

6.23 BASKETBALL GLOSSARY

alive:

a ball is alive when it is released by a shooter or thrower, or legally tapped by a jumper during a jump ball; the game clock starts only when the ball becomes alive; compare with live.

alternating-possession rule:

in college, the possession arrow changes direction after each subsequent jump ball situation, alternating which team gets possession for the throw-in.

assist:

the last pass to a teammate that leads directly to a field goal; the scorer must move immediately toward the basket for the passer to be credited with an assist; only 1 assist can be credited per field goal.

backboard:

the rectangular structure, 6' x 3 1/2', to which the basket is attached.

backcourt:

the area from the midcourt line to the end line furthest from the offense's basket.

ball handler:

the player with the ball; usually the point guard at the start of a play.

bank shot:

a shot where the ball is first bounced (or banked) off the backboard at such an angle that it then drops into the basket.

baseline:

see end line.

basket:

attached to the backboard, it consists of a metal rim 18" in diameter suspended 10' from the floor, from which a 15-18" corded net hangs, and through which points are scored; also used to refer to a successful field goal.

beat the defender:

when an offensive player, with or without the ball, is able to get past an opponent who is guarding him.

blind pass:

a pass from a ball handler who does not see his receiver, but is estimating where he should be.

blocked shot:

the successful deflection of a shot by touching part of the ball on its way to the basket, thereby preventing a field goal.

blocking:

the use of a defender's body position to illegally prevent an opponent's advance; the opposite of charging.

boosters:

alumni supporters of college teams.

boxing out:

a player's attempt to position his body between his opponents and the basket to get rebounds and prevent the opponents from doing so.

break:

see fast break.

center circle:

the circular area at midcourt from which jump balls are taken.

charging:

an offensive foul which occurs when an offensive player runs into a defender who has established position.

clear out:

see one-on-one showdown.

Commissioner:

the president of the NBA.

court:

the 94' x 50' area bounded by 2 sidelines and 2 end lines containing a basket at each end, on which a basketball game is played.

court vision:

a player's ability to see everything on the court during play — such as where his teammates and defenders are set up — which enables him to make better choices in passing; the best point guards possess this.

crossover dribble:

when a ball handler dribbles the ball across his body from one hand to the other.

cylinder:

the imaginary area directly above the basket where goaltending or basket interference can occur.

dead ball:

any ball that is not live; occurs after each successful field goal or free-throw attempt, after any official's whistle or if the ball leaves the court; it stops play which is then resumed by a jump ball, throw-in or free-throw.

defense:

the act of preventing the offense from scoring; the team without the ball.

defensive rebound:

a rebound of an opponent's missed shot.

double team:

when two teammates join efforts in guarding a single opponent.

downcourt or down the court:

the direction a team on offense moves, from its backcourt into its frontcourt and towards its own basket.

draft:

the method by which NBA teams annually select college or foreign players to their teams, designed to promote balanced competition in the NBA.

Dream Team:

the name given by the media to the U.S. basketball team that won the gold medal at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics; it was the first time non-amateurs were permitted to represent the country; the members of this team were Charles Barkley, Larry Bird, Clyde Drexler, Patrick Ewing, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, Christian Laettner, Karl Malone, Chris Mullin, Scottie Pippen, David Robinson and John Stockton. In the 1996 Olympics, the U.S. team was called Dream Team II and in 2000, Dream Team III.

dribble or dribbling:

when a player repeatedly pushes, pats, taps or bats the ball toward the floor with one hand to cause the ball to bounce back up to either of his hands; used to advance the ball or keep control of it.

dribble series:

a number of consecutive dribbles which end when a player allows the ball to rest in one or both hands; a player is only permitted one dribble series before he must pass or shoot.

drive to the basket:

to move rapidly toward the basket with the ball.

dunk:

when a player close to the basket jumps and strongly throws the ball down into it; an athletic, creative shot used to intimidate opponents.

elbowing:

it is a violation if a player vigorously or excessively swings his elbows, even if there is no contact; it is a foul if contact is made, and an automatic ejection if that contact is above shoulder level.

end line:

the boundary line behind each basket; also called the baseline.

established position:

when a defensive player has both feet firmly planted on the floor before an offensive player's head and shoulder get past him; the offensive player who runs into such a defender is charging.

fake or feint:

a deceptive move to throw a defender off balance and allow an offensive player to shoot or receive a pass; players use their eyes, head or any other part of the body to trick an opponent.

fast break:

also called the run-and-shoot offense, it begins with a defensive rebound by a player who immediately sends an outlet pass toward midcourt to his waiting teammates; these teammates can sprint to their basket and quickly shoot before enough opponents catch up to stop them.

field goal:

when the ball enters the basket from above during play; worth 2 points, or 3 points if the shooter was standing behind the 3-point line.

Finals, NBA:

the annual championship series of the NBA's post-season.

