



BASKETBALL

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About the Tutorial

Basketball is a team sport played by two teams of five players each. It is played on a rectangular court. The players try to score by shooting a ball through a hoop elevated 10 feet above the ground. This tutorial covers the very basics of how to play basketball.

Audience

This tutorial is meant for anyone who wants to play basketball. It is prepared keeping in mind that the reader is unaware about the basics of the game. It is a basic guide to help a beginner understand the game of basketball.

Prerequisite

Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are required to have a passion for basketball and an eagerness to acquire knowledge on the same.

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1. Basketball – Overview

Basketball was invented by Dr. James Naismith in 1891 to engage players in an indoor sport during winters that keeps them fit. He designed a sport loosely based on his childhood game **Duck on a Rock** where players have to hit a stone, called a duck in the game. The duck was protected by other players and placed high on a rock.

He also wanted the game to be safer and so the sport was played with soccer balls and peach baskets placed at about 10 feet high, involved less physical contact, drew players attention on the ball and not on other players. He developed a set of thirteen rules and the first match was held on December 21st, 1891 among two teams of nine players each at Springfield College.



The rules of the game were changed slightly and many more rules were added to make it better and more interesting with time. The actual game did not allow dribbling, used closed baskets and was played in a smaller court. The game was initially played in YMCA gyms. YMCA helped spreading the game to other parts of America and the game increased YMCA memberships too. It was popularized by cable televisions and spread to other parts of the globe by North American soldiers fighting in World War I.

Basketball – Objective

The main objective of basketball is to make a goal and score points. A goal is made by shooting the ball through the basket or hoop. The goal post or basket for a team is in the opponent's court. Each team should not only try to make a goal and prevent the opposite team from taking control of the ball, but should also try to protect the basket in their court and prevent the opponent from making a goal.

Basketball – Team Size

Each team may have twelve players entitled to play the game. Five players from a team can play at any time in the court and they may be substituted at anytime during the play. Each team may have a coach and an assistant coach. Each team may have a group of less than five non-players with different responsibilities. They are usually manager, doctor, physiotherapist, statistician, and interpreter.

Participating Countries

As basketball originated in the United States, it is very popular in the country and has spread to other surrounding countries. NBA should be credited for expanding the game and creating a huge fan base throughout the world.

China dominates Asian Basketball Championships and has won many titles. Basketball is the most popular sport in Philippines. Iran, South Korea and Japan are also good competitors to China in FIBA Asia Championships. Russia defeated United States at 1972 Summer Olympics and caught the world's attention.

Some of the countries that produced basketball champions are: Greece, Lithuania, Serbia, Spain, France, Canada, USA, Brazil, Italy, Argentina, and Montenegro.

