

BASKETBALL

Guide

All Thing You Need to Know to Play Basketball



Basketball Guide

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DEDICATION

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Basketball is a team sport where two teams, usually consisting of five players on each team, play against each other on a rectangular [court](#). The objective is to get the ball through a hoop mounted high on a backboard on the opponent's side of the court, while preventing the opponent from shooting it into your team's hoop. It is a very popular [sport](#) worldwide, played with a round and usually orange(orange-brown) ball that bounces.

Basketball players mainly use skills such as dribbling, shooting, running, and jumping. Each made basket is worth two points, while a basket made from beyond the three-point line is worth three points. If a player gets into too much physical contact, they may be given free throws which are worth one point each. The game typically lasts for four-quarters and the team with the most points at the end of the four-quarters win the game. If the score is tied at the end of the game, there will be something called overtime, which is additional play time to allow one team to win the match.

The game is played between men's teams or between women's teams. Basketball has been played in the Summer Olympic Games since 1936. The shot clock rule started in 1954. The first basketball game took place in 1892, where the court was half the size of what it is today. In 1891 the game was invented by [James Naismith](#).

The Rules

Basketball is a team sport.

Two teams of five players each try to score by shooting a ball through a hoop elevated 10 feet above the ground.

The game is played on a rectangular floor called the court, and there is a hoop at each end.

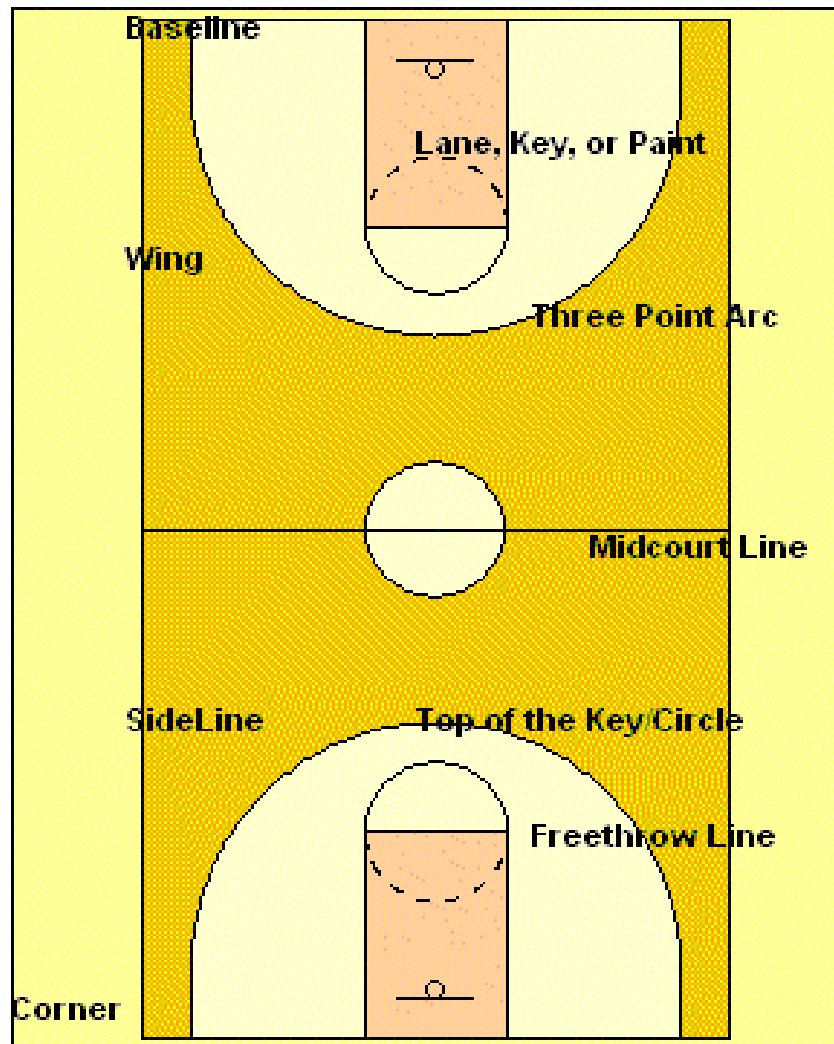
The court is divided into two main sections by the mid-court line.

If the offensive team puts the ball into play behind the mid-court line, it has ten seconds to get the ball over the mid-court line.

If it doesn't, then the defense gets the ball.

Once the offensive team gets the ball over the mid-court line, it can no longer have possession of the ball in the area behind the midcourt line.

