BERWICK

BASKETBALL CLUB INC.

A Spectator's Guide to Understanding Basketball

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Introduction

As with any sport, the game of basketball has its own peculiar rules, positions and jargon. For the novice spectator, often a parent who has never played but whose child is passionate about the game, the referee's calls and the jargon heard around the court each week can be confusing.

The rules of basketball are governed by the International Basketball Federation (FIBA). The following is a simplified explanation of the principles of the game, the basic rules, referee's signals, and the common terms and jargon, to help you better understand your child's sport so you get more enjoyment from watching them play each week.
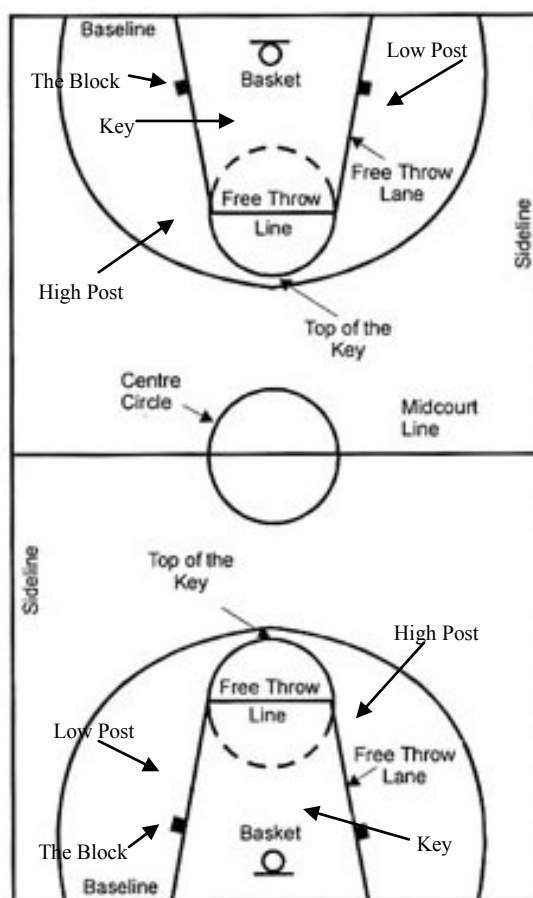
1. The Court

The basketball court is 28 metres long and 15 metres wide, measured from *inside* the boundary lines. The end lines and sidelines are *not* part of the playing area therefore the ball or player is deemed to be *out of court* if the ball bounces on the line or the player's foot touches the line while in control of the ball.

The **centre-line** divides the court into two halves: the **frontcourt**, the basket your team is attacking (the offensive end), and the **backcourt**, containing the basket the opposition team is attacking (the defensive end).

Within each half of the court is an area (sometimes painted) known as "the **Key**" (also called the Paint), the "**free-throw line**" 4.6 metres from the basket, and the **three-point arc**.

The centre circle is where the game begins with the tip-off or jump-ball between each team's tallest players.

2. Positions

There are three general positions: Guards, Forwards, and Centre. In the early years of junior basketball, players tend not to take on such clearly defined roles, but play at all positions on the court. Later, when players have grown and developed their skills they will naturally fall into one of these three roles, according to their size and proficiency with a particular skill. The following descriptions apply mainly to basketball as played at the more experienced levels.

Guards

The guards are usually the shorter and quicker players who mostly play around the perimeter (around the 3-point arc), furthest away from the basket. They tend to be the team's best ball-handlers and outside shooters, and have good dribbling and passing skills.

There will almost always be two guards on court: a point-guard and an off guard or shooting guard.

The point guard tends to be the best dribbler and passer and takes a position at the top of the key.

The off guard is usually the team's best long-range shooter.

In offence, the point guard's primary job is as ball-carrier, distributor and play-maker. That is, they move the ball up the court, distribute the ball to team-mates and set up positions for passes to the shooters.

