

NFHS and USA Basketball Rules Comparison

This chart compares major differences between the National Federation of State High School Association basketball rules and USA Basketball tournament rules.

	NFHS	USA Basketball
Act of Shooting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered in the act of shooting until one (1) foot returns to floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered in the act of shooting until both feet return to floor If fouled and able to release the ball, the ball must be released towards the basket for the foul to be considered in the act of shooting
Airborne Shooter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player who has released the ball or tapped the ball on a try and not returned to the floor is considered in the act of shooting Foul committed by airborne shooter is a player control foul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No airborne shooter rule as such Foul committed by airborne shooter is not considered a player control foul
Adding Player to Scoresheet After Game Begins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed with technical foul charged to team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not permitted
Alternating Possession Arrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set to the team that doesn't first gain control of the ball. Includes on a throw-in (i.e. after a technical foul to start game or ball tapped out-of-bounds to one team without on-court possession after tap), set to the opponents when ball handed to player throwing in the ball. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set to the team that does not gain control of the first live ball on the playing court after the jump ball
Backcourt, Frontcourt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-dribbler is in the frontcourt when he / she is no longer touching the backcourt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-dribbler is in the frontcourt when both feet are completely touching frontcourt
Backcourt Count	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tem (10) seconds Starts on player control on inbound New count after any play stoppage New count begins when the ball achieves backcourt status (touches the court or player) if the ball legally returns to backcourt without loss of team control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten (10) second backcourt Starts on player touching ball on inbound New count on defensive foul Count resumes with time remaining on any out-of-bounds, held ball, cancellation of equal penalties, double foul and offensive injury New count begins when the offensive player gains control of ball if the ball legally returns to back court without loss of control
Basket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team basket is the one a team is trying to score into 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team basket is the one a team is defending
Basket Interference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neither team may touch ball within imaginary cylinder Causing backboard to vibrate to prevent goal is a technical foul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both teams may touch the ball after it touches the rim Causing backboard to vibrate to prevent goal is a violation
Bench Area, Coaching Box, Time-out Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 feet from end line to a maximum 14 feet from end line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use existing court lines No loss of coaching box (no requirement to sit) after a technical foul

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of coaching box privileges after a direct or indirect technical foul to coach – must sit • Location of each team’s bench is designated by game management • Time-out area designated by an imaginary rectangle formed by sideline including bench, end line and imaginary line extended from nearest free throw lane line meeting an imaginary line extended from coaching box line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home team is located to the left of the scorer’s table (when facing court table side) unless both teams agree to change benches and interchange baskets No defined ‘team bench area’, team’s time-outs are taken in the team bench area
Blocked Shot or Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player returning to floor without losing control of ball is a held ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player returning to floor without losing control of ball is a travel (with the below exception) • Player returning to floor without losing control of ball with opponent’s hand(s) firmly on ball is a held ball
Bleeding, Injured Player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May remain in game if has not been substituted and a time-out is taken by PLAYER’S team and player is ready to play at end of time-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May remain in game if has not been substituted and a time-out is taken by EITHER team and player is ready to play at end of time-out
Blood on Uniform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform must be changed if it has excessive blood on it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item with blood must be removed/changed
Bonus, Penalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonus 1+1 on 7th team foul and two (2) free throws on 10th team foul of each half 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (2) free throw penalty on 5th team foul each period
Cancelled Free Throw, Field Goal or Dead Ball Enters Basket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throw-in on end line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throw-in free throw line extended (includes scenario where, for example, offensive player is fouled in restricted area prior to act of shooting but then continues and puts the ball into the basket).
Charge Semi-Circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airborne offensive player penetrating the semi-circle line passing or attempting try for goal who contacts a defender within or in contact with semi-circle area can’t be ruled a charge
Coach Replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No rule in respect to coaching duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should a coach be removed or exit a contest, a parent or adult supervisor must be present on the bench for the game to continue (can come from stands)
Closely Guarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count applied <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Only in frontcourt ○ Dribbling or holding the ball ○ Opponent within six (6) feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count applied <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Backcourt and frontcourt ○ Only while the ball is held ○ Opponent within one (1) meter playing active defense
Coach(es) Standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only the head coach may stand to coach • Loss of coaching box privileges after a direct or indirect technical foul to coach – must sit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either the head coach or assistant coaches can stand to coach • Only one coach may stand at a time • Only the head coach can address the officials