If it does, the defense is awarded the ball.



The ball is moved down the court toward the basket by passing or dribbling. The team with the ball is called the offense. The team without the ball is called the defense.

The defense tries to steal the ball, contest shots, deflect passes, and garner rebounds.

Points

When a team makes a basket, they score two points and the ball goes to the other team.

If a basket, or field goal, is made outside of the three-point arc, then that basket is worth three points. A free throw is worth one point.

Free throws are awarded to a team according to some formats involving the number of fouls committed in a half and/or the type of foul committed.

Fouling a shooter always results in two or three free throws being awarded the shooter, depending upon where he was when he shot. If he was beyond the three-point line, then he gets three shots.

Other types of fouls do not result in free throws being awarded until a certain number have accumulated during a half (called “team fouls”).

Once that number is reached, then the player who was fouled is awarded a '1-and-1' opportunity. If he makes his first free throw, he gets to attempt a second. If he misses the first shot, the ball is live on the rebound.

Game Clock

Each game is divided into sections, and all levels have two halves.

In college, each half is twenty minutes long.

In high school and below, the halves are divided into eight (and sometimes, six) minute quarters. In the pros, quarters are twelve minutes long.

There is a gap of several minutes between halves. Gaps between quarters are relatively short.

If the score is tied at the end of regulation, then overtime periods of various lengths are played until a winner emerges.

Basket Assignment and Tip-Off

Also, each team is assigned a [basket or goal](#) to defend.

This means that the other basket is their scoring basket.

At halftime, the teams switch goals.

The game begins with one player from either team at center court.

A referee will toss the ball up between the two. The player that gets his hands on the ball will tip it to a teammate. This is called a tip-off.

Fouls and Violations

In addition to stealing the ball from an opposing player, there are other ways for a team to get the ball.

One such way is if the other team commits a foul or violation.

Fouls

Personal fouls: Personal fouls include any type of illegal physical contact.

- Hitting
- Pushing
- Slapping
- Holding
- Illegal pick/screen -- when an offensive player is moving. When an offensive player sticks out a limb and makes physical contact with a defender in an attempt to block the path of the defender.

Personal foul penalties: If a player is shooting while being fouled, then he gets two free throws if his shot doesn't go in, but only one free throw if his shot does go in.

- Three free throws are awarded if the player is fouled while shooting for a three-point goal and they miss their shot. If a player is fouled while shooting a three-point shot and makes it anyway, he is awarded one free throw. Thus, he could score four points on the play.
- Inbounds. If fouled while not shooting, the ball is given to the team the foul was committed upon. They get the ball at the nearest side or baseline, out of bounds, and have 5 seconds to pass the ball onto the court.
- One & one. If the team committing the foul has seven or more fouls in the game, then the player who was fouled is awarded one free throw. If he makes his first shot, then he is awarded another free throw.
- Ten or more fouls. If the team committing the foul has ten or more fouls, then the fouled player receives two free throws.

Charging. An offensive foul that is committed when a player pushes or runs over a defensive player. The ball is given to the team that the foul was committed upon.

Blocking. Blocking is illegal personal contact resulting from a defender not establishing position in time to prevent an opponent's drive to the basket.

Flagrant foul. Violent contact with an opponent. This includes hitting, kicking, and punching. This type of foul results in free throws plus the offense retaining possession of the ball after the free throws.

Intentional foul. When a player makes physical contact with another player with no reasonable effort to steal the ball. It is a judgment call for the officials.

Technical foul. Technical foul. A player or a coach can commit this type of foul. It does not involve player contact or the ball but is instead about the 'manners' of the game. Foul language, obscenity, obscene gestures, and even arguing can be considered a technical foul, as can technical details regarding filling in the scorebook improperly or dunking during warm-ups.

Rules Violations

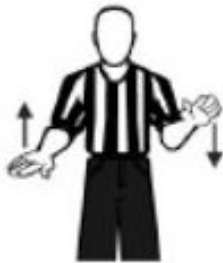
Here is a list and description of non-foul violations in the game of basketball. The penalty for most violations is loss of possession of the ball.

Traveling (walking)



One of the basic ideas of the sport of basketball is that you have to dribble or bounce the ball while you are walking or running. When you have stopped dribbling one of your feet will become your pivot foot. You cannot move your pivot foot or lift it off of the ground. If you do, this is called traveling.

Double dribble



You only get to dribble once in basketball. If you stop dribbling you have to pass it to another player or shoot the ball. If you start dribbling again, this is called double dribbling.

