has a definite effect on the quality of movement.

## 1.1 Flexibility Training

There are two recommended approaches for developing flexibility in young athletes -- **dynamic** and **static** flexibility training. Stretching routines are intended to lengthen muscle and tendons, for increased ROM, as well as to ready these tissues for the vigorous work that lies ahead. Young athletes should prepare for activity with movements that are similar to those involved in the sport. Prior to practice, training or competition, flexibility exercises should adhere to this same principle. Dynamic stretching is more effective for this purpose, whereas static stretching is more valuable following practice or competition to restore muscle to its pre-event length, calm the nervous system, and to reduce soreness.

Dynamic flexibility training involves moving the joints through an ever-increasing range and in an active manner. This method is more efficient in preparing tendons and the muscles attached to them for explosive concentric (shortening) and eccentric (lengthening) contractions. And, since it is active in nature, this technique is fun for all ages, especially children.



The key is to move the body in multiplanar - or dynamic – patterns with gradually increasing intensity, and to imitate upcoming movements. It is suggested to begin at the feet and to progress upward through the kinetic chain. Listed below are several examples of dynamic exercises:

- Ankle circles
- Calf push-starts (in push-up position)
- Toe and heel walks
- Knee circles (standing)
- Leg swings (standing - forward and backward, and side to side)
- Leg circles (lying on back, raise one leg above and draw big circles)
- Hip circles (standing)
- Trunk flexion/extension (standing, also lateral flexion/extension)
- Trunk circles (standing)
- Arm circles (various patterns, simple to complex)
- Wrist shakes
- Wrist circles and figure eights
- Neck flexion and extension (also lateral flexion and extension)

Proceed from dynamic flexibility to activity, rather than a discussion, to benefit from the active warm up. This is better for all age athletes, but particularly children, as neuromuscular connections are always developing and motor learning is now more likely to take place.

After concluding a training or practice session, or a day of tournament play, wrap up the cool down with static stretching. This technique is more commonly known and is most effective following activity. Address all major muscle groups and encourage the athletes to take their time, gently holding each stretch – at less than maximum exertion – for 45-60 seconds. Then repeat with each muscle group. Studies show that a stretch takes about 30 seconds to progress from the muscle belly to the tendon. Thus, sub-maximal static stretching for 45, but no more than 60, seconds (and repeating) not only relaxes the belly of the muscle, but affects a lengthening of the tendon, as well. This will, of course, be of value in enhancing future performance.

## **1.2 Speed, Agility, and Quickness**

Ultimate is a game of transitions, requiring explosive starts, acceleration and deceleration, and changes of direction. The ability to perform such movements rapidly and with great frequency, all while maintaining good body control, is essential for success on the Ultimate field.

### **Speed Development**

Children become faster runners by running. This is a natural process, however it can and should be enhanced with focused teaching. While we know there are no guarantees a child will realize her greatest potential, we also know that providing the tools necessary to succeed, during the growth process, makes physical success and fulfillment more likely.

In order to become a faster runner, become a more fluid runner. Passing through awkward growth stages is common (e.g. lengthening of limbs not matched by increases in coordination and strength) and teaching proper form will assist the child through these periods. The movement patterns learned will elevate performance later in the maturation continuum.

The two types of speed development are acceleration and absolute speed, and speed endurance. **Acceleration and absolute speed** refer to how rapidly an athlete can get to top speed, while **speed endurance** is the ability to do these skills over and over again. It is rare that an ultimate player performs at 100% of sprint capacity. Instead, success is determined by the ability to accelerate and decelerate rapidly, while repeating the process. Below are examples of exercises that focus on both areas.

Exercises for acceleration and absolute speed:

- Arm action drills – standing and/or seated
- Running on balance
- Falling starts
- Scramble-ups on stimulus for 5-10 yards
- Flying starts
- Accelerators
- Assisted running – hills descending 3-7% grade; partner towing
- Stop – start sprints
- Skipping for distance and for height
- Bounding or bionic running
- Straight-legged bounding

Exercises for speed endurance

- Interval runs
- Team relays – several repetitions w/o stopping
- Pickup sprints – e.g. 4 x 20 yard intervals (jog/stride/sprint/walk), rest is walking portion and repeat several times
- Skill drills incorporating endurance components

### **Agility Development**

Agility is most easily defined as the ability to accelerate, decelerate, change direction quickly while maintaining good body control and all with minimal decrease in speed. Train athletes in all planes of movement: Sagittal – forward and backward; Frontal – lateral; Transverse – all other movement in between. The transverse plane encompasses the vast majority of the 360 degrees of direction in which one can maneuver and is where the greatest gains can be realized.

Compose multiple movement challenges for athletes, including some of the suggestions listed. Increase complexity of exercises as athletes gain proficiency.

- Crossover skips
- 20-yard shuttles (assorted locomotor skills – carioca, side to sides, backpedal, etc.)
- T-drill
- Agility box drills
- Squirms
- Short distance ladder sprints
- Zig zag sprints

### **Quickness Development**

The Ultimate player must be able to stop abruptly, rapidly change direction, and powerfully accelerate again. Though similar to agility, quickness training focuses more upon movements of short duration and distance. In many cases, success in Ultimate is determined by the capacity to cover these very short distances most rapidly. Quickness is a function of power – a combination of strength and speed – as well as reaction time. Given equal technical skill, players that can initiate and react to movement in a shorter time period will have an advantage over their direct opponent.

