

# BASKETBALL TERMS

**Air ball:** When a shot is taken and it hits neither the backboard nor the rim.

**Assist:** A pass that immediately precedes and sets up a scored basket.

**Backboard:** The rectangular or fan-shaped board behind the basket.

**Backcourt:** The half of the court that is opposite a team's offensive basket; the court a team is attempting to defend.

**Bonus free throw:** When a team gets seven

**Bounce pass:** A pass that strikes the floor before it reaches the receiver.

**Carrying the ball:** Also called "palming;" a violation committed by a dribbler that involves placing the dribbling hand under the ball and momentarily holding or carrying it while dribbling.

**Center:** Also called the "pivot player;" an offensive position typically played by a tall player who plays mainly in the key areas (at the post).

**Charging:** A personal foul committed when an offensive player illegally contacts a defensive player who has established position or is stationary.

**Chest pass:** A two-handed pass thrown from the passer's chest in a straight line to the chest area of the receiver.

**Controlling the boards:** Securing a majority of the rebounds.

**Conversion:** A made basket or free throw.

**Crossover dribble:** A dribble in which the ball is moved from one hand to the other while the dribbler changes directions.

**Cut:** A quick movement by an offensive player to elude an opponent or to receive the ball.

**Dead ball:** Occurs whenever the whistle blows to stop play and after a field goal, but before the opponent gains possession of the ball.

**Defense:** The team not in possession of the ball whose objective is to keep the opponent from scoring; also a specific pattern of play used by a defending team.

**Double dribble:** A violation that occurs when a player dribbles the ball with two hands simultaneously or stops dribbling and then dribbles again.

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**Double team:** A defensive play where two defenders guard one player.

**Dribble:** Process by which a player repeatedly bounces the ball off the floor so that it returns to his/her possession. It's the only legal means by which a player may move the ball across the court.

**Drive:** A quick dribble directly to the basket in an effort to score.

**Elbow:** Also called the "junction;" a term often used to indicate the area of the court where the free-throw line and side of the key meet.

**Fastbreak:** An offensive strategy in which a team attempts to move the ball up court and into scoring position as quickly as possible so that the defense is outnumbered and does not have time to set up.

**Field goal:** A basket scored on a shot, except for a free throw, worth two or three points depending on the distance of the attempt from the basket.

**Forward:** An offensive position played to the sides of the basket near the key area and out toward the sideline along the baseline.

**Foul:** A violation resulting from illegal contact with an opposing player.

\*Foul line: See "Free-throw line."

**Free throw:** An unguarded shot taken from behind the free-throw line after a foul. If successful, the shot counts one point.

**Free-throw lane:** Also called the "key" or "lane;" a 12-foot wide area extending from the baseline to the free-throw line. Players may not be in this area during a free-throw attempt.

**Free-throw line:** A 12-foot-long line that is parallel to and 15 feet from the backboard.

**Front court:** The half of the court (divided by the center line) that contains the offensive team's basket; the offensive half of the court.

**Full-court press:** A defensive tactic in which a team guards the opponents closely the full length of the court.

**Guard:** An offensive position played primarily at the perimeter, or away from the basket.

**Held ball:** Formerly called a "jump ball." When two players on opposite teams are in joint control of the ball.

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**Intentional foul:** A personal foul that the official judges to be premeditated.

**In the paint:** In the “key” area, so named because this area of the floor is painted.

**Jump ball:** The procedure for starting play at the beginning of a game or an overtime period. The official tosses the ball into the air between the two opponents positioned at the center-court circle; the two players jump up and try to tap the ball to a teammate.

**Jump shot:** A shot that is released after the shooter has jumped into the air.

**Key:** Also called the “free-throw lane” or “lane;” the area measuring 12 feet in width and extending from the free-throw line to the end line. Also referred to as “the paint.”

**Lay up:** A shot taken close to the basket that is usually banked off the backboard towards the basket.

**Man-to-man defense:** When a defender is assigned to a specific player and defends only against that player.

**Offense:** The team that has possession of the basketball. Also, a designed play that a team uses to attempt to score.

**One-and-one:** The “bonus” free-throw situation awarded for non-shooting fouls after the opposing team exceeds a certain number of team fouls in a half. The person fouled shoots one free throw; if successful, the shooter takes a second shot.

**Over-and-back violation:** A violation that occurs when the offensive team returns the ball into the backcourt once it has positioned itself in the front court.

**Overhead pass:** A two-handed pass thrown from above the forehead.

**Overtime:** An extra period played to break a tie score at the end of a regulation game.

**Palming:** See “Carrying the ball.”

**Pass:** An intentional throw to a teammate.

**Pivot:** A footwork technique in which a player keeps one foot in contact with a “spot” on the floor while moving the other foot to adjust the position of the body or to evade a defensive player.

**Player-to-player defense:** Also “man-to-man defense;” a team defense in which each player is assigned to guard a particular opponent.

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**Point guard:** An offensive position played by a guard who usually brings the ball up the court and initiates the offense.

**Post:** An offensive position played close to the basket along the key.

**Press:** An aggressive defense that attempts to force the opponents to make errors by guarding them closely from either half court, three-quarter court or full court.

**Rebound:** The act of gaining possession of the ball after a missed shot.

**Scrimmage:** An unofficial game between two teams, or five-on-five play between team members in a practice situation.

**Technical foul:** A foul that does not involve contact with an opponent; a foul that involves unsportsman-like conduct by a player, coach or non-player; or a contact foul committed by a player while the ball is dead.

**Ten-second line:** The mid-court line over which the offensive team must advance the ball from the backcourt within 10 seconds to avoid a violation.

**Three-point field goal:** A made basket from more than 19 feet and nine inches during a high school or college game.

**Three-on-two:** A common fast-break situation in which three offensive players attempt to score on two defenders.

**Three seconds:** A violation in which an offensive player remains within the key for more than three seconds at a time.

**Traveling:** A violation occurring when a player with the ball takes a step without dribbling (moving the established pivot foot).

**Turnover:** A loss of possession of the ball by means of an error or violation.

**Violation:** An infringement of the rules that's not a foul. The penalty for a violation is the awarding of the ball to the opponent.

**Zone defense:** A team defense in which each player is responsible for defending an area of the court and the opponents within that area.

**Zone offense:** An offensive pattern of play designed to beat a particular zone defense.