Three seconds



Offensive players are not allowed to stay in the free throw lane, or key, for more than three seconds. Anytime they leave the key or the ball hits the rim, the three second count starts over again.

Ten Seconds



The offensive team has 10 seconds to get the ball across half court. If it takes longer than 10 seconds, then they will lose possession of the ball.

Over-and-back



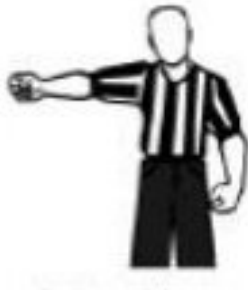
Once the offensive team has gotten the ball over half court, they cannot go back into the defender's half court with the ball. This is called over-and-back.

Carrying (palming)



Carrying, or palming, is like a double dribble. Players may not put the palm of their hands under the ball or carry the ball in one hand for a long time. This is similar to holding the ball and a double dribble.

Lane violations



During a free throw shot, players will line up on both sides of the lane. If they jump into the lane prior to the shot, it will be called a lane violation. If it was an offensive player, a made shot will not count. If it was a defensive player, a missed shot will not count and the shooter will get another try.

Kicking



Players are not allowed to intentionally kick the ball. If a defensive player kicks the ball, the offensive team will get it out of

bounds

Goaltending

Goaltending is when a player interferes with a shot when it is above the rim, but still on its downward path to the basket, interferes with the ball while on the rim of the basket, or touches the net or rim while the ball is being shot.

If goaltending is called on the defense, the shot is called good. If

goaltending is on the offense, then the shot does not count and the defense gets the ball.

Out of bounds

The ball is considered out of bounds when it touches the ground outside the lines of the court. The lines themselves are considered out of bounds as well. It is also out of bounds if the ball touches a player who has any part of their body touching the ground out of bounds.

Penalties for Fouls

Depending on the situation and type of foul in basketball, the penalty will be different. Non-shooting fouls generally cause the team to lose possession of the ball. Shooting fouls result in free throws. If the basket was made when the player was fouled, then the basket counts and one free throw is awarded. If the basket wasn't made, then either two free throws or three (if the player was attempting a three point shot when fouled) are awarded.

Fouling Out

Each time a player commits a foul, they get another personal foul added to their name. If they reach a certain total during they game they will have "fouled out" and will not be allowed to play any more. It takes five fouls to foul out in college and high school, six fouls in the NBA.

Team Fouls

The total number of team fouls add up during the game as well. After a certain number of fouls, a team is considered "over the limit" and free throws will be awarded for non-shooting fouls. The rules for the NBA and college/high school are different:

NBA - Team fouls are added up per quarter. Four fouls are allowed with two free throws being awarded starting with the fifth foul. Only defensive fouls count toward team fouls.

NCAA college and High School - Team fouls are added up per half. After 6 fouls a team is awarded a one-and-one free throw. A one-and-one means that the first free throw must be made in order to get a second free throw. If the player misses the first, the ball is live and play begins. After 10 fouls in

a half, two free throws are awarded.

Technical Foul

A technical foul is given for unsportsmanlike conduct or other infraction. This can range from fighting to arguing with the official. Both coaches and players can get technical fouls.

In high school the penalty for a technical foul is two free throws and the ball for the other team. Also, if a player or coach receives two technicals during a game, they will be ejected. In college a technical foul counts as a personal foul as well, so it adds into fouling out. In the NBA a technical foul does not count as a personal foul.

Flagrant Foul

Another type of foul in basketball is the flagrant foul. This is when a foul could seriously injure an opponent. Generally two free throws and possession of the ball are awarded. In high school and college the player committing the flagrant foul is ejected from the game. In the NBA it can count as a technical foul or the player can be ejected depending on the severity of the foul.

Referee Signals

There are a lot of different signals that basketball referees, also called officials, use in the game. It can get confusing. This is a list of the different basketball referee hand signals and what they mean. The specific rules below are described in more detail on other pages

Time Management Signals

These officiating basketball hand signals are used to communicate between the referee and the time keeper in order to notify starting and stopping of the clock.

Stop Clock – To stop the clock at any point in the game, the referee will raise one hand straight over head with his palms facing out and finger tips pointed.



Start Clock – Beginning with one hand raised above head, the start of the clock is indicated by dropping the raised hand directly towards the floor.



Full Timeout – When an official wishes to signal for a full timeout it is indicated by two arms spread to the sides forming a “T” shape.



