

BASKETBALL GLOSSARY

Advance Step

A step in which the defender's lead footsteps toward his man and the back foot slides forward.

Alley Oop

An offensive play in which a player throws the ball up near the basket to a teammate (or, more rarely, to himself) who then jumps, catches the ball in mid-air, and immediately scores a basket, often with a slam dunk.

Alternating Possession

In many rulesets, most notably FIBA, NCAA, and NFHS (U.S. high school), a rule used to settle most or all jump ball situations after the opening tipoff. In jump ball situations, or at the start of a new period of play, possession is awarded to the team whose offense is moving in the direction of the possession arrow.

Assist

A pass to a teammate who scores a basket immediately or after one dribble.

Backcourt

1. The half of the court a particular team is defending. Contrast frontcourt.
2. A team's guards.

Backcourt Violation or Over and Back

1. Touching the ball in the backcourt after it has entered the frontcourt and was not last touched by the other team.
2. Failure to bring the ball from the backcourt into the frontcourt within the allotted time of 10 seconds NFHS for women and men.

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Back Screen

An offensive play in which a player comes from the low post to set a screen for a player on the perimeter.

Ball Screen

An offensive play in which a player sets a screen on the defender guarding the player with the ball.

Ball Side or Strong side

The half of the court (divided lengthwise) that the ball is currently on. Contrast help side.

Baseline or End Line

The line that marks the playing boundary at either end of the court.

Basket or Goal, Hoop, and Net

The goal in the game of basketball, consisting of a net suspended from a hoop 18 inches (46 cm) in diameter and 10 feet (300 cm) above the ground. In regulation contexts it is attached to a backboard.

Basket Interference

The violation of touching the ball or the basket while the ball is on the rim; touching the ball when it is within the cylinder extending upwards from the rim; reaching up through the basket from below and touching the ball; or pulling down on the rim of the basket so that it contacts the ball before returning to its original position, or during a shot attempt.

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Block

1. To tip or deflect a shooter's shot, altering its flight so that the shot misses.
2. A violation in which a defender steps in front of a dribbler but is still moving when they collide; also called a **blocking foul**.
3. The small painted square on the floor next to the basket just outside the lane.

Box-and-One

The **box-and-one** defense is a hybrid between a man-to-man defense (in which each defensive player is responsible for marking a player on the other team) and a zone defense (in which each defensive player is responsible for guarding an area of the court).

Carrying or Palming

A violation in formal play which occurs when an offensive player holds the ball excessively at the ball's apex while dribbling. In formal play, this penalty is considered either a "carry" or a double dribble.
defender guards one player man-to-man.

Center (C)

One of three standard player positions or five total positions in the game of basketball. Centers are generally the tallest players on the floor, responsible mainly for scoring, rebounding, and defense near the basket.

Charge

An offensive foul which occurs when a player with the ball rushes into a non-moving defender.

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Dead-ball Rebound

A rebound that is not credited to either team, such as a rebound that (technically) occurs after a miss on the first free throw of a two-shot foul. It ensures that every missed shot has a corresponding rebound, and was introduced for the purposes of box score statistical error detection.

Division Line

The **division line**, otherwise known as the midline or half court **line**, is the boundary **line** that splits a **basketball** court in half.

Double Bonus

In NCAA men's and NFHS rules, a team is "in the double bonus" when the opposing team has accumulated 10 or more team fouls in a half, and therefore earns two free throws on each subsequent non-shooting foul committed by the defense. Before 2015-16, this rule was also part of NCAA women's play, but the change from playing in halves to quarters resulted in the elimination of the "one-and-one" free throw situation. The term "double bonus" is widely used by the media and fans, but does not appear in any official rule book. See also bonus and penalty.

Double-Double

Double-digit figures in two positive statistical categories, especially when achieved by an individual player (e.g., 12 points and 14 rebounds).

Double Dribble

To dribble the ball with two hands at the same time, or to dribble, stop, and then begin to dribble again. Either act is a violation of the rules and results in a loss of possession.

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Dribble

To bounce the ball continuously with one hand. Dribbling is required in order to take steps while in possession of the ball; failing to do so properly is a violation of the rules in all rulesets used in the game.

Drop Step

A post-up move where the ballhandler picks up their dribble and at the same time extends a leg back on one side of their defender, and then turns toward the basket, using that leg as leverage to get between their defender and the basket.

Dunk or Slam Dunk.

1. To score by putting the ball directly through the basket with one or both hands, i.e., without shooting by letting the ball travel through the air.
2. Any shot made by dunking.

Elbow

1. An actual or attempted strike of another player with one's elbow. Especially violent examples are typically called as flagrant fouls.
2. The court area where the free-throw line meets the side of the three-second lane.

Euro Step

A move in which an offensive player picks up their dribble, takes a step in one direction, and then quickly takes a second step in another direction.

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Flagrant Foul

An unsportsmanlike foul in which there is no serious attempt to play the ball. NFHS (high school) uses *flagrant personal foul* and *flagrant technical foul*; A flagrant foul may be unintentional or purposeful. At all North American levels, the latter type of foul results in the immediate ejection of the offender.

Foul

A violation of the rules other than a *floor violation*, generally one which attempts to gain advantage by physical contact. Such violations are penalized by a change in possession or the awarding of free-throw opportunities. There are many different types of fouls; see *personal foul*, *technical foul*, *flagrant foul*, *unsportsmanlike foul*, and *disqualifying foul*.

Four-point Play

A rare play in which a player is fouled while making a three-point field goal and then makes the resulting free throw, thereby scoring a total of four points.