In defence, if playing a man-on-man defence, the guards will man-up on an opposition guard. If playing a zone defence the two guards position themselves as the first line of defence at the top of the key.

Forwards

Forwards are taller and bigger than the guards. They are accurate shooters from within 4 metres, and take a position near the basket to take the rebound off missed shots.

As with the guards there are two forwards on the court: the small forward and the power forward.

The small forward is athletic and versatile. They can play in the "lane" (shooting area) as well as on the perimeter when in offence, and are able to guard both the small and quick as well as the big and strong opponents.

The power forwards are bigger players and therefore tend to be better rebounders. They shoot accurately from the free throw line and mostly play on the right-hand side of the key, near the basket.

In offence the forwards will "post-up", with the small forward taking the high post position near the top of the key, and the power forward taking the low post closer to the ring so they can grab the rebound off any missed shots.

In defence the forwards play the baseline to prevent the opposition from taking a shot, and to box-out and rebound.

Centre

The centre is also known as a "post" player. They are usually the tallest players who use their size to take rebounds and work their way into position to take a shot. Using their height they can make it difficult for an opponent to shoot near the basket.

In offence the centre's job is to cut through the key and post-up close to the ring.

In defence the centre's job is to stop the opposition penetrating and to grab the rebound off any missed shots.

3. Basic Principles

Each player may occupy any vacant position on the court within an imaginary cylinder, including the floor space and the space above when he/she jumps vertically. The cylinder is defined by:

- The palms (the front)

- The buttocks (the rear)

- The outer edge of the arms and legs (the sides).

The hands and arms, bent at the elbows so that the forearms and hands are raised, may be extended in front or to the side of the body no further than the position of the feet.

<u>Defence</u>

Legal Guarding Position

A player has established a Legal Guarding Position when they:

- Are facing their opponent

- Have both feet on the floor

- Are contained within their "cylinder".

A defender who has established a legal guarding position may guard the opponent by remaining stationary, jumping vertically, or moving laterally or backwards *away* from the opponent. They may not move towards the opponent or extend the arms, shoulders, hips or legs into the opponent's path, causing contact.

Guarding a player who controls the ball

A player with the ball must expect to be guarded, and be prepared to stop or change direction whenever a defensive player takes a legal guarding position in from of him or her.

If the defender has established legal guarding position and contact occurs on the torso, the contact is deemed to have been caused by the player with the ball (an offensive foul).

Guarding a player who does not have control of the ball

A player who does not have control of the ball is entitled to move freely around the court and take a position not already occupied by an opposition player.

When taking guarding position against a player who does not have control of the ball, the defender must allow sufficient time and distance for the opposition player to stop or change direction (this is usually 2 steps at the pace the opposition player is moving)..

If the defender does not allow sufficient time and distance and contact occurs, it is deemed to have been caused by the defender (a defensive foul).

Screening

A player sets a screen to prevent an opposition player without the ball from reaching a position on the court.

In defence, a screen may be set to prevent a player moving into position to receive the ball in the key in order to take a shot.

In offence a screen may be set to prevent a defender guarding the ball-carrier.

In setting a screen, a player must consider the position and movement of the opponent to be screened:

- If the opponent is stationary and the screen is to be set in front of or to the side of the player giving the opponent a reasonable opportunity to be aware of the screen, the screener may establish the screen as close to the opponent as he/she wishes, provided there is no contact

- If the screen is to be set behind the opponent giving the opponent no opportunity to be aware of the screen, the screener must allow space for the opponent to take one step towards the screen without making contact

- If the opponent is moving at the time a screen is being set, the screener must allow sufficient time and distance for the opponent to stop or change direction to avoid contact with the screen (usually 2 steps).

A screen is legal when both feet are on the floor and the player is contained within his/her cylinder. If contact occurs, it is deemed to have been caused by the opposition player (a charging foul).

A screen is illegal if the player setting the screen is moving into position when contact occurs, does not allow the opposition player sufficient time or space to stop or change direction, or has their arms or legs extended outside of their cylinder. If contact occurs, it is deemed to have been caused by the player setting the screen (a blocking foul).