Final Four:

the 4 regional champions (West, East, Midwest and Southeast) remaining from the 64 college teams that compete in the annual NCAA Tournament; they play one another to determine the national champion.

flagrant foul:

unnecessary or excessive contact against an opponent.

floor:

the area of the court within the end lines and sidelines.

floor violation:

a player's action that violates the rules but does not prevent an opponent's movement or cause him harm; penalized by a change in possession.

forwards:

the 2 players on the court for a team who are usually smaller than the center and bigger than the guards; often a team's highest scorers.

foul:

actions by players which break the rules but are not floor violations; penalized by a change in possession or free-throw opportunities; see personal foul or technical foul.

foul lane:

the painted area 19' x 16' (12' in college) bordered by the end line and the foul line, outside which players must stand during a free-throw; also the area an offensive player cannot spend more than 3-seconds at a time in.

foul line:

the line 15' from the backboard and parallel to the end line from which players shoot free-throws.

foul shot:

see free-throw.

4-point play:

a 3-point shot followed by a successful free-throw.

franchise:

a professional team.

franchise player:

a star player around which a franchise is built.

free agent, restricted:

an NBA player whose contract has expired and who has received a "qualifying offer" from his current club which provides a salary level predetermined by the *collective bargaining agreement*. While this player is free to negotiate an offer from a new team, his current team has a *right of first refusal* to match that offer, thereby obligating him to remain with his current team.

free agent, unrestricted:

a player who has completed his 3rd NBA season (or 4th season, if his current team exercised its "option" to have him play for a 4th year) and is free to negotiate a contract with other NBA teams without his current team having a *right of first refusal*.

free-throw:

an unguarded shot taken from the foul line by a player whose opponent committed a personal or technical foul; it is worth 1 point.

free-throw line:

see foul line.

free-throw line extended:

an imaginary line drawn from the free-throw line to the sideline to determine the location for certain throw-ins.

frontcourt:

the area between the midcourt line and the end line closest to the offense's basket.

full-court press:

when defenders start guarding the offense in the backcourt.

game clock:

shows how much time remains in each of the four 12-minute quarters of an NBA game or two 20-minute halves of a college game.

guards:

the 2 players on each team who are the smallest on the court; they usually handle setting up plays and passing to teammates closer to the basket.

guarding:

the act of following an opponent around the court to prevent him from getting close to the basket, taking an open shot or making easy an pass, while avoiding illegal contact.

half-court or set offense:

when a team takes the time to develop a play in its frontcourt, such as the give-and-go or a screening play; opposite of fast break.

high percentage shot:

a shot that is likely to go in the basket, such as a layup.

high post:

an imaginary area outside either side of the foul lane at the free-throw line extended.

in the paint:

being in the foul lane area which is painted a different color.

inbounds:

the area within the end lines and sidelines of the court; also the act of bringing the ball into this area by means of a throw-in.

incidental contact:

minor contact usually overlooked by officials.

inside shooting:

shots taken by a player near or under the basket.

jump ball:

2 opposing players jump for a ball an official tosses above and between them, to tap it to their teammates and gain possession; used to start the game (tip-off) and all overtime periods, and sometimes to restart play.

keepaway game:

a tactic used by the team that is leading near the end of the game to keep the ball from its opponents to prevent them from scoring while using up time off the game clock; also called freezing.

key or keyhole:

the area at each end of the court consisting of the foul circle, foul lane and free-throw line; named for the shape it had years ago.

layup or layin:

a shot taken after driving to the basket by leaping up under the basket and using one hand to drop the ball directly into the basket (layin) or to bank the ball off the backboard into it (layup).

leading the receiver:

when a passer throws the ball where he thinks a receiver is headed.

live ball:

as soon as a ball is given to a free-throw shooter or a thrower on a throw-in, it is live, but the game clock does not restart until the ball is alive.

loose ball:

a ball that is alive but not in the possession of either team.

low post:

an imaginary area outside either side of the foul lane close to the basket.

lower percentage shot:

a shot that is less likely to go in the basket, such as one thrown by a player who is off balance or outside his shooting range.

man-to-man defense:

the defensive style where each defensive player is responsible for guarding one opponent.

March Madness:

see NCAA Tournament.

match-ups:

any pairing of players on opposing teams who guard each other.

MVP (Most Valuable Player):

an award recognizing the NBA player who contributed most to the regular season or to the Finals.

NBA (National Basketball Association):

a professional league created in 1949 that now has 27 teams in the U.S. and is adding 2 Canadian teams in 1995.

NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association):

a voluntary association of over 1,200 colleges and universities in the U.S. whose role is to establish standards and protect the integrity of amateurism for student-athletes.

NCAA Tournament:

an annual competition between 64 college teams to crown a national champion; also called March Madness because the three-week-long event is held during March; see also Final Four.

NIT (National Invitational Tournament):

the oldest college tournament, in which 32 teams not selected to the NCAA Tournament compete each year.

off the dribble:

a shot taken while driving to the basket.

offense:

the team with possession of the ball.

offensive rebound:

a rebound of a team's own missed shot.

officials:

the crew chief, referee and umpire who control the game, stop and start play, and impose penalties for violations and fouls.

