

# Basketball Fundamentals

## *Basic Basketball Positions*

**Center** - Often the tallest player on the team. Normally plays close to the basket and is responsible for getting rebounds and blocking shots.

**Forwards** - Two players generally positioned closer to the basket than the guards. They often assume a floor position along the perimeters of the free-throw lane and maneuver both inside and outside.

**Guards** - The two players who typically move the ball from the backcourt into the frontcourt. They usually handle setting up plays and passing to teammates closer to the basket.

**Point Guard** - Usually a team's floor leader, who initiates the offense and controls the tempo of the game. **Post Player** - The position usually played by the center.

**Power Forward** - Usually the bigger, stronger forward who plays close to the basket and is responsible for rebounding and inside scoring.

**Shooting Guard** - Generally, the player who takes the majority of the shots from the perimeter, many of which are three-point attempts.

**Small Forward** - Usually bigger than the guards but smaller than the power forward; responsibilities include both inside and outside work.

## *Other Basketball Positions*

**Ball Handler** - Player controlling the ball; can also mean a player known for skillful handling of the ball.

**Outlet** - A player that sets up near the sideline for a pass from a defensive rebounder. This pass will initiate the offensive fast break.

**Pivot** - The position a player takes with their back to the basket, either at the top or on the side of the free throw lane. This is also called the post position.

**Playmaker** - The point guard who usually sets up plays for his teammates.

**Shooter** - A player who takes a shot at the basket.

**Sixth Man** - The first substitute to come off the bench to replace a starter.

**Starting Line-up** - The five players who begin a game for one team.

**Substitute** - A player who comes into the game to replace a player on the court.

**Swing Man** - A player who can play both the guard and forward positions.

**Wing** - A player who is running the outside lane on the fast break. Also a player who is positioned at the foul-line extended area during the half-court offense.

## ***Basketball Court Terms***

**Backboard** - The flat surface directly behind the basket. The basket is connected to the backboard.

**Backcourt** - That half of the basketball court that is the farthest from the offensive basket. Also, the position played by the guards.

**Ball Side** - The side of the court on which the ball is located. Also called the strong side.

**Baseline** - Also called the end line. This line extends across both ends of the court behind the baskets.

**Basket** - Consists of the rim and the net.

**Blocks** - The square markings six feet from the baseline on each side of the lane.

**Center Circle** - The circular area at midcourt where jump balls take place.

**Court** - The area on which a basketball game is played; bounded by 2 sidelines and 2 end lines, containing a basket at each end.

**Cylinder** - The imaginary area directly above the basket where goaltending or basket interference can occur.

**Downcourt** - Moving from the backcourt toward the frontcourt, or toward the offensive basket.

**End Line** - Also called the baseline. This line extends across both ends of the court behind the baskets

**Floor** - The area of the court within the end lines and sidelines.

**Free Throw Lane** - The area bordered by the end line, the free throw line, and two connecting lines forming a twelve foot lane. This is also called "the paint".

**Free Throw Line** - The line 15 feet from the backboard and parallel to the end line from which players shoot free-throws. Also called the "foul line".

**Frontcourt** - The offensive area of the basketball court from the midcourt line to the baseline. Also the positions played by the forwards and center.

**Game Clock** - Shows how much time remains in each quarter or half of play.

**Hashmark** - One of four lines extending 3 feet in from a sideline, 28 feet from and parallel to a baseline.

**Help Side** - The side of the court opposite that of the ball. Also called the weakside.

**High Post** - An area of the court located near the free-throw line.

**Hoop** - The basket.

**In-the-Paint** - The inside area of the free throw lane that is painted a different color than the rest of the court.

**Key** - The area consisting of the foul circle, foul lane and free-throw line.

**Lane** - The area running from the end line to the free-throw line and extending 12 feet across is called the lane. It's also known as the "paint".

**Low Post** - An area of the court located near the basket.

**Midcourt Line** - The line in the middle of the basketball court that separates the frontcourt from the backcourt.

**Midline** - See Midcourt Line.

**Out of Bounds** - The area outside of and including the end lines and sidelines.

**Paint** - The area inside the free-throw lane.

**Perimeter** - The area outside the three-second lane area.

**Post** - The area on either side of the free-throw lane.

**Shot Clock** - A clock that limits the time a team with the ball has to shoot it.

**Sidelines** - The two boundary lines that run the length of the court.

**Strong Side** - The side of the basketball court on which the ball is being controlled. If the ball is either passed or dribbled across court, then that side becomes the strong side.