Thirty Second Timeout – To indicate a thirty second timeout has been called by one of the teams, the official will take both hands and place them on top of his shoulders with his elbows out.



Jump Ball – When both players have control over the ball at the same time, it is indicated by both thumbs pointing upwards with arms extended.



Substitution – If a substitute player wishes to enter the game it is indicated by having one hand facing the time keeper, raised in a “stop” manner, and the other hand waving the substitute player into the game.



Basketball Foul Signals

When a player commits a personal foul, the referee will give a specific signal to indicate the type of foul and which player has committed the foul.

Player Control Foul (Charge) – One hand on the back of the head and the other pointing in the opposite direction of the play indicates a charge call has been made.



Hand Check – When a player commits a hand check foul, it is signaled by having one arm extended in front of the chest with the fingers up, and the other arm grabbing the wrist.



Blocking – If a defensive player commits a blocking foul the official will have both hands, in fists, touching his hips, and his elbows in tight against his body.



Holding – The holding signal is made by having one arm extended upwards in front of the face, and the other hand grabbing the wrist.



Pushing – To signal a pushing foul, the official will have both hands extended straight in front of him, with his palms facing outward.



Intentional Foul – When a player commits an intentional foul, the official will put both arms above his head and cross them.



Technical Foul – To signal a technical foul has occurred the referee will place both his hands in front of him and put them in the formation of a letter “T”.



Double Foul – If two players have committed a foul at the same time, the referee will put both hands, in fists, extended out towards the sides.



Illegal Hand Use – An illegal hand use foul is signaled by the official putting both of his hands in front of him, at waist level, and grabbing one of his wrists with the other hand.



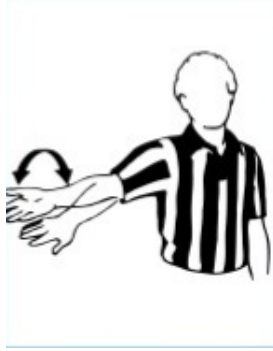
Basketball Violation Hand Signals

A violation is a rule which is broken, but it does not result in a player picking up a personal foul. The other team is awarded possession of the ball.

Traveling – When a player has committed a traveling violation, the official will signal it by placing both of his hands in front of him and moving them in a circle.



Carrying or Palming – In order to signal a palming or carrying violation, the referee will have one hand at the side, flipped over from palm up to palm down.



Double Dribble – The official will signal a double dribble violation has been committed by putting both of his hands in front of him, with palms down, and alternating them up and down, as if dribbling a basketball.



Three Seconds – The official will indicate that a player has committed a three second violation by having three fingers raised, and the hand makes a swiping motion back and forth at the side.



Five Seconds – In order to signal a five second violation the official will have five fingers raised with arm extended upward.



Ten Seconds – The ten second violation is shown when the official has ten fingers raised with both arms extended upwards.



Kicking the Ball – When a player kicks the ball, the referee will have one foot raised in front.



Hand signal Indicators

These indicators allow officials to communicate information to the scorer's table during the game.

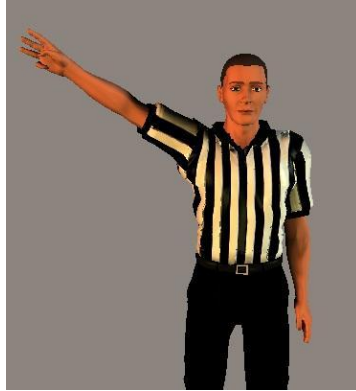
Two Point Basket Scored – When a two point basket is scored, the official will extend one arm parallel to the floor and point with two fingers.



Three Point Basket Scored – The official will extend both arms directly upwards with fingers pointed to signify that a player has scored a Three Point Basket.



Counting – The referee indicates he is counting for a timed violation by moving his hand back and forth from the middle of the chest to straight in front continuously. Each movement represents one second.



Basket Counts – To indicate a basket counts, when a foul has also occurred, the referee will drop his hand from shoulder height directly down.



Basket Does Not Count – To “wave off” a basket, or indicate it does not count because a foul has occurred, the referee will start with both hands at the shoulders, elbows out, and extend hands out directly towards the side.



Bonus Free Throws – When a player at the free throw line is to be awarded a bonus free throw, the official will extend both of his arms out to his sides completely straight and then move one up and down.



Lane Violation – If a player is shooting a free throw and a lane violation occurs, the referee will signal it by raising one of his arms out to his side and holding it there until the free throw is completed.