Offence

A player in offence must not use the arms to create additional space, or spread the arms or legs to cause contact with a defender in a legal guarding position.

The offensive player is deemed to be responsible if contact is made after a defender has established his or her legal guarding position.

The Jump-ball situation

A jump-ball situation occurs when players from both teams are in contact with the ball, but neither side is able to gain control (known as a "held ball").

Possession of the ball will be awarded on an alternating basis as signalled by the arrow in front of the scorer's bench, starting with the team that did not win the tip-off at the beginning of the game, to be taken as a throw-in from the sideline or baseline.

A jump-ball situation can also arise if:

- The ball goes out of court and the referees are unable to agree/determine which team last had contact with the ball;

- The ball becomes wedged between the basket and the backboard.
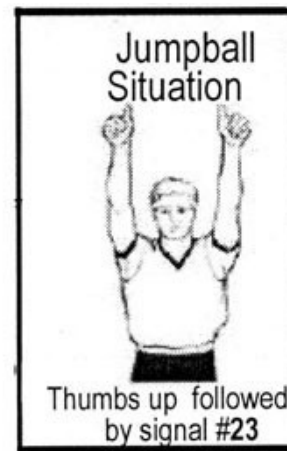
4. Fouls

The FIBA definition of a foul is "…an infraction of the rules concerning illegal personal contact with an opponent and/or unsportsmanlike behaviour". *(Article 32, FIBA Official Basketball Rules 2008.)*

Although basketball is a non-contact sport, some contact between players is inevitable when you have 10 players chasing after the one ball in a limited area, but not every instance will result in a foul. Some contact is incidental, having no real effect on the player, while other instances of contact may impede a player, or give a player an unfair advantage. The referee must distinguish between the two.

Blocking

Blocking is illegal contact with an opponent (with or without the ball) that impedes the progress of the opponent.

A blocking foul may be called if contact occurs when:

- A player setting a screen is moving, or makes contact with an opponent who is stationary or retreating

- A player extends his/her arms or legs outside their cylinder to prevent an opponent from passing

Charging with the Ball

Clenched fist open palm
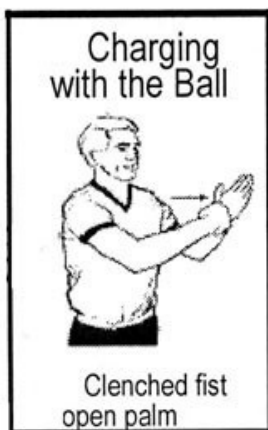
Charging

Charging is illegal contact by pushing or moving into an opponent's torso.

A charging foul may be called when contact occurs with:

- A player who has set a legal screen

- A player who has established a legal guarding position.

Contact using the hands

Contact using the hands or extended arms is illegal if it restricts the freedom of movement of an opponent.

A foul may be called when:

Illegal Use of Hands

Strike wrists

- A defender places his/her hands or arms upon an opponent with or without the ball, and remains in contact with the opponent to restrict his/her movement

- A player with or without the ball hooks or wraps an arm around an opponent to restrict their movement

- An offensive player uses an extended forearm while dribbling, to fend off a defender or prevent an opponent from gaining control of the ball.
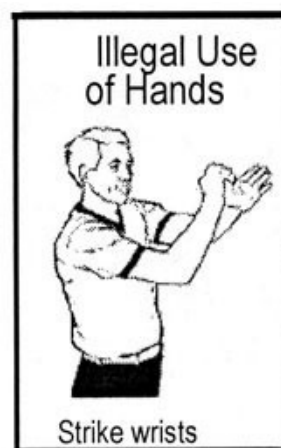
It should be noted that the hand in contact with the ball is considered to be part of the ball. Therefore, contact with an opponent's hand whilst on the ball is <u>not</u> a foul. For example: a player slaps at the ball to dislodge it from the opponent's hand, and in doing so makes contact with the opponent's hand on the ball. In this case a foul will not be called. However, if the player hits the opponent anywhere above the wrist, a foul would be called.

