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Basketball

Basketball began with 13 fundamental rules that have been added to and amended greatly over the years since the game's beginnings in 1891. Invented by James Naismith, basketball first featured nine players per team because Naismith had 18 students in his YMCA Training School. In a few years that number was changed to five per side, a metal ring with a net replaced the original peach baskets that players shot at, and running with the ball was eliminated.

Basketball first became an Olympic sport in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It is a widely enjoyed participant sport, with leagues for all ages and abilities and more than 30 million people who play the sport, from recreation levels on up, in the United States.

The rules in this chapter are general basketball rules, with specific references at times to high school, college, and professional play. How the game is modified at the international level and the youth level is noted toward the end of the chapter.

Objective: To win by scoring more points than the other team.

Scoring: One point per successful free throw; two points per two-point field goal; three points per three-point field goal.

Number of Players: Five per team.

Length of Game: 32 minutes (high school), 40 minutes (college), or 48 minutes (professional).

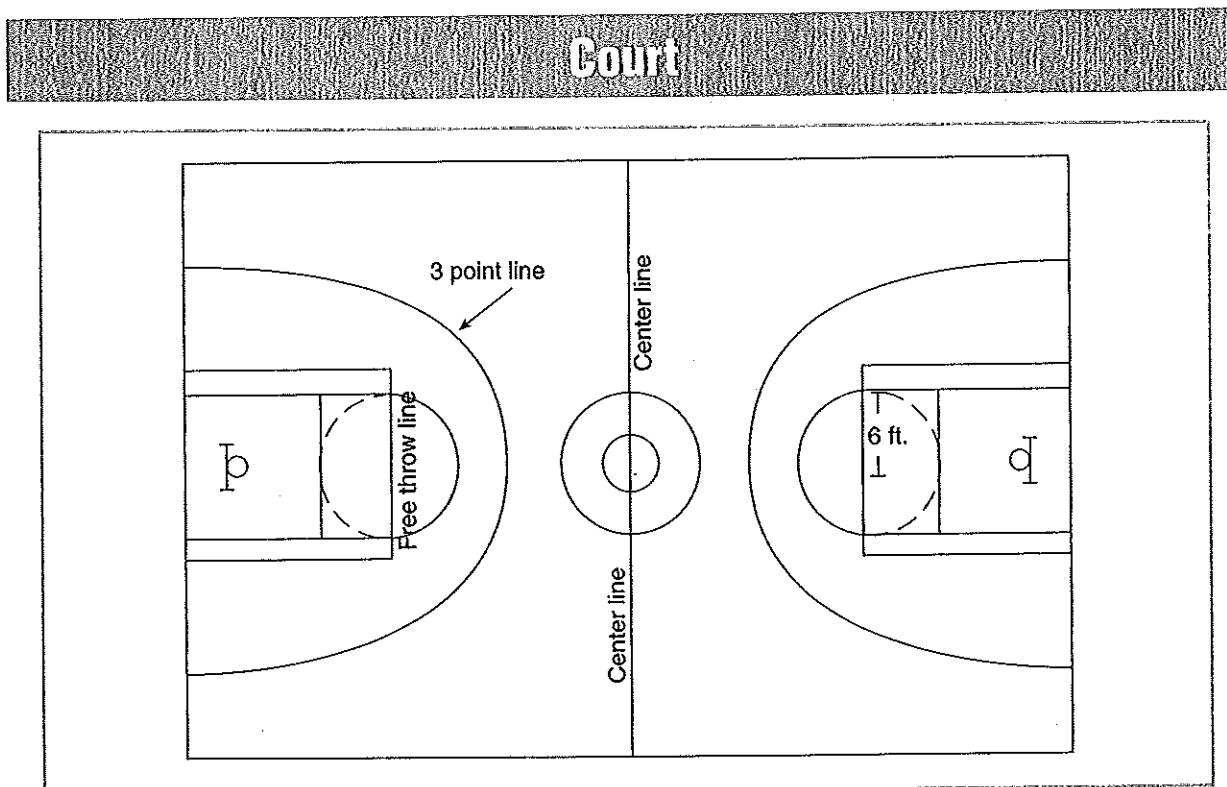
Overview: A team advances the ball by dribbling and passing, and attempts to score. A shot that does not go into the basket is usually rebounded by a player. If that player is on offense, she can either shoot or set up another scoring opportunity. If the player who rebounds is on defense, she and her team advance the ball down court and try to set up their own scoring opportunity. After a made basket, the player who throws the ball in may run the length of the baseline with the ball. On any inbounds play other than a made basket, the player who throws the ball in must establish, and may not move, a pivot foot before releasing the ball. The player must throw the ball in within five seconds, or it is turned over to the other team.