**Ten-Second Line** - The half-court line is the ten-second line. When a team is advancing the ball up the court from their defensive end, they have ten seconds to get the ball across the half-court line.

**Three-Point Line** - Semi-circle that is 19 feet, 9 inches from the basket at all points. This has varying distances for the different levels of competition.

**Three-Second Lane** - An area that extends from the baseline under the basket to the free-throw line. Also called the "key".

**Time Line** - See Ten-Second Line.

**Top of the Key** - The semi-circle that extends beyond the free-throw line.

**Weak Side** - The side of the basketball court without the ball.

## ***Basketball Action Terms***

### ***Basketball Action Terms - A***

**Air Ball** - A shot that completely misses the rim and the backboard.

**Alley-Oop Pass** - A pass thrown with a high arc near the basket so a teammate can make a leaping catch and score in a single motion.

**Arc** - The trajectory of the ball as it is shot toward the basket.

**Assist** - A pass to a teammate that results in an immediate score. The scorer must move immediately toward the basket for the passer to be credited with an assist.

### ***Basketball Action Terms - B***

**Back-Door Cut** - A cut behind the defender and toward the basket.

**Back Screen** - A move by an offensive player away from the basket to set a screen for a teammate.

**Ball Control** - An offensive strategy which prolongs possession of the ball by delaying the shot until the best possible situation develops. Also referred to as stall ball or the delay game.

**Ball Fake** - A fake pass or shot.

**Bank Shot** - A shot in which hits off the backboard and then rebounds into the basket.

**Baseball Pass** - A one-handed pass used to advance the ball to a cutter going toward the basket.

**Beat the Defender** - When an offensive player, with or without the ball, is able to get past the player who is guarding them.

**Behind-the-Back-Dribble** - A dribble behind the body from one hand to another.

**Behind-the-Back-Pass** - A pass thrown behind the back.

**Between-the-Legs-Dribble** - A dribble through the legs from one to another.

**Blind Pass** - A pass from a ball handler who does not see the receiver, but estimates where they should be.

**Blocked Shot** - Deflection of a shot by touching part of the ball on its way to the basket.

**Bounce Pass** - A pass that hits the floor between the passer and the receiver.

**Box Out** - Establish and maintain a rebounding position between the basket and your opponent.

**Brick** - A shot that bounces hard off the rim or backboard.

### ***Basketball Action Terms - C***

**Catch & Face** - Technique for receiving a pass and squaring up to the basket; similar to the triple-threat position.

**Change-of-Pace Dribble** - Alternately slowing down and speeding up in order to penetrate past a defender.

**Chest Pass** - A two-handed pass thrown from the chest.

**Chin It** - The position of the ball after a rebound: directly under the chin with the elbows and fingers up.

**Clear Out** - When an offensive player leaves an area so the ball handler has more room to maneuver.

**Control Dribble** - A low dribble used when closely guarded.

**Court Sense** - A player's ability to be aware of everything that is happening on the court at all times.

**Court Vision** - A player's ability to see everything that is happening on the court during play. This enables them to make better decisions when playing.

**Cross Screen** - A lateral move by an offensive player to set a screen for a teammate.

**Crossover Dribble** - A dribble from one hand to the other in front of the body.

**Crossover Step** - An offensive move consisting of a jab step followed with a step in the opposite direction.

**Curl Cut** - A cut off a screen toward the basket; is used when the defender is trailing the cutter.

**Cut** - An offensive move to elude a defender or drive to the basket.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - D*

**Defense** - The team without the ball; also the act of trying to stop the opponent from scoring.

**Defensive Rebound** - A rebound by a player on defense.

**Double Team** - When two defenders move to guard one offensive player.

**Down Screen** - A move by an offensive player toward the baseline to set a screen for a teammate.

**Dribble** - The act of bouncing the ball up and down. The offensive player with the ball uses the dribble to move around the court.