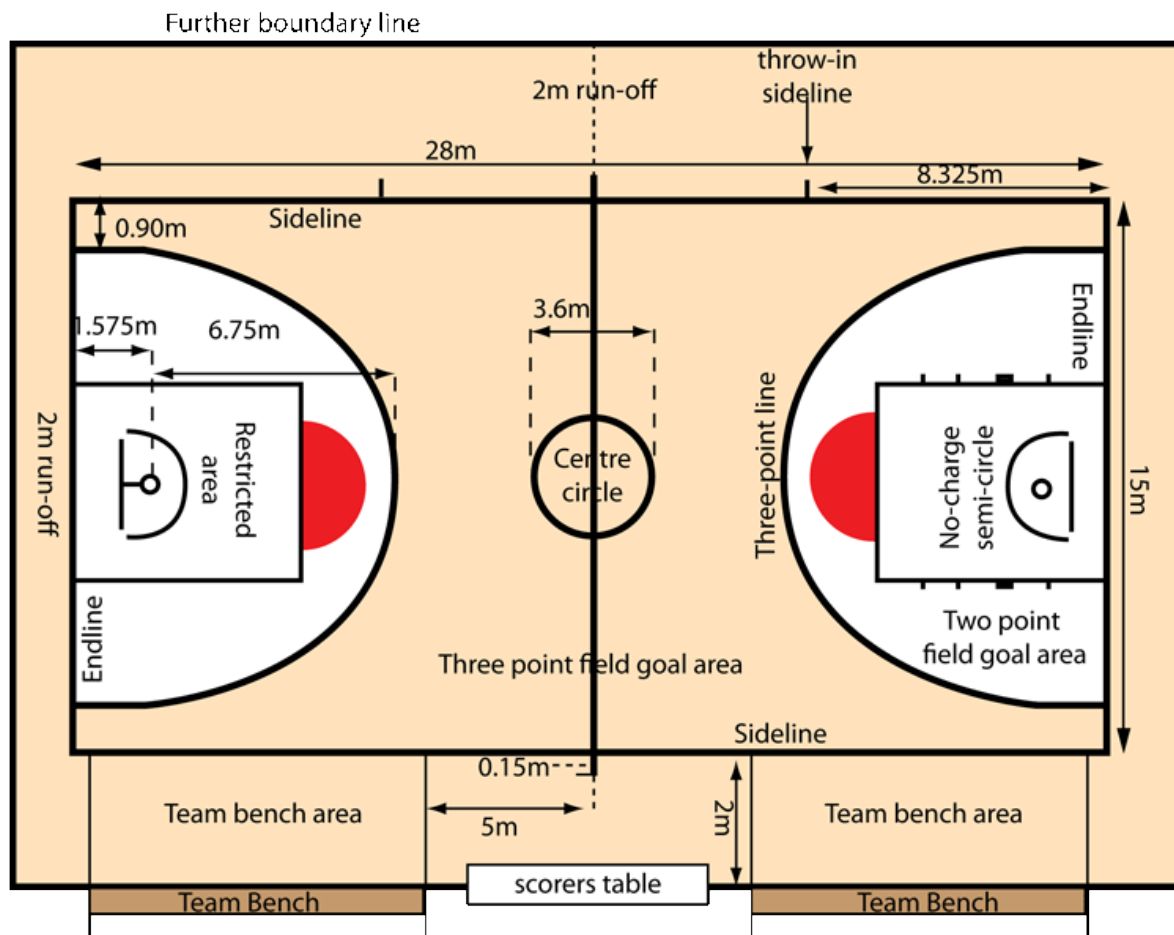
2. Basketball – Playing Environment

There are many variants of basketball, some play indoors and some outdoors, some play on larger grounds, and some teams have more players. We can play the fun game on any flat surface but FIBA, the organizing body has laid down some guidelines for a basketball court.

Court Design

A standard international basketball court is an indoor, rectangular court with dimensions 50 feet × 94 feet.

Courts at schools may be smaller. The court is divided into two symmetrical halves, one for each team. Various markings are painted on the court. There's a circle at the center, free throw semi circles, restricted areas and three-point lines are marked on either side of the court. A no charge semi circular area is marked just below the basket.



3. Basketball – Equipment

Basketball is a simple game, it doesn't require any equipment other than a hoop, a ball and a flat court. Even two players can play and have fun with basketball.

Basket

A hoop or basket with net around its circumference and of 18 inch diameter is firmly hung horizontally from a rectangular backboard of 3.5 feet height and 6 feet width on either sides of the court. The rim of the hoop is 10 feet above the ground. The backboard in various international competitions is transparent for better visibility.



Ball

Basketball is an orange-colored and rough-textured spherical ball with black contours usually made of leather or composite tough materials.

The ball is bounced continuously (dribbling), thrown through the air to other players (passing), and towards the basket (shooting). So a typical basketball must be very durable and easy to hold on to.



Other Equipment

There may be some more equipment for convenience.

- Some international courts have a **game clock** that makes a beep at the end of each period. Some also show the shot clock countdown.
- Sometimes, the back boards have **bordering lights** that light up and indicate that a period is about to end.