COURT

Court sizes vary according to the level of play. In high school, the court is 50 feet by 84 feet; in college and the National Basketball Association (NBA), it is 50 feet by 94 feet. The *free-throw line* at all three levels is 15 feet from the basket. The *free-throw lane*, which borders the free-throw line, is 12 feet wide in high school and college and 16 feet wide in the NBA. This lane has a semicircle with a six-foot radius from the center of the free-throw line.

At least three feet of unobstructed space should lie beyond the *sidelines* and *end lines* (or *baselines*) that mark the boundaries of the court. The court is split in half by a *center line*, around which are two *center circles*.

Two *coaching boxes* are behind the sidelines, 28 feet long and extending toward center court from each end line. See figure 6.1 for standard court attributes.



► Figure 6.1 Dimensions for courts vary according to the level of play, but many of the same features are included on all courts.

Adapted from White 1990.

TERMS

These terms are not described elsewhere in this chapter.

To **dribble** is to bounce the ball on the floor, using one hand at a time. (Dribbling with both hands at once is "double dribbling," a violation that results in a turnover.) Players may move on the court or be stationary when they dribble. The dribble ends when the ball is caught by the dribbler, who cannot dribble again until another player touches the ball.

A team's **frontcourt** is that half of the court that includes its basket. The **backcourt** is the half of the court that includes the other team's basket. No part of the end line or the center line is considered part of the frontcourt.

A **held ball** occurs when each of two players from opposite teams has a firm grasp on the ball or when an opposing player places a hand on the ball to prevent an airborne player from attempting a pass or shot. The team with the possession indicator in its favor is awarded the ball out of bounds.

Incidental contact occurs when opponents are in equally favorable positions to perform normal defensive or offensive movements, and contact (even severe contact) is made, such as in going for a loose ball. No foul is called. Similarly, a blind screen may be ruled incidental contact, regardless of the violence of the collision.

A **pass** is the movement of the ball by a player who throws, bats, or rolls the ball to another player.

A **pivot** occurs when a player holding the ball keeps one foot at a point of contact with the floor while stepping in any direction. Picking up the pivot foot before dribbling or getting rid of the ball is a traveling violation.

A **rebound** occurs when a player controls possession of a shot missed by either a teammate (offensive rebound) or an opponent (defensive rebound).

A **screen** occurs when an offensive player reaches a desired position first, causing a de-

fensive player to go around him and delaying the progress of the defender. The offensive player must have feet planted and remain stationary.

Substitutes are alternative players who may enter a game by reporting to the scorer and being beckoned by an official. Substitutes may enter during a dead ball and when time is out (except in college, where a substitute may enter after a successful field goal in the last minute of a game and in overtime). A substitute may not enter a game for a player shooting a free throw unless that player is injured.

Verticality applies to ascertaining who has legal position. A defender who has already established position and who raises her hands and arms within her vertical plane is in legal position and shouldn't be charged with a foul if an offensive player causes contact. The defender can leave her feet within this plane, but cannot "belly up," or use the lower part of the body to contact the offensive player outside the vertical plane.