Holding

Holding is illegal contact with an opponent that interferes with their freedom of movement.

Holding

Grasp wrist downward

Pushing

Pushing is illegal contact by a player who forcibly moves or attempts to move an opponent with or with out control of the ball.

A pushing foul may be called when:

- A player with the ball "pushes off" the opponent to create more space, get free to receive the ball, or prevent the opponent from attempting to play the ball.
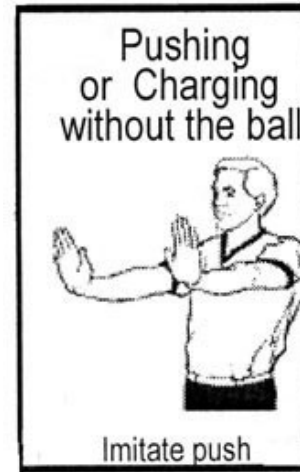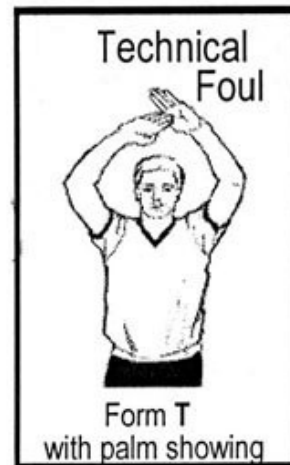
Technical Foul

A technical foul is the deliberate or repeated non-compliance with the rules of conduct.
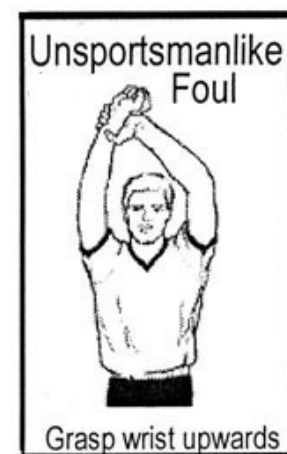
A player or coach may be given a technical foul for:

- Continually arguing with the referee

- Swearing;

- Bad sportsmanship.

Unsportsmanlike Foul

An unsportsmanlike foul is called when the referee considers the contact is intentional and is not a legitimate attempt to directly play the ball.

Penalties

Personal fouls

Each player is limited to *five personal fouls*. On committing a fifth foul, the player must immediately leave the game.

If the foul is committed against a player in the act of shooting (that is, when the ball has left the shooter's hands), that player may be awarded one or more free-throws, determined by whether the shot was successful:

- If the shot was successful the points will be counted and one additional throw will be awarded

- If the shot was unsuccessful, two free throws (three if the attempt was made from beyond the 3-point line) will be awarded.

If the foul is committed against a player not in the act of shooting, the non-offending team shall take possession of the ball at a place on the boundary line nearest to where the foul was committed.

Team fouls

All personal fouls are also counted against the team. In our level of competition, a team may carry up to nine fouls in each 20-minute period, after which the team will be in a "team foul penalty situation".

When a team is in a team foul penalty situation, any subsequent fouls committed by a player of that team will be counted against the player, *and* be penalised by two free-throws being awarded to the other team.

Technical fouls

If a technical foul is called the opposing team shall be awarded two free throws followed by possession for a throw-in from the centre line.

Unsportsmanlike fouls

If an unsportsmanlike foul is committed against a player in the act of shooting:

- If the shot is successful, one free-throw will be awarded, followed by a throw-in from the centre line

- If the shot is unsuccessful, two free-throws (three if the attempt was from beyond the 3-point line) will be awarded, followed by possession of the ball for a throw-in from the centre line.