Equipment



One of the great things about basketball is that you don't need a lot of equipment to play. Just get a ball and find a goal and you can start a pick up game. However, there are some official rules about what equipment you need when playing competitively.

The Ball

Professional leagues such as the NBA have very precise parameters for the official basketball they use. This includes color, material, size, air pressure, and bounce. The main thing to know about the basketball is the size. There are different sizes for different ages as well as for boys and for girls.



Standard Mens Basketball (Size 7) - This is the size used by the NCAA men, boys high school, as well as the NBA. It has a circumference between 29.5 and 30 inches and weighs between 20 and 22 ounces .

Standard Womens Basketball (Size 6) - This is the basketball used by NCAA women, girls high school, and the WNBA. It is between 28.5 and 29 inches in circumference and weighs 18-20 ounces.

Junior Basketball (Size 5) - The junior size basketball is for boys and girls between the ages of 8-12. It is between 27.25 to 27.75 inches in circumference and weighs 14-16 ounces.

Mini Basketball (Size 3) - For young children ages 5-8, the mini ball is 22 to 22.5 inches in circumference and weighs 10.5 to 11.25 ounces.

The Basket

The basket is made up of the backboard, rim, and net. The rim is 18 inches in diameter. A regulation backboard is 72 inches wide by 48 inches tall, although you will find backboards can vary in size.

The rim should be 10 feet from the ground. Typically a 10 foot rim is used from ages 6th grade and older. For younger kids you can lower the goal so that they can take a proper shot at the goal. For kindergarten through second grade children you can try a 6-foot goal. Then move it up to 8 feet for 3rd and 4th grade. Try nine feet for 5th grade. Of course, this depends on the

size, strength, and skill of the player.



The basketball net hooks onto eight rungs on the bottom of the rim. It hangs down around 15 to 18 inches. The net helps to slow the ball coming through the hoop and also to help see whether a basket was made or not .

The Uniform

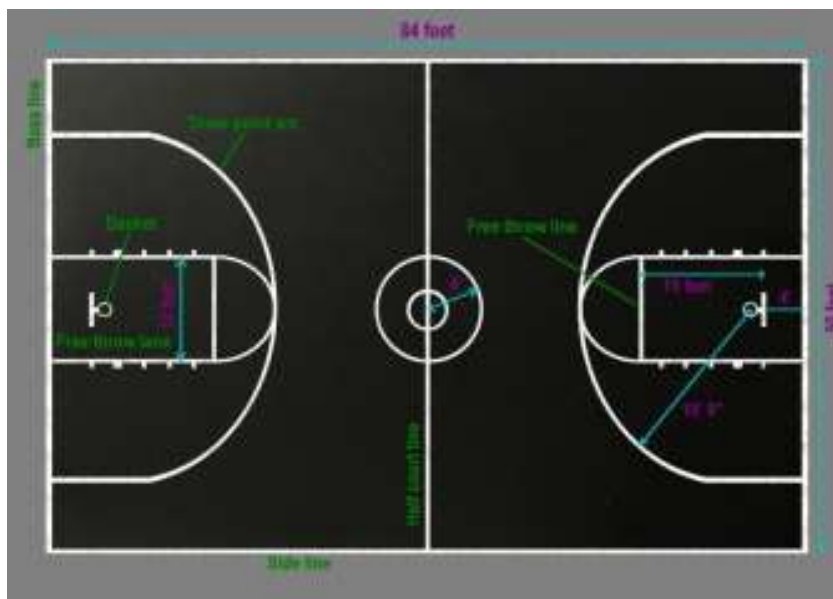
The basketball uniform generally consists of a tank top and shorts. You also need socks and some good basketball type sneakers. Basketball sneakers are good for all the starting and stopping required in the game. You can choose high tops, low tops, or three quarter height shoes. If you play under the basket a lot you may want high tops to help protect you from getting a twisted ankle .

You should not wear a watch or a shirt with buttons while playing basketball. These can scratch or get caught on other players. Also, you may want to wear a mouthpiece to protect your teeth.

The Court

Basketball courts vary in size depending on the gym and the level of play. However, some features remain the same. The size and height of the basket, the distance from the free throw line, etc.

Here is a picture of the dimensions and areas of the court used for high school basketball .