PLAYERS

A team consists of five players. Typically, but not always, a team will play two guards (a point guard, considered the team's playmaker, and an off guard or shooting guard), a small forward, a power forward, and a center or post player. These are loosely defined roles; players may be defined differently in different systems. Players are sometimes referred to by position numbers (which have nothing to do with their uniform numbers):

1. Point guard
2. Off guard or shooting guard
3. Small forward
4. Power forward
5. Center or post

PLAY

Game length and other time factors differ according to the level of play; see table 6.1. The shot clock governs the time a team is

Table 6.1 Game Length and Time Factors

Level	Length	Overtime	Shot clock	Timeouts
High school	Four 8-min quarters	3 min	None	Four per game
College	Two 20-min halves	5 min	30 sec women; 35 sec men	Four per regulation (three per televised game); one per overtime
Professional	Four 12-min quarters	5 min	24 sec	Seven per regulation plus one 20-sec timeout per half; three per overtime
International	Two 20-min halves	5 min	30 sec	Two per half

allowed to be on offense before attempting a shot. If the ball does not leave the shooter's hand before the clock expires, or if the shot does not touch the rim or go into the basket, a shot clock violation is called and the ball is given to the other team. The clock is stopped at the end of each period and when an official blows a whistle for

- a violation,
- a foul,
- a held or jump ball,
- a ball that goes out of bounds,
- suspension of play because of an injury to a player,
- suspension of play for any other reason,
- when the shot clock sounds (if the shot is in the air when the clock sounds and the shot hits the rim, the clock is ignored and play continues without time stopping), and
- timeouts.

Defense

When a defender is guarding a player who has the ball, the maximum distance between the two players is 6 feet. (No minimum distance is required.) To establish legal position, the defender must have both feet on the floor, with

the torso facing the opponent. If the opponent is airborne, the defender must have established a legal position before the other player left the floor and must maintain that position.

When a defender is guarding a player who does not have the ball, the defender must give the opponent time and up to two steps to avoid contact. If the opponent is airborne, the defender must have established a legal position before the other player left the floor and must maintain that position.

Examples of legal use of hands and arms include when a defender vertically extends hands and arms, reaches to block or slap the ball away, or hits the hand of the opponent when the ball is in contact with the opponent's hands. If the extension is not vertical and any contact hinders the offensive player, the movement is not legal. Defenders may use their hands to protect their faces or bodies in absorbing a charge from an opponent, but they can't use their hands to push the offensive player away. Defenders cannot use any part of their bodies to force their way through screens or to hold a screener and then push that player away.

In professional basketball a team cannot play a *zone defense*, in which each defender is assigned a certain portion of the court, rather than an individual player. In college and high school, zone defenses are allowed, as are *man-*

to-man defenses, in which each player defends a specific opponent.

Fouls

A foul occurs when a player or coach breaks a rule in any of a variety of ways. A player is disqualified and removed from a game after being assessed five fouls (high school and college) or six fouls (professional). Specific fouls include these:

- **Away from the ball** is a foul committed by a player in a play not involving the player with the ball.
- **Blocking** is illegal contact by a defender, impeding the progress of an offensive player.
- **Charging** is illegal contact by an offensive player by pushing or moving into the defender's torso.
- **Delay of game** is called when a player prevents the ball from being promptly put into play, such as after a made basket or in batting the ball away from an opponent before the player can throw the ball inbounds.
- A **double personal** occurs when two opposing players commit personal fouls at about the same time. No free throws are awarded; in professional ball, the team in possession of the ball at the time of the fouls retains possession; if neither team was in possession, a jump ball is used to put the ball into play. In college, the alternating-possession arrow determines the team that gets possession.
- A **double technical** is called when two opposing players commit technical fouls at about the same time. In college, each team receives two free throws, and the alternating-possession arrow determines which team gets possession. In professional ball, this penalty is handled the same way as a double personal foul.
- In professional ball, two free-throw attempts are awarded for an **elbow foul**. If the contact is made above shoulder level, the player throwing the elbow may be ejected. In college and in high school play, excessive swinging of elbows—even without making contact—may result in a foul.