If an unsportsmanlike foul is committed against a player not in the act of shooting:
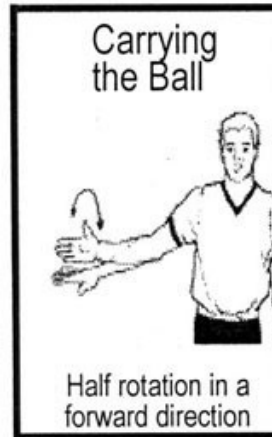
- Two free-throws will be awarded, followed by possession of the ball for a throw-in from the centre line.

5. Violations

A violation is an infringement of the rules that does not involve personal contact with another player.

Carry

When a player dribbling the ball places their hand under the ball and turns the ball over by turning the wrist.

Centre-line or "over and back"

When the ball has been brought into the frontcourt but is then returned to the backcourt before an opponent has touched it. For example, in passing the ball, it is passed back to a team-mate still positioned in the backcourt, or a player dribbles into their frontcourt but steps back over the centre line while still in control of the ball.
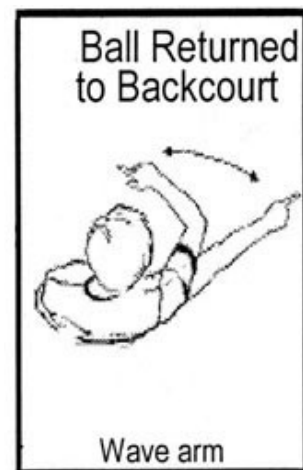
Double dribble

When a player touches the ball with both hands during a dribble, or begins dribbling again after having stopped.
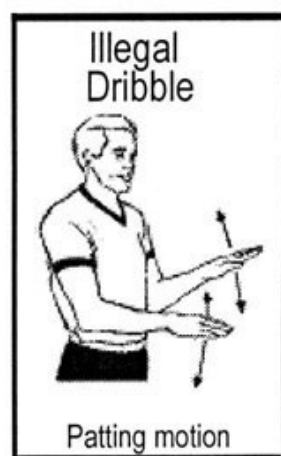
Eight seconds
When a team gains control of the ball in their backcourt, they have eight seconds to return the ball to their frontcourt. If the ball has not passed over the centre line within eight seconds, the opposition will be awarded possession for a throw-in.

8 Seconds Violation

Show 8 fingers
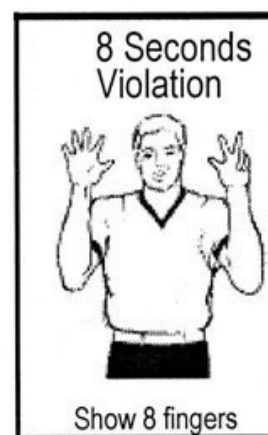
Free-throw violation
During a free-throw a player shall not enter the key or leave their rebound position until after the ball has left the shooter's hands.

Out of bounds (player or ball)
A player is out of bounds when any part of the body comes into contact with the floor or any object other than a player, on or outside the boundary line.

The ball is out of bounds when it touches:

- A player or other person who is out of bounds

- The floor, on or outside the boundary line

- The backboard supports, the back of the backboard or any object above the playing court.

Out of Bounds

Signal #6 followed by pointing finger in direction of play
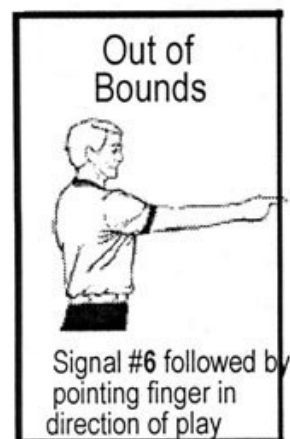
Travel
When a player in possession of the ball takes more than one step without releasing the ball on a dribble, pass or shot.

A player holding a ball may step in any direction using the *same foot*, but the other foot (the pivot foot) must remain in contact with the floor. The pivot foot, if lifted, may not be re-grounded until the ball is released from the hands to be passed or shoot for goal.