4. Basketball – Common Terms

We have listed here a few common terms frequently used in Basketball:

- **Offending team** – The team possessing the ball is the offending team.
- **Defending team** – The team that doesn't possess the ball and tries to get control of it is the defending team.
- **Shot clock** – Shot clock indicates the amount of time allotted to an offending team to make a goal. If the team cannot make a goal it is a shot clock violation and the ball is given to the opposite team to inbound it. The clock usually is set for 24 seconds in FIBA and NBA matches. The clock is set back to the full limit, when the ball touches the basket or passes through the basket. In some cases, after a foul the shot clock is usually set to a lower number, 14 in NBA and FINA matches.
- **Key** – The painted area of 16 feet wide in professional basketball courts.
- **The basket ball gun** – This ball gun shoots the basketball back to the player. It is used while training.
- **Dunk shot** – A player takes a dunk shot when he/she jumps and pushes the ball through the basket.
- **Free throw** – When a player is granted a free throw he/she can try to make a goal from 15 feet without any obstruction from the opposing team. Free throws are also granted to opposing team when a player makes technical fouls.
- **Penalty situation** – A team falls in penalty situation if it commits five fouls in one quarter. Penalty situation grants free throws for the opposing team after a foul.
- **Held ball** – Sometimes a player is surrounded by too many opponents that he cannot pass the ball to any of his teammates. He holds the ball tightly and sometimes even one of his opponents might also hold the ball at the same time. To take control of the ball, one of them should snatch it by force. This situation is called a held ball.
- **Jump ball** – A referee may call for a jump ball to deal with a held ball situation and bring the ball back into play. The referee also starts the game with a jump ball. A ball is thrown vertically in the air between two opponents. Any one among them pushes it to a teammate.
- **Point guard, Shooting guard, Small forward, Power forward, Center** – These are various positions of team members. It is not necessary for them to take a particular position, and a team may choose to discard team positions. It is sometimes used to attract attention and to satisfy viewers.

5. Basketball – How to Play?

The ball is tossed in the air to start the game. One of the players deflects it to a teammate. It is dribbled and passed among the teammates to protect the ball and to make a goal. The basket or the hoop is placed horizontally at the height of 10 feet on a back board. Each team tries to protect the goal on their side while trying to make a goal on the opponent's side of the court.

The opposite team tries to get the ball, take control of it while bouncing and tries to grab it while it is passed among the team mates to prevent a goal. When a player commits a foul, the other team gets a chance of free throw or to inbound the ball. Each goal carries two points and each free throw one point. The team with higher score wins the game. Players may be substituted when a substitute asks for it.

The game starts when the referee throws a jump ball. In the international sport, each game is divided into four 10 minute periods. However, if there's a tie between the teams they play for an extra period of 5 minutes.

After the first period and after the third period, the players take a 2 minute break. After the second period the players take a 15 minute break and exchange baskets. After a break, the last player holding the ball throws the ball in and starts the next period.



The play time may also be increased if a foul is committed just before the time ticks off. In such cases a free throw is granted despite the time lapse.

If a player throws the ball before the time lapses, but the ball flies down the basket after the timer ticks off, the goal is still considered.

Rules of the Game

Though basketball was invented with a set of thirteen rules, some rules were amended and many rules were added to help players play faster and make the game more interesting for the viewers. Some rules were introduced to minimize the advantage of height enjoyed by taller players.

There are many variants of the game at different places and these branches have governing bodies formulating rules of the game. In the US, basketball tournaments are very popular in colleges. Their rules in inter-collegiate championships are slightly different from the professional basketball sport.

- Any player possessing the ball cannot stay inside the foul ring of the court with his back to the basket for more than three seconds
- No player should touch the ball, basket or its rim while the ball is passing through the basket.
- Players are allowed to make a brief contact with an opposing player trying to pass the ball or make a goal, but cannot obstruct them.
- Players making more than five fouls are removed from the game.
- Fouls as per the situation, grant free throws to the opposing team and the ball is handed over to them.
- Players cannot carry the ball with them and walk or run. This is called travelling.
- When a player is surrounded by opponents, within one meter radius, trying to get hold of the ball, he/she cannot have the ball for more than five seconds. Such player is considered to be close guarded.
- Players of the team possessing the ball shouldn't stay in the restricted area of the opponent's team for more than three seconds.
- They should shoot the ball before the shot clock clicks.