- A team calling a timeout when it has no timeouts left is assessed a technical foul for **excessive timeout**. The timeout is granted, but two free throws and the ball out of bounds are awarded to the opposing team.

- A defender cannot **face guard**—that is, place a hand in the face or eyes of the opponent she is guarding from the rear if the opponent does not have the ball. Such a play results in a technical foul.

- In the NBA, **fighting** results in technical fouls assessed against those involved and automatic ejection. No free throws are awarded.

- In both college and the pros, a **flagrant foul** results in two free throws awarded to the offended team and possession of the ball. Any player committing a flagrant foul is automatically ejected in college; a professional player may be ejected at the discretion of the official.

- Defenders cannot **hand check**—that is, use their hands to check the progress of offensive players when those players are in front of them.

- If either an offensive or a defensive player **hangs on the rim**, a technical foul is assessed. The only exception is if a player hangs on the rim to protect himself or other players from injury.

- In college, an **intentional foul** occurs when a player commits a personal foul without attempting to directly play the opposing player or the ball. It does not depend on the severity of the foul; it depends on whether the official judges the foul to be intentional. Holding or pushing a player in full view of an official, in order to stop play or shoving a player in the back as she is attempting a lay-up that cannot be defended are examples of intentional fouls. The penalty for such fouls is two free throws and the ball out of bounds.

- Any player on offense can commit an **offensive foul**. If a defender has established legal position in a dribbler's path, the dribbler cannot make contact with the opponent. A screener cannot move into an opponent after setting a legal screen. A shooter cannot charge

into a defender who has established legal position and who maintains that position.

- The term **personal foul** covers a wide variety of contact fouls that players can commit, including holding, pushing, charging, tripping, and illegally interfering with a player's progress.

- A **player-control** foul is another term for charging—when the dribbler commits an offensive foul by charging into a defender who has established legal position.

- In professional ball, a **punching foul** results in one free throw being awarded, and the ball out of bounds. The player throwing the punch—whether it connects or not—is automatically ejected. (In college this foul would be handled the same as a flagrant foul.)

- A **technical foul** is a foul committed by anyone—players on the court or bench, coaches, other team officials—that does not involve contact with the opponent while the ball is alive. Examples of technical fouls include use of profanity, delay of game, excessive timeouts, unsporting conduct, and hanging on the rim (except to prevent injury). Two free throws and the ball are awarded the offended team when a player commits a technical foul. If a coach, substitute, or other team personnel commits a technical foul, two free throws are awarded (and in college, the offended team would retain possession of the ball). A player who commits two technical fouls is removed from the game. A coach who commits two technical fouls is removed from the competition area.

- **Throwing the ball**, or any object, at an official is a technical foul and cause for possible ejection.

- **Unsportsmanlike conduct** is a technical foul resulting from any of numerous unsporting actions, including disrespectfully addressing an official, trying to influence an official's decision, arguing with an official, taunting an opponent, inciting undesirable crowd reactions, throwing items on the court, and so on. The penalty is two free throws and the ball out to the opposing team.

SCORING

When the ball enters the basket from above and remains in or passes through the net, a goal is scored. If that goal is scored with at least one of the shooter's feet on or inside the three-point line, a *two-point field goal* is scored. If neither of the shooter's feet is on or inside the three-point line, a *three-point field goal* is scored. After releasing the ball, the shooter may touch the three-point line or land inside the line and still be awarded three points on a successful shot. If a goal is mistakenly scored in the opponent's basket by a defender, two points are awarded to the nearest offensive player.

A successful *free-throw* attempt counts as one point. If the free throw is not made but the rebound is tapped in, the player who tapped it in is awarded two points. Free throws must be attempted within 10 seconds.