A travelling violation will be called if:

- A player ends a dribble by holding the ball in one or both hands, but continues their run

- A player having received the ball, lifts the pivot foot from the floor and then re-grounds it before releasing the ball

Travelling

Rotate fists

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- A player gains control of the ball whilst lying or sitting on the floor, then attempts to roll or stand while holding the ball

- A player having stopped their run, shuffles the feet while holding the ball.

3 seconds

In offence, a player must not remain in his or her team's key for more than three seconds. They may run into the key to receive a pass or draw the defence away from the shooter, but must leave the key within 3 seconds. The player can run into and out of the key any number of times. (Note: in younger age groups, 5 seconds may be allowed.)

3 Seconds Violation

Arm extended to show 3 fingers
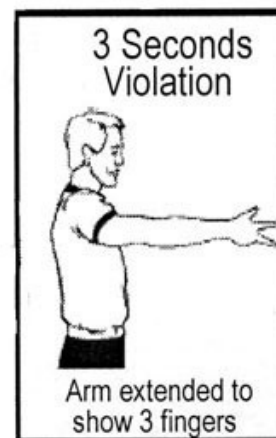
Penalties

The penalty for a violation is the ball being awarded to the opposition team for a throw-in from a place on the side-line or the baseline nearest to where the violation occurred.

The following penalties will apply if the violation is committed during a free-throw:

If the free-throw is successful:

- Violation by the shooter, the score shall not count

- On the first free-throw, violation by any other player, the point shall count and the violation disregarded

- On the last free-throw, violation by the shooting team, the point shall not count and the ball shall be awarded to the opposition team

- On the last free-throw, violation by the non-shooting team, the violation shall be disregarded.

If the free-throw is unsuccessful:

- On the last free-throw, a violation committed by a team-mate of the shooter will be penalised by the ball being awarded to the opposition for a throw-in from the sideline in line with the free-throw line

- A violation committed by an opponent of the shooter will be penalised by a substitute free-throw

- Where the violation is committed by both teams on the last free-throw, a jump-ball situation shall occur. The exception is when the shooter also commits a violation which shall over-ride any other violations and the opposition shall be awarded the ball for a throw in from the sideline.
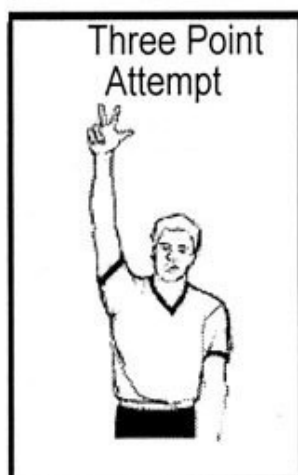
6. Other Referee's Signals

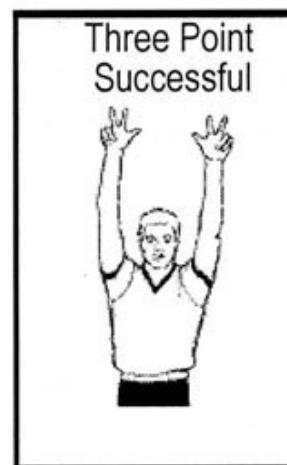### Scoring related: 1, 2 3 point score and 3-point attempt

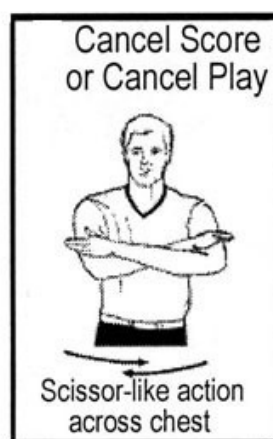Free-throw (one point) successful.

Two point shot from the field successful

Player is attempting a 3-point shot from the field

Player's 3-point attempt from the field successful

The ball has passed through the ring but the score is not counted, usually due to a foul or violation

Clock related: stop for foul, time in

Time In

Chop with hand

To resume play following a time-out

Stop Clock

Open palm

In junior domestic competition if a foul is called in the final 3 minutes of the match the clock will be stopped until play resumes

Administration: subs, timeout

**Substitution**

Cross forearms

The coach has indicated his wish to substitute a player and the referee signals that a substitution is permitted

Beckoning-in

The referee calls the substitution player onto the court

The coach has called for a time-out to speak to his players and the referee signals that the time-out is permitted.