What a Basketball Player Should not Do?

A player should not:

- Throw the ball away out of the court boundaries.
- Step on a foul line while free throwing the ball.
- Step on the end or side line while passing the ball to a teammate.
- Kick the ball.
- Dribble or hit the ball with their fist.
- Double dribble the ball.
- Hold the ball and stay in the backcourt that contains their basket for more than 8 seconds, else the team responsible should bear a foul.

If a team or player violates any of the rules mentioned above, the team loses the ball and the ball is handed over to the opponent team. The opponent team throws it from the side of the court, this is called a throw-in.

Rules for women are slightly modified to lessen strain on players. Clara Baer, who introduced basketball for women, published a set of rules for women players in 1895.

Regulating Bodies

FIBA – Fédération Internationale de Basketball Amateur (FIBA) is the international regulating body of basketball. It governs rules, appoints referees for international tournaments and conducts world cups every four years for both men and women. It is based in Geneva.

NBA – A tutorial on basketball cannot be complete without mentioning NBA, the most important basketball league based in North America. NBA organizes league championships and is a member of USA Basketball association. Its players are highly paid and they also play for other teams outside the US. Attracted by the huge talent in the US and high remunerations, many international players also play in NBA league matches. NBA formulates rules for its matches that may be slightly different from the ones stated by FIBA.

6. Basketball – Variants

There are many variants of basketball which are usually played when there are lesser number of players, sometimes in a half court and mostly without a referee. These games are popularly known as pick-up basketball games.

3-against-3 or 3-on-3

This is a popular game, usually played in a half court when six players have gathered in the court and are waiting for the other players to turn up. This game continues till one of the teams achieves a set score, usually 12 or 21. This game can be played with any even number of players. The rules of the game are mostly similar to the official sport, but the team that catches a rebound has to shoot the ball away from the three point line.

21 or Cut Throat

This is an individual sport and any number of players can play it. The first player making exactly 21 points wins the game. A goal carries 2 or 3 points, and is usually followed by a charity free throw worth one point or a charity free throw from three point line worth two points. A successful charity shot may be followed by another one till the player achieves 21 points. But, if the player achieves 22 points, the score goes back to 13 or 15 points. The game is less restrictive and more interesting as there are no fouls at all.

Chicago

This game is similar to 21, but the main difference is that players take turns and stay out of the court. For example, when three players play the game if the first one scores a goal, the second leaves the court and the third one comes down to play, and if the third one scores, the first one has to leave the court for the second and the third player.

Horse

This is an interesting game where two players challenge each other's shooting ability and the shots are not defended. Each alphabet of the word 'HORSE' is used to award a negative point.

A player challenges the next player by shooting the ball from any place he chooses, and if he makes a goal the next player has to make a goal from the same point, else he gets a negative 'H' tag and the first player again gets a chance to throw a new challenge again. However, if the first player challenging the other misses the goal, the next player gets a chance to shoot the ball from any point in the court and challenges the first one.

If a challenge is met, the player who took up the challenge gets a chance to shoot the ball from any preferable point in the court. The player who first starts the game and has five negative points on oneself is termed as "Horse" and is the loser of the game.

Shooting Contest

There are different forms of shooting contests, either on or outside the three point line. The players may choose rules whether the shots may be defended or undefended. There is an undefended shooting contest from the three point semi circle called around the world or around the key, where players advance from one end of the circle to the other as they successfully make goals. When a player misses a goal, the next player gets a chance. Sometimes, players have to start each chance afresh, and sometimes players agree to mark the spot they made the last successful goal.