**Drive** - Dribbling toward the basket; also called a dribble drive.

**Dunk** - Scoring a basket by stuffing the ball into the basket from above the rim.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - E*

**Early Offense** - The period just after a team has crossed over the midcourt line and set up its half-court offensive.

**English** - A special spin that is put on the basketball to help soften the shot.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - F*

**Fade Cut** - A cut used by an offensive player coming off a screen when the defender is in a sagging position.

**Fake** - A technique used to get a defensive player off balance or out of position.

**Fast Break** - The act of moving the ball quickly downcourt by an offensive team in hopes of getting ahead of the defense to score.

**Fish-Hook Cut** - A change-of-direction cut that takes the shape of a fish hook and is used as a pressure release.

**Front Pivot** - Moving forward while turning on the pivot foot.

**Full-court Press** - When defenders guard the offense in the backcourt.

**Fumble** - Losing control of the basketball by dropping it or having it slip out of your hands.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - G*

**Give & Go** - An offensive maneuver, sometimes called an inside cut, whereby a player passes to a teammate and cuts for the basket.

**Guarding** - Following an opponent around the court to prevent him from getting the ball, taking an open shot or making a pass.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - H*

**Half-Court Offense** - When a team takes the time to run a play in its frontcourt.

**Half-Court Press** - Defensive pressure applied as soon as the opposing team takes the ball into the frontcourt.

**High Percentage Shot** - A shot that is likely to go in the basket. These are usually shots close to the basket such as a lay-up.

**Hook Shot** - A one-handed shot on which the player is sideways to the basket and the ball is released above the head from the hand farthest from the basket.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - I*

**Inbounds Pass** - Pass thrown-in from out-of-bounds.

**Inside Cut** - When the offensive player passes the ball to a teammate and cuts to the basket looking for a return pass.

**Inside shot** - Shot taken from near or under the basket.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - J*

**Jab Step** - A small step toward the defensive player with the non-pivot foot.

**Jump Ball** - A jump ball starts every game and occurs when a referee tosses the ball into the air between two players from opposite teams. During games a jump ball is called when two players from opposite teams gain possession of the ball at the same time. Players involved in a jump ball must tap the ball to a teammate to gain possession.

**Jump Shot** - An offensive shot in which the offensive player's feet leave the floor.

**Jump Stop** - Coming to a full stop by jumping off one foot and landing in a parallel or staggered stance with both feet hitting the floor at the same.

*Basketball Action Terms - K*

**Keepaway Game** - When the leading team keeps the ball away from its opponent to take time off the clock and prevent them from scoring. This occurs at the end of the game.

*Basketball Action Terms - L*

**"L" Cut** - A cut in the shape of the letter "L" that is used when the defender is in the passing lane but is playing very loosely.

**Lay-up Shot** - A close-in shot made when moving to the basket.

**Leading the Receiver** - When the passer throws the ball where he thinks the receiver will be.

**Lower Percentage Shot** - A shot that is less likely to go in. These are usually shots taken further from the basket or out of the shooter's range.

*Basketball Action Terms - M*

**Man-to-Man Defense** - Defensive style where each defensive player is responsible for guarding one opponent.

*Basketball Action Terms - O*

**Offense** - The team with the ball.

**Offensive Rebound** - A rebound by a player on offense.

**Off the Dribble** - A shot taken while driving to the basket.

**Open** - When a player is unguarded by a defender.

**Outside Shooting** - Shots taken from the perimeter.

**Outlet Pass** - A pass made from a rebounder to an offensive teammate.

**Overhand Lay-up Shot** - A lay-up shot with the shooting hand positioned on the back of the ball with the palm facing the basket.

**Overhead Pass** - A pass made while the ball is held above the head with both hands.

*Basketball Action Terms - P*

**Pass** - When a player throws the ball to a teammate.

**Passing Lane** - The area between two offensive players where a pass can be made.

**Penetration** - When the ball is dribbled or passed inside the defensive area toward the basket.

**Pick** - A screen set by an offensive player.

**Picked Off** - When a defender is prevented from reaching the ball handler by an offensive screen.

**Pivot** - The rotation of the body around one foot that is kept in a stationary position.

**Post Up** - Take a position close to, and facing away from, the basket in preparation to receive a pass.

**Power Lay-up Shot** - A lay-up used when closely guarded.

**Pull-Back Dribble** - A dribble used to avoid defensive pressure or traps.

**Push Pass** - Used to pass through or past a defender who is guarding closely.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - R*