1-and-1 or 1-plus-1:

in college, a free-throw attempt awarded for certain violations that earns the shooter a 2nd attempt only if the first is successful.

open:

when a player is unguarded by a defender.

out of bounds:

the area outside of and including the end lines and sidelines.

outside shooting:

shots taken from the perimeter.

over the limit:

when a team commits 5 or more team fouls per NBA period (4 in each overtime); 8 or more per WNBA half; 7 or more per half in college; this team is also said to be *in the penalty*.

overtime or OT:

the extra period(s) played after a regulation game ends tied.

pass:

when a passer throws the ball to a teammate; used to start plays, move the ball downcourt, keep it away from defenders and get it to a shooter.

passer:

the player who passes the ball to a teammate.

period:

any quarter, half or overtime segment.

perimeter:

the area beyond the foul circle away from the basket, including 3-point line, from which players take long-range shots.

personal foul:

contact between players that may result in injury or provide one team with an unfair advantage; players may not push, hold, trip, hack, elbow, restrain or charge into an opponent; these are also counted as team fouls.

picked off:

refers to a defender who has been successfully prevented from reaching the ball handler by an offensive screen.

pick-up games:

impromptu games played among players who just met.

pivot:

a center; also the foot that must remain touching the floor until a ball handler who has stopped dribbling is ready to pass or shoot.

playmaker:

the point guard who generally sets up plays for his teammates.

point-shaving:

an illegal practice where players intentionally win a game, but by fewer points than the point spread; led to 2 major college scandals (involved 32 of the biggest stars in the 1950s, then 22 colleges in 1961).

point spread:

a device established by bookmakers to equalize 2 teams for betting purposes; e.g., if a team is considered to be 4 points better than another, the spread is 4 points; to win a bet on the favorite, that team would need to win by more than the spread (in this case, by more than 4 points); the margin of victory can be more important than whether a team wins or loses.

possession:

to be holding or in control of the ball.

possession arrow:

in college, used to determine which team's turn it is to inbounds the ball to begin a period or in a jump ball situation.

post position:

the position of a player standing in the low post or high post.

quadruple double:

a triple double with double-digits scored in 4 categories.

rebound:

when a player grabs a ball that is coming off the rim or backboard after a shot attempt; see offensive rebound and defensive rebound.

receiver:

the player who receives a *pass* from the ball handler.

regulation game:

four 12-minute quarters in the NBA or two 20-minute halves in college; a game that ends without overtime periods.

release:

the moment that the ball leaves a shooter's hands.

rookie:

a player in his first NBA season.

roster:

the list of players on a team.

run:

occurs when one team scores several field goals in quick succession while its opponents score few or none.

salary cap:

an annual dollar limit that a single team may pay all its players.

scoring opportunity:

when a player gets open for a shot that is likely to score.

screen or screener:

the offensive player who stands between a teammate and a defender to give his teammate the chance to take an open shot.

shot clock:

a clock that limits the time a team with the ball has to shoot it; 24 seconds in the NBA; in college, 35 seconds for men, 30 seconds for women.

shooter:

a player who takes a shot at the basket.

shooter's roll:

the ability to get even an inaccurate shot to bounce lightly off the rim and into the basket

shooting range:

the distance from which a player is likely to make his shots.

sidelines:

2 boundary lines that run the length of the court.

sixth man:

the best substitute on a team; usually the first player to come off the bench to replace a starter.

slam dunk:

see dunk.

squaring up:

when a player's shoulders are facing the basket as he releases the ball for a shot; considered good shooting position.

starting lineup:

the 5 starters who begin a game; usually a team's best players.

substitute:

a player who comes into the game to replace a player on the court.

swing man:

a player who can play both the guard and forward positions.

team fouls:

each personal foul committed by a player is also counted against his team; when a team goes over the limit, its opponent is awarded free-throw opportunities.

technical fouls or Ts:

procedural violations and misconduct that officials believe are detrimental to the game; penalized by a single free-throw opportunity to the non-offending team (2 free-throws and possession in college).

3-on-3:

a game played with only 3 players on the court for each team.

3-point play:

a 2-point field goal followed by a successful free-throw.

3-point shot:

a field goal worth 3 points because the shooter had both feet on the floor behind the 3-point line when he released the ball; also counts if one foot is behind the line while the other is in the air.

throw-in:

the method by which a team with possession inbounds the ball.

timeout:

when play is temporarily suspended by an official or at the request of a team to respond to an injured player or discuss strategy; there are full timeouts (100 or 60 seconds in NBA, 120 seconds in WNBA, 75 or 60 seconds in college) and 20-second timeouts (30 seconds in college).

tip-off:

the initial jump ball that starts the game.

transition:

the shift from offense to defense.

traveling:

a floor violation when the ball handler takes too many steps without dribbling; also called walking.

triple double:

when a player scores double-digits in 3 categories during one game (points, assists and rebounds are most common, but it can also be blocks or steals); a sign of great versatility.

turnover:

when the offense loses possession through its own fault by passing the ball out of bounds or committing a floor violation.

upset:

when a higher-seeded (better) team loses to a lower-seeded (inferior) one.

violation:

see floor violation.

weaksides:

the side of the court away from the ball.

zone defense:

a defense where each defender is responsible for an area of the court and must guard any player who enters that area; compare with man-to-man defense.