Learning to properly shoot a basketball is of the essence at all stages of the game. The thrill of putting the ball in the basket is what first attracts many players to the game. The best way to learn is by spending time on your own shooting the ball. This works well if the player has a good model of what good shot form should look like and the awareness of how to fix his/her own shot, when parts do not fit the model. This is not the norm. Players in general need someone to teach them the proper shooting form and develop the awareness of their own shot. In order to develop the proper shot form, time must be spent in practice on the appropriate details. The following things should be taken into consideration:

- Biomechanically we are trying to create a position that will allow the player to consistently generate power to lift the ball and softly place it on top of a target. Doctor Naismith used the word finesse when talking about shooting. It is not about hitting the target with power alone.
- We are talking about form shooting and not game like shooting. In form shooting the skill is done:
  - In a slow motion
  - In distinct phases
  - With the player verbalizes the steps to enhance awareness
  - With the main focus on form, not the ball going in the basket (process vs. outcome)
- Practicing shot form should take place early in the practice, before the athlete is tired. You do not want to practice form shoot when fatigue has set in. This is not always true for game like shooting.
- Shot form practice should not become competitive against other player. Competition shifts the focus from the shot form to the ball going in the basket. This is game like shooting, which is another type of shooting that needs to be practiced. When you go to game like shooting, the form will more often than not suffer. The coach can have the players focus on one element of their form in these types of shooting activities.
- Progression of details. The players cannot handle too much information at one time. It is progressive.

**Shot Form - Starting Position**

The player starts in a balanced stance with the ball placed on the thigh of the leg corresponding to the shooting hand. This allows the player to properly position the hands on the ball.

One of the concerns with many one handed shooting drills is that the players use an unnatural motion to deliver the ball to the shot pocket. This action cannot be done without putting either the elbow out of alignment or a twisting of the hand.

Note: This is not one of the three phases, but helps the younger players with alignment of the foot, knee, hip, shoulder, elbow, and grip on the ball.
With younger players it is often useful to have them repeat a little slogan or mantra to help bring awareness to the different body parts. For example, "feet, knees, hips, shoulder, elbows, hands".

**One and 1/2 hands on the ball**
The shooting hand is spread out in the centre of the ball. The tips of the first two fingers should be able to grip the seams of the ball. The guide hand is on the side of the ball. The thumbs will form a 'T'. We want to use the finger pads, which are the most sensitive part of the hand, to grip the ball. It should not rest on the palm.

As in all skills the coach must make allowances for individual differences. No two players are built the same; therefore idiosyncrasies will occur. These are not errors as long as the basic biomechanical principles are maintained to the best of the athlete's ability.

**Phase One - "Ready"**
The ball is tipped into a ready position (triple threat). From this position the player can quickly pass, dribble or shoot the ball.

Key points of emphasis:
- Balanced stance - the width of the feet and amount of stagger will vary based on the individual.
- Focus on pushing the hips back rather than bending the knees with younger players.
- The top of the ball is level with the shoulder.
- The shooting elbow is under the ball.
- The elbow and ball are in line with the knee and foot.
- Two 90° angles are formed by the elbow and wrist when looking from the side.

Have the players verbalize the position. They can say 'One' or 'ready'. You as a coach can choose any words you want. The important thing is that you are making a connection between this position and a cue word. This increases the player's awareness of this position and is beginning to develop a vocabulary that enhances communication between the player and the coach. This is especially important for error detection and correction. It is more effective for the coach to say to a player; "In position one your elbow is sticking out." than to say; "When you shoot your elbow is sticking out." The athlete can go quickly to position one to make the correction.
Phase Two - "Lift"

In this phase the ball is brought above the forehead and in front of the face. The player is looking under the ball at the target using two eyes. The ball is above the shooting knee. The player has taken a dip in his/her stance in preparation to lift. Have the players verbalize "two" or "lift".

Notice the slight stagger of the feet to aid in alignment for the player.

This is not a place that the player will pause when actually shooting the ball. It is a spot that we want them to go through when shooting. It is a checkpoint.

Many players do not bring the ball through the proper release point. If the ball is too far in front of the face the power is being generated forward.

If the ball is brought back behind or beside the head there is a loss of power backwards.

Knee Check

Have the player do a squat from this phase (you can also do it in Phase One). The ball should be over the knee. Another good check is to have the player sit and put pressure on top of the ball. If there is alignment the player can generate power. If the ball is too far in front or behind the head he/she will not be able to push up. This can also be done from a standing position with smaller players.
Errors in moving from Phase Two to Phase Three

In the example to the left the player does not continue to lift the ball. The wrist moves forward, while the elbow and shoulder remains still. This player is playing darts, trying to hit a very flat target.

In the example to the right the player will do a slight dip of the ball which puts the elbow out to the side before lifting. This player is used to shot putting the ball and wants to generate power by putting the ball over the shoulder. Very often the coach will have to put their hand under the elbow and make the player feel the elbow lifting. Just doing the drills does not improve a players shot. The coach must be diligent in error correction and detection. Having the players do the three phases in slow motion also aids the coach in his/her ability to watch the shot.

Phase Three - In

The final phase is the full extension of the body from the toes to the fingers. There should be a little hop or at least extension at the ankles. The player holds the follow through with the fingers pointing at the target. The player should land on balance. Again the phase should be verbalized to help with awareness.

The guide hand can return to the side of the body after the shot is released. This prevents the player from shooting with the shoulders rotating forward, a very common occurrence; especially players who still have two hands involved in their shot.
One of the most common errors in the follow through is the positioning of the hand. The wrist is the joint that flexes forward. Many players, especially those who have a flat wrist, will have the flexion occur at the fingers. This is a big loss in power and control for the shot. Hold the follow through until the ball hits the floor.

After each shot the players should correct their hand and body position. This ability to self-correct is crucial in developing self-awareness of their shot.

In review, have the players go through their shot form early in practice and verbalize the three phases. As the player's awareness improves the coach can continue to add details as necessary.