Defensive players and offensive players alternate positions along the free-throw lane, with the defensive team getting the positions closest to the basket. The shooter must remain behind the free-throw line until the ball touches the basket. The players in the lane must remain in their positions on the free-throw lane until the ball leaves the shooter's hands.

A player who is fouled while attempting a two-point field goal gets two free throws; a player gets three free throws if fouled during a three-point field goal attempt. One free throw is awarded a player who is fouled while making a field goal. After a certain number of fouls are committed in a quarter or a half, a team may be in the *bonus* situation, where the next player fouled (not in the act of shooting or as the result of taking a charge from an offensive player) receives a chance to make a free throw. If the first free throw is successful, that player receives a bonus of one more free-throw attempt. Bonus free throws are awarded as follows:

- **High school:** The one-and-one bonus is awarded on the 7th, 8th, and 9th team fouls of each half. Beginning with the 10th team foul of each half, the team

fouled gets two free throws, regardless of the outcome of the first free throw.

- **College:** The one-and-one bonus is awarded beginning with the 10th foul in a half.
- **Professional:** Two free throws are granted for each foul after four fouls in a quarter (or three in overtime).

The penalty for most technical fouls is two free throws and the ball out of bounds to the team attempting the free throws. Any player on the floor may be named by the coach to attempt free throws awarded from a technical foul.

VIOLATIONS

Violations occur when players break the rules in a way that does not involve contact. Violations include the following:

- When a team is in possession of the ball in its frontcourt and the ball goes into the backcourt (last touched by an offensive player), an offensive player cannot touch the ball until a defensive player does. If an offensive player does touch the ball first, a **backcourt violation** is called, and the ball automatically goes to the defensive team. If, however, the ball was deflected into the backcourt by a defender, then an offensive player may retrieve the ball in the backcourt.

- **Basket interference and goaltending** are called when a player touches the ball or the basket when the ball is on or within the basket. A player cannot touch the ball when it is in the cylinder (the basket extended upward) or touch the ball if it is in flight downward toward the basket and has a possibility of entering the basket. Defensive basket interference and goaltending result in two points for the offense; offensive basket interference results in no points and the ball out of bounds to the defense.

- **Double dribble** is called when a player stops her dribble and then resumes it. A player can resume a dribble, however, if the ball has

been batted out of her hands or if a pass or fumble has been touched by another player.

- A player cannot intentionally miss a **free throw**. The penalty is the awarding of the ball out of bounds to the opposing team.

- A player cannot intentionally **kick** the ball or **strike** it with his fist. Doing so results in the ball being given out of bounds to the other team.

- Any ball that goes **out of bounds** is awarded to the team opposing the player who last touched the ball.

- Any shot that does not beat the **shot clock** results in the ball being turned over to the other team. If the ball is released before the clock expires and hits the rim after the buzzer goes off, no violation has occurred.

- **Traveling** is called when a player advances with the ball without dribbling it.

- A player making a **throw-in** (throwing the ball inbounds) may not carry the ball onto the court; hold the ball longer than five seconds; touch the ball on the court before another player has touched it; leave the designated throw-in spot (except after a made basket); or step over the boundary line while still touching the ball.

EQUIPMENT

The ball is round, with a circumference of 29.25 to 30 inches for men and 28.5 to 29 inches for women. A men's ball weighs 20 to 22 ounces; a women's ball weighs 18 to 20 ounces. The ball has a leather cover with eight panels joined by rubber ribs. (Balls with synthetic covering may be used if both teams agree.)

The backboard, which supports the basket, can be either 6 feet by 4 feet or 6 feet by 3.5 feet for college and high school play; professional basketball uses only the smaller size. In high school play, a fan-shaped backboard may be used. A 24- by 18-inch rectangle is centered on the backboard, behind and above the basket. The bottom and sides of the backboard are padded, as is the backboard support.