In the beginning stages of quickness training emphasize decelerating, change of direction, and explosive starts. Concentrate also on improving reaction time. Below are exercises to help develop quickness in your athletes:

- Scrambles (from various positions and over very short distances)
- Lateral skates
- Rope skipping
- Ankle jumps (in place, traveling back and forth, side to side or in diagonal patterns)
- Vertical jumps (repetitions of 6-10)
- Long jumps (successive repetitions of 3-5 jumps)
- Zig zag jumps (2 feet take off and landing) and bounds (alternating or same foot)
- Plyometric exercise followed immediately by a short sprint

### **1.3 Functional Strength**

While Ultimate does require strength, it is not necessary to spend significant time in a weight room. Core and functional strength can be developed using the athlete's own body weight or small external implements, such as medicine balls. Strength and strength endurance help protect the body from injury and also boost the acquisition of speed and quickness. Jumping to win a disc in the air, lunging positions common on the mark, as well as throwing long all require strength. Additionally, tournaments, games and even individual points can be grueling in length and demand tremendous energy output, so possessing strength endurance is also vital.

Here is a list of body-weight exercises that will assist in building appropriate strength in your athletes:

- Squats (regular and staggered stance)
- Lunges (regular, lateral, diagonal and backward)
- Hip thrusts
- Push-ups (regular, staggered hands, plyometric – advanced)
- Crunches (regular and reverse)
- Table tops (propped on elbows)
- Bridges (face up and propped on hands in reverse pushup position w/heels on ground, lift one leg at a time)
- Trunk extension (prone position supermans)
- Hip extensions (on bench or off end of bleacher)

To help build core strength and stability, it is recommended that medicine balls (4-8 pounds, depending on age of athletes) be acquired. There are several throws and other rotational movement exercises that will develop explosive core power. These are fun and can be done with partners or in small groups.

## **Summary**

Ultimate is a physically demanding sport. An athlete will realize greater success by committing to a comprehensive approach to fitness, and its cumulative effects. Set fitness goals and objectives in order to effectively map out a plan for the athletes and their season. A program that strives to train all aspects of development - speed, agility and quickness, flexibility and functional strength, and taking care to properly warm up and cool down – will serve the Ultimate player well. The quality of performance will be enhanced, the threat of injury will be significantly reduced, and life-long attitudes and approaches to fitness, of all sorts, will be enriched.

Recommended Suppliers and Resources for Fitness:

### Suppliers:

Human Kinetics ([www.HumanKinetics.com](http://www.HumanKinetics.com)) publisher of excellent and huge supply of books, videos and dvd's on sport-training and much more

Perform Better ([www.performbetter.com](http://www.performbetter.com)) supplier of training equipment and literature

### Books:

Training for Speed, Agility, and Quickness, Lee Brown, Vance Ferrigno and Juan Carlos Santana editors; Human Kinetics, 2000 (companion dvd available).

Sports Speed 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, George Dintiman and Robert Ward; Human Kinetics, 2003.

Total Training for Young Champions, Tudor Bompa, PhD; Human Kinetics, 1999.

High-Performance Sports Conditioning, Bill Foran, Editor; Human Kinetics, 2001.

# Other Disc Games

Sometimes you don't have your full squad at practice or you want to play on a weekend with a few players. Maybe you're tired of all these drills. Well, players have invented a couple of alternative games to play.

## Half-court Ultimate

If you don't have a full field or a full squad, try cutting the field in half. The same rules and scoring apply; however, when the disc changes possession, the team who gained possession must "clear" the disc by throwing it to someone on or beyond the half-field line. Once the disc is cleared, the team on offense can try to score. Possession does not change after a goal – just start trying to clear the disc again. . If you have a very small number of players, shrink the size of the field and reduce the stall count to 5 or 7.

## Half-court Goaltimate

Establish a goal at one end of the field. You can use a football goal or soccer goal without the net, but avoid crashing into the standards. We recommend setting up two cones approximately 15 feet apart to avoid headaches. Establish a clearing marker approximately thirty yards away from the goal (set it further away if you have more than eight players).

The objective is to complete a pass to your teammate that goes through the goal. If you are using cones, you cannot pass directly over the cones; with a football or soccer goal, the disc cannot go over the upper cross bar. A goal is scored by completing a pass through the goal in either direction. There is no out-of-bounds.

Before you can score, your team must be the last one to clear the disc beyond the clearing marker. After every incomplete pass, the team who gained possession must clear the disc before scoring.

## Hot Box

You need four markers to make a square box approximately 8 feet by 8 feet, plus two clearing markers placed approximately 30 yards in opposite directions of the box. We suggest using low-profile cones to mark the box, since they are smaller than regular cones. There is no out-of-bounds in Hot Box.

The goal is to complete a pass to a teammate standing in the box. Both feet must be inside the box to score. If the disc is turned over, the team who gained possession must clear the disc by completing passes to a teammate across either clearing line before they can attempt to go for a goal.

Variations include adding a stall count, lengthening or shortening the clearing markers, using only one clearing line, and making the box larger or smaller.

### 10 Pull

This is just like Ultimate except the same team pulls 10 times in a row. Each team has exactly one possession to score and if neither team scores on their first possession, play is restarted with a pull. This is a good drill for intermediate to advanced teams seeking to learn how to 'value' the disc. Keep a three column score: O-D-Neither.