Free Throw Line

The **free-throw line**, where one stands while taking a **foul shot**, is located within the three-point arc at 15 feet from the plane of the backboard. A **foul shot** is worth 1 point, but if a shot is made from the **foul line** while in play it is still worth 2 points.

Free Throw

An unopposed attempt to score a basket, worth one point, from the free-throw line. Generally, two attempts are awarded when the player is fouled in the act of shooting (three attempts are awarded in the case of a three-point shot), fouled flagrantly, or when the opposing team fouls while over the foul limit. For technical fouls, NFHS rules award two free throws.

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Goaltending

The violation of interfering with the ball while it is on its way to the basket and it is in a downward flight, above the basket ring and within the imaginary cylinder, and/or not touching the rim.

Hand-Check Foul

A kind of foul wherein a player used their hands illegally to impede or slow the movement of the opponent.

Held Ball

A situation when players from both teams claim possession of the basketball at the same time without a foul from either team.

Depending on the league and the game situation, may result in a jump ball, a change in possession, or an out-of-bounds play by the team that previously had possession.

Intentional Foul

To deliberately foul an opposing player to either stop the clock and/or to get possession of the ball after free throw attempts. A common strategy toward the end of the first half or the end of the game.

Jump Ball

The jump ball is what starts every basketball game. Takes place in the center of the court.

Lane Line

Lane lines are boundaries running from the free throw line to the baseline. The width and shape of the lane lines vary on different levels of the game. The lane lines also contain lane spaces markings used to align and separate the non-shooters.

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Loose Ball Foul

To foul an opposing player when neither team has control of the ball. As an example, fouling an opposing player when both players are chasing a loose ball.

Man-to-Man Defense

A defense in which each player guards a single opposing player. Contrast *zone defense*.

Moving Violation

Another name for a traveling violation.

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The governing body that sets rules for high school sports in the U.S., including basketball.

Offensive Foul

A foul committed by an offensive player.

Offensive Rebound

The team that last shot the ball regains control of the ball on a rebound.

Paint

Another name for the key, often referring only to the painted area below the free-throw line.

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Palming

Specifically referring to the habit of an offensive player to hold the ball at the apex of its bounce while dribbling, usually by gripping the ball firmly in the dribbling hand. In organized play this is always considered a dribbling penalty, often called a *carry* or double dribble. In non-organized play this is typically considered rude and is generally discouraged by the defensive players.

Pass

1. To throw or bounce the ball to a teammate.
2. The act of passing to a teammate.

Player Control Foul

A foul which occurs when the player with the ball crashes into a defender; sometimes incorrectly referred to as a charge.

Possession Arrow

A physical or electronic arrow at the scorer's table that determines the next possession under the alternating possession rule. After the opening jump ball, it is set to point in the direction in which the team that lost the jump ball is moving on offense, and is switched each time the alternating possession rule is invoked.

Pump Fake

For an offensive player to start a shooting motion without their feet leaving the floor and then to quickly stop. The intent is gaining an advantage if the foot of an over-eager defensive player leaves the floor.

Put-back Dunk

A dunk performed in the air during an offensive rebound.

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Rebound

1. To obtain the ball after a missed field goal attempt.
2. The act of rebounding.

Screen or Pick

1. To attempt to prevent a defender from guarding a teammate by standing in the defender's way. The screening player must remain stationary; a moving screen is an offensive foul.
2. The tactic of setting a screen.

Shot Clock

A timer designed to increase the pace (and, consequently, the frequency of scoring) by requiring a shot to be released before the timer expires; if the ball does not touch the rim or enter the basket, a shot-clock violation is called, which results in a loss of possession for the shooting team.

Sideline

The sidelines are the two boundaries **lines** running the length of the court. Their location is determined by the width of the court, which is normally 50 feet wide. Along with **Baseline** and **End line** they establish the size of the playing area.

Technical foul or abbreviated as **T**.

A foul assessed for unsportsmanlike behavior that does not involve physical contact and for some procedural violations (for example, having too many players on the court or calling a timeout when none remain). Technical fouls are penalized by loss of possession after a free throw, which may be taken by any member of the opposing team.

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Three-point field goal or three-pointer or simply a three and abbreviated 3FG.

A shot worth three points that must be attempted with both feet behind the three-point line.

Three second Rule

A rule which requires that a player shall not remain in the opponent's restricted area for more than three consecutive seconds while the player's team is in control of a live ball in the frontcourt and the game clock is running.

Transition Defense

The portion of a team's defensive play conducted when the other team has first gained possession and is moving up the court, before both teams have established positions; this includes defense against fast breaks. See also half-court defense.

Transition Offense

The portion of a team's offensive play conducted when first obtaining possession from the other team and moving up the court, before both teams have established positions; this includes fast breaks. See also half-court offense.

Travel

To move one's pivot foot illegally, to fall to the floor without maintaining a pivot foot, or to take three or more steps without dribbling the ball. Such violations are referred to as *traveling*; the precise rules regarding the infraction vary by ruleset.

Up and Down

A traveling violation which occurs when the ball carrier jumps vertically into the air and does not get rid of it before landing.

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Vertical Jump

The act of raising one's center of gravity higher in the vertical plane solely with the use of one's own muscles; it is a measure of how high an individual athlete can elevate off the ground from a standstill.

Violation

An infraction of the rules other than a foul, such as traveling or a three-second violation.

Walk

To walk without dribbling the ball.

Zone Defense

A defensive strategy in which each player is responsible for defending a particular area of the court. Contrast man-to-man defense.