Size of the Basketball Court

- NCAA college and NBA - 94 feet long by 50 feet wide
- High School - 84 feet long by 50 feet wide
- Junior High - 74 feet long by 42 feet wide

Three Point Arc

The three point arc is a certain distance from the basket. Any shot made outside of the arc is worth three points instead of the normal two. The

distance from the basket to the three point arc changes for different levels of basketball play:

- NBA - 23 feet 9 inches at the top, 22 feet at the sides
- Men's NCAA college - 20 feet 9 inches
- WNBA - 20 feet 6 inches
- High School and Women's NCAA college - 19 feet 9 inches

Free Throw Line

The free throw line is located 15 feet from the backboard. After certain types of fouls or violations, players will be awarded a shot, or shots, from the free throw line.

The Free Throw Lane or Key

The area between the free throw line and the base line is called the "lane" or the "key". How wide the key is depends on the level of play. It is 12 feet wide for college and high school basketball, but 16 feet wide in the NBA.

Offensive players are only allowed to be in the lane for 3 seconds before a shot hits the rim or they will get called for a three-second violation. Also, players line up on the side of the free throw lane during free throws. They are not allowed to enter the lane for a rebound until the shooter releases the shot.

The FIBA international free throw lane used to be trapezoidal shaped. This was changed recently and now they use the NBA shaped lane.

Free Throw and Center Circle

The circle at the top of the key is used for jump balls on that end of the court. The center circle is for the jump ball at the start of the game or jump balls at the center of the court.

The Basket

The basket is located 4 feet out from the baseline. The rim should be 10 feet high

Out of Bounds

The bounds of the basketball court are described by the sidelines, running the length of the court, and the base lines (or end lines) at the end of the court

Basketball Positions

[Basketball Rules](#) [Player Positions](#) [Basketball Strategy](#) [Basketball Glossary](#)

The rules of basketball do not define any specific player positions. This is different from many other major sports like football, baseball, and soccer where at least some players must be in certain positions during the play of the game (the goalie in soccer, for example). So the positions in basketball are more part of an overall strategy of the game. There are 5 traditional positions that most teams have in their offense and defensive schemes. Many players today are interchangeable or can play many positions. Also, many teams have rosters and players that allow them to try different set ups like a three guard offense, for example.



The five traditional basketball player positions are:

Point guard:

The point guard is the team leader and play caller on the basketball court. A point guard needs good ball handling skills, passing skills as well as strong leadership and decision making skills. Traditionally basketball point guards were small, fast players and this is still often the case. However, Magic Johnson changed the way point guards were used. He was a big 6-8 player that used his height and size to get great passing angles. Magic's success has opened the door for all sorts of point guards. The key to a strong point guard today is leadership, passing, and running the team .

Shooting guard:

The shooting guard in basketball has the main responsibility of making long outside shots including the three-point shot. The shooting guard also should be a good passer and able to help the point guard with the ball handling. Shooting guards are often the top scorer on a team. Perhaps the best shooting guard in the history of basketball was Michael Jordan. Jordan could do it all, from scoring to defense to rebounding. It's this versatility that makes a great shooting guard, but all shooting guards should be able to extend the defense with their outside shot.

Small forward:

Along with the shooting guard, the small forward is often the most versatile player on the basketball team. They should be able to help with ball handling, make an outside shot, and get rebounds. The small forward is often a great defensive player as well. The combination of height and quickness can allow them to defend a number of positions and take on the best scorer on the opposing team. On many teams today the small forward and the shooting guard are almost the same position and are called "wing"

players .

Power forward:

The power forward on a basketball team is usually responsible for rebounding and some scoring in the paint. A power forward should be big and strong and able to clear out some space under the basket. Many great power forwards in the game today do not score a lot of points, but lead their team in rebounds. Power forwards are often good shot blockers as well.

Center:

The center is usually the biggest or tallest member of the basketball team. In the NBA, many centers are 7 feet tall or taller. The center can be a big scorer, but also needs to be a strong rebounder and shot blocker. On many teams the center is the final line of defense. Many of basketball's greatest players (Wilt Chamberlain, Bill Russell, Kareem, Shaq) have been centers. A strong center presence was long considered the only way to win an NBA championship. In modern times, many teams have won with other great players (Michael Jordan), but a strong center is still a prized basketball position on any basketball team.

Bench:

Although only 5 players play at a time on any basketball team, the bench is still very important. Basketball is a fast paced game and players need to rest. A strong bench is key to any basketball team's success. In most games at least 3 players from the bench will play a significant amount of time.