The basket is an orange metal ring, 18 inches in inside diameter. A white cord net, 15 to 18 inches in length, hangs from the basket. The upper edge of the basket is 10 feet above and parallel to the floor. The nearest point of the basket is 6 inches from the backboard.

Other equipment includes

- a scoreboard,
- a game clock, and
- a possession indicator (which indicates which team will get possession of the ball in the next held ball or double-foul situation).

OFFICIALS

A referee and one or two umpires, depending on the level of play, call fouls and violations and make all on-court calls. A scorekeeper operates the scoreboard and records the play; a timekeeper operates the game clock; and a shot clock operator is in charge of the shot clock.

For common officials' signals, see figure 6.2.

MODIFICATIONS

Because basketball is so widely popular and is played by young and old, skilled and unskilled, many organizations adapt the rules to fit their members better. Two major groups who have rule variations are youth and international basketball.

Youth Basketball

Variations differ from organization to organization; following is an overview of the types of rules that are adapted for youths.

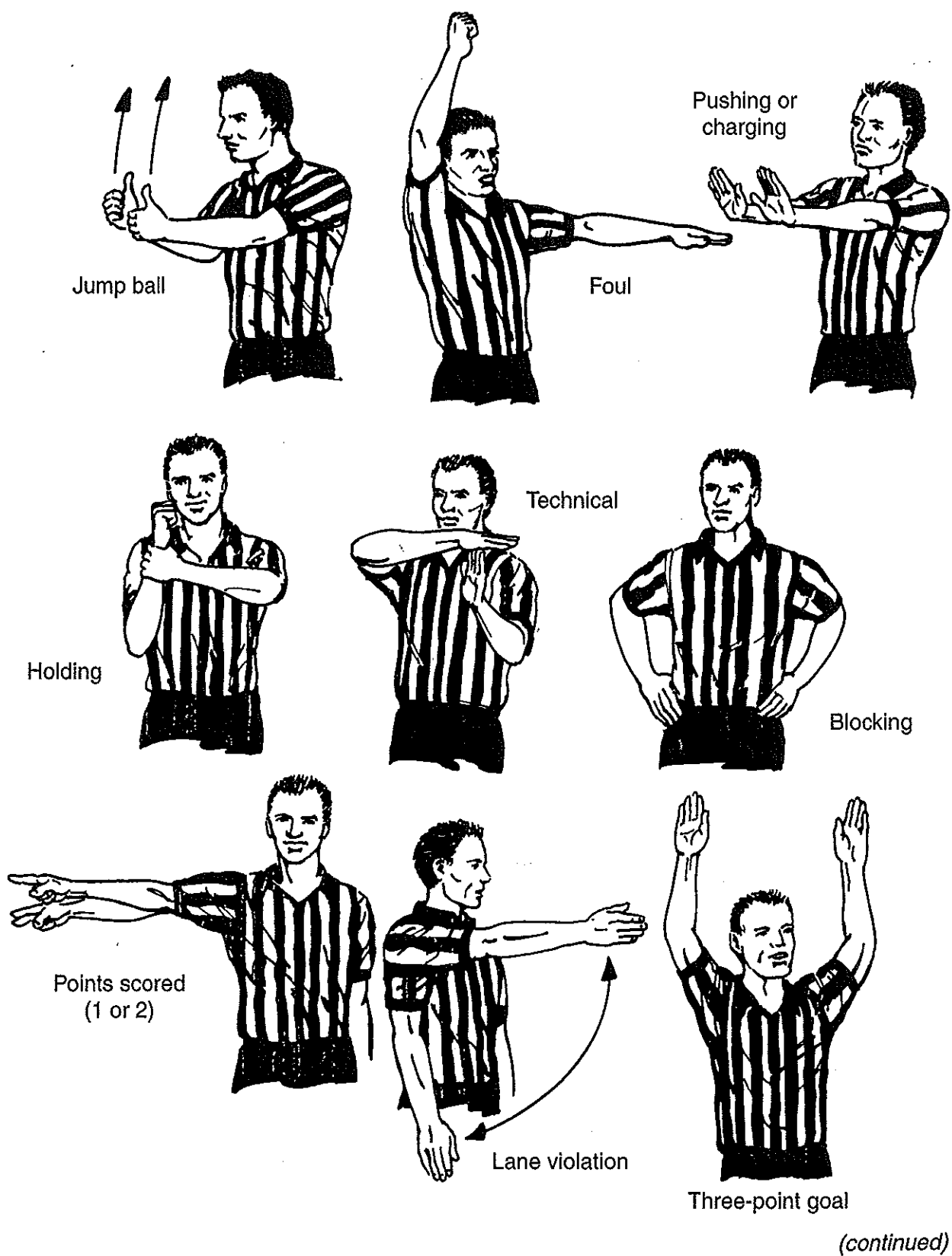
- The size of the ball and the court is generally smaller.
- The basket height is lowered to give youths a reasonable chance to score and to help them learn proper shooting technique.