**Rebound** - Securing the ball off the backboard or the rim after a missed field goal or free-throw attempt.

**Receiver** - The player who receives a pass from a teammate.

**Release** - The moment the ball leaves the shooter's hand.

**Reverse Dribble** - A dribble move used to change directions. Also called a spin dribble.

**Reverse Pivot** - Stepping backward while turning on the pivot foot.

**Rocker Step** - An offensive move consisting of a jab step followed by a step backward; the player can either shoot or drive, depending on the movement of the defender.

#### *Basketball Action Terms - S*

**Scoring Opportunity** - When a player gets open for a shot they are likely to make.

**Screen** - An offensive technique used to block or delay an opponent from reaching a desired floor position.

**Screen & Roll** - When an offensive player screens for the ball handler and then rolls toward the basket.

**Shallow Cut** - A change-of-direction cut; also called a fish-hook cut.

**Shape Up** - A term used to describe the movement of the screener toward the ball after the screen has been set.

**Shooter's Roll** - When the shot takes a favorable bounce off the rim and into the basket.

**Shooting Range** - The distance from the basket where a player is comfortable shooting and is likely to make the shot.

**Spacing** - Refers to the positioning of the offensive players, who should be approximately 15-18 feet from one another.

**Speed Dribble** - A high, quick dribble used to advance the ball up the court when there are no defenders blocking your path.

**Spin Dribble** - A change-of-direction move in which the dribbler's body is always kept between the ball and the defender.

**Squaring Up** - When a player's shoulders are facing the basket as he releases the ball for a shot.

**Stride Stop** - Coming to a full stop by landing on one foot first and then the other foot.

**Strong Side** - The side where the ball is located on the offensive end of the court.

*Basketball Action Terms - T*

**Three-Point Shot** - A field-goal attempt from outside the three-point line. The shooter must have both feet behind the three-point line when the ball is released.

**Throw-in** - Inbounding the ball.

**Tip-Off** - The initial jump ball that starts the game.

**Transition** - When a team goes from offense to defense or defense to offense as the ball moves quickly upcourt.

**Trap** - A defensive tactic in which two players double-team the ball handler.

**Triple-Threat Position** - An offensive position from which the ball handler can either shoot, pass or dribble.

*Basketball Action Terms - U*

**Underhand Lay-up Shot** - A lay-up shot with the shooting hand in front and under the ball.

*Basketball Action Terms - V*

**"V" Cut** - A fake in one direction and movement in the opposite direction in order to get open for a pass.

*Basketball Action Terms - W*

**Weak Side** - The side away from the ball on the offensive end of the court.

*Basketball Action Terms - Z*

**Zone Defense** - A defense where each defender is responsible for an area of the court and must guard any player who enters that area

*Basketball Rule Terms - A*

**Alive** - A ball is alive when it is released by a shooter or thrower, or a jumper during a jump ball. The game clock only starts after the ball is alive. This is called a live ball.

*Basketball Rule Terms - B*

**Blocking** - The use of a defender's body position to prevent an opponent's advance.

*Basketball Rule Terms - C*

**Charging** - An offensive foul that happens when an offensive player runs into a defender who has an established position.

*Basketball Terms - D*

**Dead Ball** - Any ball that is not live; occurs after a successful field goal or free-throw attempt, after the whistle is blown, and if the ball leaves the court.

### *Basketball Rule Terms - E*

**Elbowing** - It is a violation if a player swings their elbows in an excessive manner.

**Established Position** - When a defensive player has both feet firmly planted on the floor. If an offensive player runs into the defender, they would be called for charging.

### *Basketball Rule Terms - F*

**Field Goal** - A basket made while the ball is in play.

**Field Goal Percentage** - The percentage of converted field goal attempts.

**Five-Second Violation** - When passing the ball inbounds after gaining possession, players have five seconds to get the ball to a teammate.

**Floor Violation** - When a player violates the rules but does not commit a foul against his opponent. This is penalized by a change of possession.