Defensive Positions:

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There are two main types of defensive basketball strategies: zone and man-to-man. In man-to-man defense each player is responsible to cover one player on the other team. They follow this player wherever they go on the court. In zone defense, players have certain positions or areas of the court they cover. The guards usually play at the top of the key with the forwards playing closer to the basket and on opposite sides. The center usually plays in the middle of the key. However, there are a wide variety of zone defenses and combinations of zone and man-to-man that basketball teams play. Teams will often switch defenses around during a basketball game to see which works best against a particular opponent.

The Point Guard

The point guard is the leader on the floor. He takes the ball up the court and gets the offense started. The point guard can score, but his main job is to distribute the ball to the other players and get the rest of the team involved in the offense. Point guards should be unselfish, smart, and good leaders.

Skills Needed

To be a good point guard you need to be an excellent dribbler and passer. Quickness is important as well, so you can get the ball up the court as well as play defense against the opposing team's point guard.

Dribbler: If you want to be a great point guard, the first thing to work on is your ball handling. You need to be able to dribble with either hand, at full speed, with your head up. You can't be looking down at the ball while dribbling because you need to be ready to make that quick pass when a teammate is open.

Passing: A point guard must be able to pass the ball with accuracy. This includes getting the ball into players posting up on the blocks, hitting the wing man for an open shot, or a perfectly timed bounce pass on the fast break. You have to think pass first, shoot second.

Quickness: Speed and quickness are great assets to the point guard. With

speed you can get up the court fast on a fast break. Pushing the ball off the dribble can put pressure on the other team and get them on their heels. Quickness will allow you to dribble around the defense and find open players.

Smarts: Point guards should be smart. They have to be the coach on the floor, calling out plays and keeping the offense under control.

Important Statistics

Although statistics don't tell the whole story about the point guard, assists and turnovers are generally important stats. Also important is the assist-to-turnover ratio. This is how many assists the player has per how many turnovers. The higher the number the better, showing that the player has many more assists than turnovers.

Some of the top NBA point guards of all time include:

- Magic Johnson (LA Lakers)
- John Stockton (Utah Jazz)
- Oscar Robinson (Milwaukee Bucks)
- Bob Cousy (Boston Celtics)
- Steve Nash (Phoenix Suns)
- Walt Frazier (New York Knicks)

Most people consider Magic Johnson to be the greatest point guard of all time. He was 6'7" tall and redefined what a point guard was in the NBA.

The Shooting Guard



The Scorer

You can tell from the name that the shooting guard's main job is to shoot the ball. This has become especially important since the three point line was added. Getting scoring from the shooting guard is a key to a good offense. A strong shooting guard can force the defense to play on the perimeter, opening up passing lanes to get the ball inside .

Skills Needed

Shooting: The number one skill you need to be a good shooting guard is a pure jump shot and the ability to make three pointers. You have to be able to sink open shots consistently and be willing to take them when the game is on the line. If you want to be a shooting guard you should shoot lots of jump shots, work on taking shots with a quick release as well as taking

shots directly after receiving a pass without dribbling .

Move Without the Ball: Since the point guard will have the ball more, shooting guards need to learn how to move without the ball. This means moving around the court and working off of screens to get open .

Defense: A strong defense helps all players, but the shooting guard will likely be playing the best shooter from the other team as well. A strong defense can shut down their best player and give your team an advantage .

Ball Handling: Although not the primary ball handler (that is the point guard), the shooting guard still needs to be an excellent ball handler. Handling the ball well can help when trying to get the ball up the court against the press. It can also help when creating your own shot off of the dribble.

Important Statistics .

Field goal percentage and points per game are the top stats for measuring the performance of a shooting guard. Three point field goal percentage is important as well. A well rounded shooting guard will also have decent assist and rebound stats, too.

Top Shooting Guards of All Time

- Michael Jordan (Chicago Bulls)
- Jerry West (LA Lakers)

- Kobe Bryant (LA Lakers)
- George Gervin (San Antonio Spurs)
- Reggie Miller (Indiana Pacers)
- Dwayne Wade (Miami Heat)

Michael Jordan was not only the greatest shooting guard of all time, but also the best basketball player of all time. This shows you how important a position the shooting guard can be.

The Small Forward

The small forward does everything on the basketball court and needs to have a well-rounded set of skills. You could call him a Jack of all trades. He handles the ball some, rebounds, shoots from the outside, the inside, and plays defense on the perimeter and inside .

Usually the middle player in height, the small forward is generally smaller than the power forward and center, but taller than either of the guards .

Skills Needed .