- The free-throw line is closer to the basket. The younger the players, the closer the line (compared to the standard 15-foot free-throw line).
- The length of the game is shorter and a shot clock is often not used for the younger levels.
- Officials are not as strict in calling all violations and fouls, and they often help instruct the players in terms of what constitutes violations and fouls. Violations that are typically not called strictly by the book, especially for younger levels, include traveling, double dribble, and backcourt violations.

International Rules

The Fédération Internationale de Basketball Amateur (FIBA) regulates international play for Olympic and other international competitions. Some of the major differences between FIBA rules and the rules presented earlier in this chapter include the following:

- The size of the court is 28 meters long by 15 meters wide. The free-throw lane is 3.6 meters wide at the free-throw line, widening to 6 meters at the baseline. The 3-point arc is a semicircle that is 6.25 meters from the basket at all points.
- Game length is four 10-minute periods with, if necessary, one or more 5-minute overtimes.
- The shot clock is 24 seconds.
- All held balls result in jump balls.
- A player fouls out after committing five fouls.
- A team is in the bonus foul situation when it has committed four team fouls in a period.
- A maximum of five players—three defensive and two offensive—may occupy the free-throw lane places during a free throw.



► Figure 6.2 Common officials' signals for basketball.



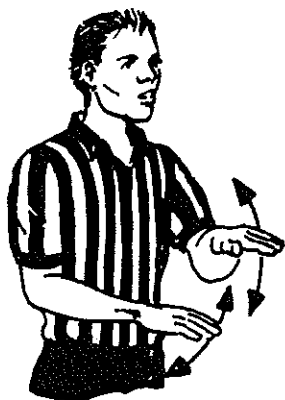
Three-point field goal attempt



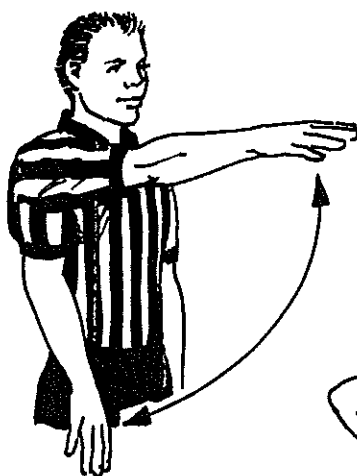
Intentional foul



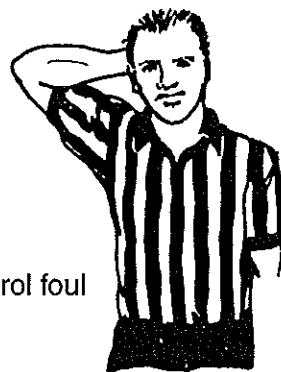
Traveling



Illegal dribble



Three-second violation



Player control foul

▶ Figure 6.2 (continued)