Basketball Basics

Object

The game is played with 2 teams. Each team consists of 5 players on the court at a time. The object of the game is to outscore your opponent by shooting the ball into your basket and preventing them from putting the ball into theirs. The ball can be advanced up the floor with the hands only, either by dribbling or passing to teammates.

Playing Area

The basketball court is rectangular in shape and is split in half by a mid-court line. There are 2 baskets, one located at each end of the court. The standard basketball rim is 10 feet off of the ground.

Starting Play

Teams are assigned a basket at which to shoot for the first half, and they switch ends at half-time. The game begins with a jump ball at center court between one player from each team. Other players line up in alternating fashion around the center circle. Once the ball is touched by either player, the game begins. The team in possession of the ball is on offense and takes the ball toward their basket to score against their opponent who is on defense.

Fundamentals

The fundamental skills involved in the game, include:

- Dribbling
- Passing and catching
- Shooting
- Rebounding
- Jumping
- Defending
- Moving without the ball
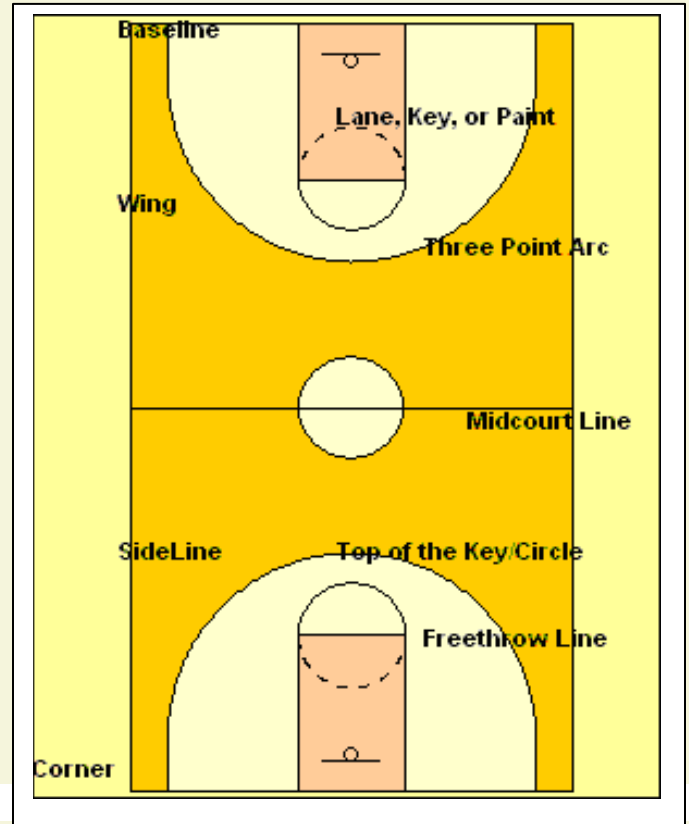
Positions

There are a variety of ways players can line up on the court, but the most common **basketball positions** are:

- #1 or Point Guard
- #2 or Shooting Guard
- #3 or Wing or Small Forward
- #4 or Power Forward
- #5 or Center

Scoring

Points are scored any time the ball goes through the basket. 3 points are granted if the shot is taken beyond the 3-pt line and 2 points are awarded for a basket made from anywhere else on the court. A free throw is worth 1 point.

Game Length

Games are divided into time segments known as periods. The length and number of each period differs between leagues. For example, college games are divided into 2 20-minutes halves while high school games are made up of 4 8-minute quarters.

Fouls

Basketball fouls are penalties assessed by the referees for rough play to keep a player from gaining an advantage over another player. A player who is fouled is awarded the ball out of bounds unless the foul occurred during the act of shooting. Each player is allowed 5 fouls before they are removed from the game.

Personal foul penalties: If a player is shooting while a 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.

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.

Here are some common basketball fouls:

- **Blocking** – A personal foul caused when the defender makes illegal personal contact with an opponent who may or may not have the ball. Blocking is called when the defender impedes the progress of the opponent.

- **Charging** (or **Player Control Foul**) – A personal foul occurring when an offensive player makes contact with a defender who has already established a set position. A player with the ball must avoid contact with a stationary defender by stopping or changing direction.

- **Elbowing** – It is a violation for a player to swing the elbows excessively.

- **Flagrant Foul** – A personal or technical foul, which is violent in nature. Examples are fighting, striking, kicking, or kneeing an opponent.

- **Hand Check** – A personal foul caused by a defender making repeated contact with her hands on her opponent.

- **Holding** – A personal foul caused by illegal contact with an opponent, which interferes with his freedom of movement.

- **Intentional Foul** – A personal or technical foul, which keeps the opponent from capitalizing on an advantageous situation. It could be contact away from the ball or contact when a defender is not making a legitimate attempt to play the ball or a player. It also occurs when a player causes excessive contact with an opponent.

- **Offensive Foul** – A foul caused by an offensive player, usually in the form of charging.

- **Over the Back**– When a player jumps up over the back of another player in an attempt to go for the ball.

- **Personal Foul** – Illegal contact with an opponent while the ball is live, which hinders the opponent's offensive or defensive movement. A personal foul also includes contact by or on an airborne shooter when the ball is dead.

- **Technical Foul** – A non-contact foul by a player; an intentional or flagrant contact foul while the ball is dead; or a violation charged to the head coach because of violations on the sideline or from bench personnel.

- **Team Foul** – Any foul charged to a team. Once a team reaches 7 team fouls, its opponent is in a bonus free throw situation.

Violations

The basketball basic rules include numerous ball handling and time violations that cause a team to lose possession of the ball. Here are some common violations:

- **Backcourt Violation** – If a player is the last one on her team to touch the ball before it goes into the backcourt, she cannot be the first player to touch it in the backcourt.

- **Closely Guarded** (or **Five-second Violation**) – Violation that occurs when a ball handler in his team's frontcourt is continuously guarded by any opponent who is within six feet of him while he is either dribbling or holding the ball. The offensive player has 5 seconds to either get rid of the ball or drive past the defender.

- **Double Dribble** - When a dribbler touches the ball with both hands at the same time or when the dribbler picks up the ball and then starts dribbling again.

- **Goaltending** – Occurs when a player touches a shot ball while it is in its downward flight above the rim. It also occurs when a defender touches a free throw attempt outside the basket.

- **Lane Violation** – A violation called during a free throw situation against a player who enters the lane too soon.

- **Ten Seconds in the Backcourt** – A team has 10 seconds to advance the ball from their backcourt past the half-court line to the frontcourt.

- **Three Seconds in the Lane** – An offensive player cannot remain in the free throw lane for longer than 3 seconds while her team is in control of the ball in the frontcourt. She has to clear the lane completely with both feet to stop the official's count. If she receives the ball while she is in the lane, she is allowed to stay beyond 3 seconds in order to drive toward the goal for a shot.

- **Traveling** – A violation caused by moving the feet in any direction without properly dribbling the ball. It results in a turnover, and the ball is given to the opposing team. While holding the ball, a player has to establish a pivot foot which has to remain on the floor at all times until he passes, shoots, or dribbles. While holding the ball, his knee cannot touch the floor and if he falls, he must get rid of the ball before attempting to get up.