Well-rounded: The small forward needs to have a strong well-rounded basketball skill set. They have to help out with the ball handling, grab rebounds, make an open jumper, and mix it up inside on defense .

Specialty: To be a great small forward you need to be good at everything, but also great at something. Some small forwards excel as defensive stoppers, others at shooting and scoring, while others are top rebounders. If you want to be a small forward, work on the total basketball skill set, but pick one skill that you are really good at and make it your personal

specialty.

Important Statistics

The small forward needs to have decent stats in all areas. You should be getting rebounds, assists, and scoring. If you are especially good in one area, it really helps, but to be a strong small forward you will contribute in all aspects of the game. A great stat to shoot for is the triple double. If you can get double figures in three stats, you'll know you are doing an excellent job.

Top Small Forwards of All Time

- Larry Bird (Boston Celtics)
- Julius Erving "Dr. J" (Philadelphia 76ers)
- Elgin Baylor (LA Lakers)
- LeBron James (Miami Heat/Cleveland Cavaliers)

The Power Forward

The power forward is often one of the most physical players on the court. Hence the name "power" forward. They play close to the basket, fighting for rebounds and posting up on offense. Power forwards should be tall, strong, and aggressive.

Skills Needed

Rebounding: The primary skill for a power forward in basketball is rebounding. If you want to be a good power forward you should build up your strength and practice rebounding, especially boxing out techniques. Being a good rebounder is also a state of mind. You need to believe that every ball is yours. So having the right attitude is important for the power forward.

Posting Up: Power forwards work mostly inside on offense. They play with their "back to the basket". This means that they often have their backs to the basket, facing the player with the ball. Defenders are usually behind them keeping them from having an open lane to the basket. Power forwards need to post up. They muscle their way in for position under the basket, receive the input pass, and then make a post up move to shoot.

Jump Shot: Some power forwards also develop a jump shot. This helps keep the defense honest. They can't just stay under the goal and wait for you if you can make a 12-15 foot jump shot. This skill has helped many average

power forwards become great. Dirk Nowitzki of the Dallas Mavericks has made himself into a premier NBA power forward by having a nearly unstoppable jump shot .

Shot Blocking: Although not as important a skill as for centers, power forwards also need to have some shot blocking ability. They are generally the second tallest player on the court and need to keep the little guys from getting easy shots off inside the lane.

Important Statistics

Rebounds per game (RPG) is usually the most important stat for the power forward. It's their main job and if they are getting rebounds, then the team is likely suffering. In some cases the power forward is so strong in other areas, like scoring, that lower rebounds are okay and the rest of the team must pick up the slack.

Top Power Forwards of All Time

- Tim Duncan (San Antonio Spurs)
- Karl Malone (Utah Jazz)
- Dirk Nowitzki (Dallas Mavericks)
- Bob Pettit (St. Louis Hawks)
- Charles Barkley (Philadelphia 76ers)

The Center

The tallest player on the team is almost always the center. Height is important in basketball. It helps you get off shots, block shots, and get rebounds. Of course other skills and attributes are very important as well, but, as many coaches are fond of saying, "you can't teach height". The center will play the closest to the basket and be playing against the other team's tallest player.

Skills needed

Shot blocking: The center is generally the team's best shot blocker. Strong shot blocking from the center is important to keep smaller players from coming into the lane to take easy shots. If the center keeps blocking their shots, they will stay away and try more difficult shots from the perimeter.

Rebounding: Although the power forward is often the main rebounder on a team, the center is generally near the top of this statistic. The center plays right under the basket and has many opportunities to rebound the ball. The center should be a strong rebounder.

Posting Up: On offense, centers play with their backs to the basket. They post up. This means they establish position near the basket, receive a pass, and then make a move (like a hook shot) to score. Many of the great scorers in basketball have been centers including the all-time career scoring leader

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and the player with the most points ever in a game.

Passing: Centers can help their team a lot by learning how to pass. Once a center has proven he can score by posting up, they will often be double teamed. A center that can find the open player when double teamed can help their team score.

Important Statistics

Blocked shots, rebounds, and scoring are all important for a center. A good center should excel in at least one of these stats. You may want to focus on scoring, but consider that Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics is considered to be one of the best shot blockers as well as rebounders in the history of the NBA. He also led his team to 11 NBA championships.

Top Centers of all time

- Wilt Chamberlain (LA Lakers)
- Bill Russell (Boston Celtics)
- Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (LA Lakers)
- Shaquille O'Neal (LA Lakers, Orlando Magic)
- Hakeem Olajuwon (Houston Rockets)