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No loss of coaching box privileges (no requirement to sit) after a direct “C” or bench “B” technical foul to coach
Concussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove player from game who exhibits signs, symptoms or behavior consistent with concussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately remove player from game who exhibits signs, symptoms or behavior consistent with concussion
Correctable Errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free Throws shot at wrong basket – cancel activity and re-shoot Free Throws shot by wrong player – cancel activity and re-shoot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free Throws shot at wrong basket are not a correctable error– count FT’s and resume play in correct direction at correct point Free Throws shot by wrong player – cancel Free Throws and award ball to opponent at Free Throw line extended The error is to be ignored if failure to award merited free throws and team scores
Default	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game can continue with one (1) player if officials believe that team can win 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game is defaulted if a team has fewer than two (2) players ready to play on the court
Delay of Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific resumption of play procedure for team not making thrower available for a free throw or a throw-in following a time-out or intermission. 2nd offense is a technical foul Warning for delays for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throw-in plane violations Huddle by either team and contact with free thrower Interfering with ball after a field goal Delay for team ready to play after a time-out Once one (1) warning has been issued for any of the above, any subsequent infraction is a technical foul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official can put the ball on the floor and start a count if a player refuses to take the ball/is delaying the game on any free throw and/or throw-in Warning or technical foul for preventing a throw-in from being taken promptly/interfering with a throw-in Warning or technical for deliberately touching ball after a goal or successful free throw No rule for huddling or contacting free thrower during free throws If a team is delaying coming out of a time-out on 1st offense <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warning if return to court after being re-beckoned Charging additional time-out if they do not return If no time-outs left a technical foul is charged 2nd offense results in a technical foul
Double Foul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point of Interruption – throw-in at spot closest to where ball was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point of Infraction – throw-in at spot closest to the foul
Disqualified Player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 seconds to replace Warning horn at five (5) seconds (15 seconds before the 20 seconds ends) Team may not huddle Definition includes player who has committed five (5) fouls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be replaced within 30 seconds No warning horn Team may huddle Player who has committed five (5) fouls is an excluded player
Dribbling Out-of-bounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dribbler is considered in player control of the ball and if steps out-of-bounds while dribbling it is a violation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No violation if dribbler steps out-of-bounds while dribbling but does not contact the ball while out-of bounds and

		has in-bounds status when next contacts the ball
Dunking in Warm-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not permitted – technical foul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permitted (Note: though dunking is legal, hanging on the rim is not)
End of Game, Official's Jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ends when the crew of officials leave the visual confines of the court Can assess fouls while still in the visual confines of the court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ends when referee signs the score sheet No assessment of fouls after time expires, report any activity/incidents
Extra Period (Overtime)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four (4) minutes Start with jump ball One (1) additional time-out per period and all unused time-outs from game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four (4) minutes Start with alternate possession Only one (1) time-out each period
Excessively Swinging Elbows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without contact – violation With contact – may be common (team control), intentional or flagrant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without contact - technical foul With contact – may be personal (team control), unsportsmanlike or disqualifying
Falling to Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Illegal for player in control of ball to fall to floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal for player in control of the ball to fall to floor
Fighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head coach only may assist in restoring order (no longer required to be beckoned by official) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head coach or assistant coach may assist in restoring order
Free Throws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum of six (6) players (2 offensive) in lane spaces Bottom two (2) spaces must be occupied by defense – other open spots may be taken by opponent Violation on offense enforced immediately. Delayed violation against defense – ignore if free throw successful. Double violation involving shooter and opponent – alternate possession arrow Ten (10) seconds to release ball It's a violation for anyone in lane spaces or shooter to fake to cause opponent(s) to violate Free throw doesn't end if hits rim and still has a chance to go in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum of five (5) players (2 offensive) in lane spaces Spaces are exclusive to teams but don't have to be occupied Bottom two (2) spaces must be occupied by defense – other open spots may be taken by opponent Violation by either team (except shooter) ignored if free throw is successful Double violation involving shooter and opponent – shooter violation penalized Five (5) seconds to release ball Players on lane can enter on release; shooter and players behind arc can't enter until ball hits rim Only shooter can't fake Free throw ends when ball touches the rim
Game Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four (4) quarters of eight (8) minutes each 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four (4) periods of eight (8) minutes Time Between Periods: 1-minute
Goaltending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ball touched in downward flight, above ring level with chance of entering the basket whether it has touched the backboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ball touched in downward flight, above ring with chance of entering the basket or a ball touched above level of ring after it has touched the backboard
Held Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two (2) players in-bounds both hands on ball trying to get possession and one player steps out-of-bounds - player stepping out-of-bounds has caused ball to go out-of-bounds and ball awarded to opponents Two (2) opponents both hands on ball trying to get possession in frontcourt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two (2) opponents in-bounds one or both hands firmly on the ball trying to get possession and one player steps out-of-bounds – held ball situation and ball awarded based on alternate possession arrow Two (2) opponents in frontcourt one or both hands firmly on ball trying to get