Charged Time-out

Form **T** with index finger
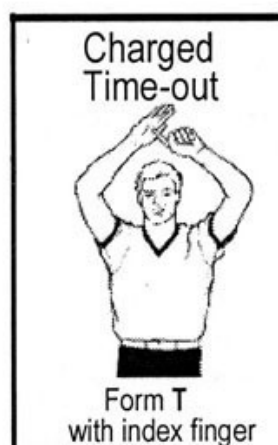
Player Numbers

Player numbers one through five are signaled by the appropriate fingers of one hand.

For example:

Numbers in the teens are signaled by a clenched fist of one hand to signal 10, and the appropriate number of fingers on the other hand.

For example:

Understanding the Language

These are some of the common terms you may hear a coach use during a game, and what they mean:

Assist	The last pass to a player that results in a goal. The player who passed the ball to the shooter is said to have made an assist.
Backcourt	The end of the court containing your opponent's goal
Box-and-one	Four players play a zone defence while the remaining player plays a man-to-man defence on the opposition's most dangerous player
Box out	A coach may call to his players to "box out" or "box out & rebound". To "box out" is to position yourself in front of your opponent to prevent them from getting the rebound
Cutters	Players in offence who are "cutting" through the key. Players must not remain in the key for more than 3 seconds but may cut through to draw the defence away from the shooter or to receive the ball and take a shot.
Double team	When two defenders guard the one opponent
Drive to the basket	When the ball-carrier dribbles quickly up the court to the basket they make a "drive to the basket"
Fast break	When a player or players gain possession of the ball and make a fast run up the court to shoot for goal or pass the all before the opposition catch up
Frontcourt	The half of the court containing your basket; the offensive end
Foul line/free-throw line	The line drawn across the top of the key behind which a player must stand to take free-throws. Also known as the "charity stripe"
Full court press	When defenders start guarding the offence in the backcourt
Half court press	Setting up a defence from the centre line
High post	The area on either side of the key that runs along the free-throw line
Jump shot	When a player begins a lay-up for goal, pulls up short and jumps to shoot over the heads of the defenders
Lay-up	The action of dribbling towards the goal which finishes with a shot for goal
Low post	The low post is the area on either side of the key, between the basket and about halfway up the key
Man-up	Find your player and guard them. Don't leave anyone loose or open

Understanding the Language

Man-to-Man	A form of defence where each player is responsible for guarding an opposition player.
Pivot Foot	The foot that must remain in contact with the floor until the ball-carrier passes or shoots the ball, or begins to dribble
Post-up	To take a position at either the high post or low post
Press	To put pressure on the ball-carrier by playing tight, close defence
Rebound	To take control of the ball when it rebounds off the ring or backboard into the playing area following a missed shot for goal
Screen	Player in offence who positions him/herself between team-mate and defender to give the team-mate the opportunity to take a shot, or in defence takes a position to prevent the opponent moving into position to receive the ball
Steal	To take possession of the ball from the opposition by tapping it out of a dribble without making physical contact with the other player, or intercepting a pass
Sub	Short for "substitution", to bring a player off and replace with another player
Time out	A short break in play of 1 minute, called by either coach in order to direct players, give them a moment's rest or re-focus their attention
Top of the key	The semi-circular area furthest away from the basket
Trap	When two defenders double-team the ball-carrier, trying to "trap" or force the player into committing a violation
Travel	When a player continues to run/walk while holding the ball, or when a player in control of the ball on the floor attempts to roll or stand while holding the ball.
Turn-over	When the offence loses possession of the ball through a bad pass, a foul, or violation
Zone	A defensive strategy where the team position themselves to guard an area, to prevent the opposition team getting to the basket