**Foul** - Actions by players which break the rules but are not floor violations.

**Foul Trouble** - Players who accumulate too many fouls during the course of a game are said to be in foul trouble. Players who commit five fouls in high school and college or six fouls in the NBA are disqualified or eliminated from that particular game. Teams need to avoid the total number of team fouls reaching more than six in each half. Once they reach this number, the other team is "in the one-and-one" and goes to the charity stripe for all subsequent fouls in that half.

**Free Throw** - An unguarded attempt to score from a line 15 feet from the basket.

**Free Throw Percentage** - The percentage of converted free throw attempts.

### *Basketball Rule Terms - G*

**Goaltending** - When a defensive player interferes with a shot while it is on the way down toward the basket, after it has touched the backboard, or while it is in the cylinder above the rim, the shot counts. For offensive goaltending, the ball is awarded to the opposing team for a throw-in.

### *Basketball Terms - H*

**Hand Check** - A personal foul where a defender intermittently or continuously uses one or both hands on an opposing player, usually the ball handler.

**Held Ball** - When two opposing players both possess the basketball but neither one can gain sole possession.

**Holding** - Using the hands to interfere with or limit an opponent's freedom of movement.

### *Basketball Rule Terms - I*

**Incidental Contact** - Minor contact that is usually ignored by officials.

**Intentional Foul** - A foul committed on purpose by a defensive player to stop the clock. In college basketball, the team that was fouled gets two free throws and possession of the ball.

### *Basketball Terms - L*

**Lane Violation** - During a free throw situation, if you enter the lane too soon, it's called a lane violation and results in a turnover or the other team gets another free throw attempt.

**Live Ball** - As soon as a ball is given to a free-throw shooter or a thrower on a throw-in, it's live.

**Loose Ball** - A live ball that neither team has possession of.

#### *Basketball Rule Terms - O*

**Offensive Foul** - A personal foul committed by an offensive player. Usually not resulting in a free throw as the penalty.

**Officials** - Also called referees, they're in charge of controlling the game.

**One & One** - A free-throw attempt awarded for certain violations that earns the shooter a 2nd attempt only if the first is successful.

**Over the Limit** - When a team commits more fouls than they are allowed per quarter or half. They are then in the penalty.

**Overtime** - The extra period(s) played after a regulation game ends tied; also called OT.

#### *Basketball Rule Terms - P*

**Period** - Any quarter, half or overtime segment.

**Personal Foul** - Contact between players that gives one team an unfair advantage. Players cannot push, trip, hack, elbow, hold, restrain or charge an opponent. These are also counted as team fouls.

#### *Basketball Terms - Q*

**Quadruple Double** - When a player gets double-digit figures in four of five offensive categories (scoring, assists, blocked shots, steals or rebounds) during the course of a game.

#### *Basketball Rule Terms - T*

**Team Fouls** - Each personal foul committed against a player is also counted against the team. When a team goes over the limit, their opponent is awarded free-throw opportunities.

**Technical Fouls** - Violations and misconduct that are detrimental to the game. These are penalized by free-throw opportunities.

**Three-Point Play** - A 2-point field goal followed by a successful free-throw.

**Three-Second Rule** - No offensive player can be in the free-throw lane for longer than 3 seconds at a time.

**Timeout** - When play is temporarily suspended by an official or at the request of a team to discuss strategy or respond to an injured player.

**Traveling** - Taking more than one and a half steps without dribbling while you have the ball. It's also called traveling when you pick up your dribble and then move or change your pivot foot. Either way, you'll turn the ball over to the other team if you travel, so don't do it! (Also called Walking).

**Triple-Double** - When a player reaches double figures in three of five offensive categories - scoring, assists, blocked shots, steals or rebounds - they are said to have had a triple-double.

**Turnover** - When the offensive team loses the ball to the defensive team for any reason.

*Basketball Rule Terms - U*

**Umpire** - One of the two officials in most international and high school basketball competition.

**Un-sportsmanlike Foul** - Unfair, unethical or dishonorable conduct. These fouls are penalized by free-throw opportunities.

*Basketball Rule Terms - V*

**Violation** - An infraction of the rules that doesn't result in a free throw; however, the ball is turned over to the opposing team for a throw-in.

*Basketball Rule Terms - W*

**Walking** - See the term "traveling".