Slam Ball

A slam ball court has four trampolines placed below the basket and players have to jump with the ball and make a dunk shot. The scoring rules may be a bit different.

Basketball – Tournaments

Coach Forrest C. (Phog) Allen led a movement to include basketball in the Olympics in 1936. Basketball is widely played across the world. About 215 various national basketball organizations are members of FIBA. Many of these federations organize basketball championships and the winners take part in international events.

Some of the popular international championships are listed below:

- FIBA Basketball World Cup
- FIBA women's World Championship
- NCAA women's Championship
- NCAA men's Championship
- WNBA Championship
- NBA Championship
- FIBA Asia Championship

*NCAA - National Collegiate Athletic Association

*WNBA - Women's National Basketball Association

7. Basketball – Champions

Most champions and championships have funny and witty nicknames. They not only add a fun element but are also a big part of the game and pull a lot of media attention.

Many teams won Basketball matches at the Olympics, but of the games popularity and championships organized by NBA, very few non-NBA players are as popular as the NBA players. It has become customary for a good champion of any country to join NBA and play in their championships.

Some of the famous basketball champions are listed below.

Bob Cousy

Bob Cousy nicknamed 'Houdini of the Hardwood' is an American professional basketball player and is considered one of the greatest ball-handling guards. He was a member of the American professional basketball team of Boston, Boston Celtics from 1950-1963. He also coached at the Boston College from 1963 to 69.

Bill Russell

He helped United States win a gold at the 1956 Olympics games held in Melbourne. He also played for Boston Celtics and is the first African American basketball icon. The period he played in the NBA championships, from 1957 to 1969, is usually identified as 'The Russell era'.



Wilt Chamberlain

He was a strong opponent of Bill Russell and a disciple of coach, Phog Allen, Chamberlain. He was a goal scoring machine in the 60's and was never fouled out of any NBA match he played. He loved his nickname 'The Big Dipper' and was also fondly called 'Wilt the Stilt', 'Goalith'.



Magic Johnson

Earvin Johnson, Jr, more popular as Magic Johnson, is an American Basketball player. He was the member of Los Angeles Lakers team and led the team to five NBA championships. He also used to entertain viewers with his creative ball handling techniques.

Larry Bird

Bird, described as 'Hick from French Lick', played 13 seasons as a part of the NBA team Boston Celtics and is a great shooter. He was a member of the US men's basketball team, the Dream Team, that won an Olympics gold at Barcelona in 1992.

Michael Jordan

Michael Jordan, nicknamed Air Jordan, is popular for his exceptional acrobatic ability to leap higher. He was widely considered as the best basketball player of all time. He is good at shooting, passing, and also defending the ball. He helped the US Olympic team win gold medals at Barcelona and Spain in 1984 and 1992.



Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, born Ferdinand Lewis Alcindor, Jr, was the most popular American professional Basketball player in the 1970's and 80's. He was a member of Milwaukee Bucks and Los Angeles Lakers teams of the NBA. He is also a popular actor and writer.

Shaquille O'Neal

Shaquille O'Neal, usually called Shaq, played for various NBA teams, Orlando Magic, Houston Rockets, Los Angeles Lakers, Miami Heat, Phoenix Suns, Cleveland Cavaliers and Boston Celtics. He was a part of the US Basketball team that won gold at Olympics in 1996.

John Stockton

John was a part of the NBA team Utah Jazz and though he was not as tall as most of his team members, he was so good at handling the ball and at steals that he was considered the greatest point guard in the NBA history. He was a part of the US Olympics basketball team in 1992 and in 1996 and also won two gold medals.



LeBron James

James, popular as King James, earned the title Ohio's Mr. Basketball. He was a part of the Miami Heat team of the NBA during its 2012 and 2013 wins. This tall, muscular and athletic champion is also famous for bagging several million dollar endorsements even before starting his career with the Cleveland Cavaliers team of the NBA. He was also a part of the US men's Olympic teams that won a bronze in 2004 and a gold in 2008.