	and player of team in control steps on division line or into backcourt – violation and ball awarded to opponents	possession and player of team in control steps on division line or into backcourt - held ball situation and ball awarded according to alternate possession arrow
Intentional Foul (NFHS) /Unsportsmanlike Foul (FIBA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If on an attempt for goal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basket not scored: two (2) or three (3) shots and possession at spot of foul ○ Basket scored: count basket and two (2) free throws and possession at spot of foul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If on an attempt for goal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basket not scored: two (2) or three (3) shots and possession at center line ○ Basket scored: One (1) free throw and possession at center line • Foul by the defense on throw-in during last two (2) minutes is unsportsmanlike if ball still in hands of player throwing in or at their disposal • Foul from behind or laterally on player with a clear-path to stop a fast break is unsportsmanlike
Instant Replay System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Instant Replay System
Jump Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To start game and all overtime periods. Alternate possession for rest of game • Players may NOT move onto or around the circle until the ball leaves the official's hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To start game only. Alternate possession for rest of game including extra periods. • Players may move onto or around circle prior to toss
Last Second Shot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.4 seconds or more to catch and shoot • 0.3 or less – tap or directly dunk only • Only shoot foul shot(s) if fouled simultaneously with signal to end game if may have effect on final score 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.3 seconds or more to catch and shoot • 0.2 or 0.1 – tap or directly dunk only • Shoot free throws if fouled simultaneously with signal to end game while shooting
Out-of-bounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ball is considered out-of-bounds when it passes over a rectangular backboard • Two (2) players in bounds both hands on ball trying to get possession and one player steps out-of-bounds. Player stepping out-of-bounds has caused ball to go out-of-bounds and ball awarded to opponents • Violation for a player to leave the court for an unauthorized reason 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal for the ball to pass over the backboard in either direction • Two (2) opponents in bounds both hands on ball trying to get possession and one player steps out-of-bounds. Held ball situation and ball awarded based on alternate possession arrow
Personal Foul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact during a live ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact by a player against an opponent while ball is alive or dead during playing time
Player Control Foul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes airborne shooter (cancel made field goal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not include airborne shooter after release on a try (count field goal if made and penalize pushing foul)
Protests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NFHS Basketball Rules Committee does not recognize protests on game situations. State Associations have policies and procedures in place for issues 'outside the game' i.e. use of ineligible players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest procedure is started by coach signing the appropriate spot on the scoresheet before the start of the game & reporting complaint to designated tournament personnel

Resumption of Play Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results in a violation rather than technical foul for initial delay when a team does not make a player for throw-in available or following a time-out or intermission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No such procedure; warn if initial delay is excessive and assess a technical foul if repeated
Returned to Backcourt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifting foot in backcourt while straddling the division line and in control of the ball (unless while dribbling) gives the ball frontcourt status and touching down again in backcourt while in control of ball is a violation Two (2) opponents in frontcourt both hands on ball trying to get possession and player of team in control steps on division line or into backcourt - player has caused ball to be returned to backcourt and ball awarded to opponents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifting foot in backcourt while straddling the division line and in control of the ball and touching down again in backcourt while in control of ball is legal (i.e. Offensive player catches pass from backcourt straddling the division line, lifts foot in backcourt to pivot and puts it back down again in backcourt – legal) Two (2) opponents in frontcourt one or both hands firmly on ball trying to get possession and player of team in control steps on division line or into backcourt - held ball situation and ball awarded according to alternate possession arrow
Rostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each team is allowed a maximum of 15 players or coaches on the official roster, at least one of which must be a licensed coach in good standing. All bench personnel over the age of 18 must also be actively licensed in good standing.
Shot Clock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 Seconds On a throw-in, clock begins when touched by player on court If horn sounds, delay whistle – if no rim and defense gets immediate control, no whistle – play on All resets go to 30 seconds.
Shooting Foul Simultaneous with Horn to End Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not shoot free throws unless effects outcome of game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoot free throws regardless of the score
Slapping Backboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If intentional is a technical foul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If intentional and it is deemed to prevent the ball from entering the basket then it is a violation and count the goal Could be deemed technical if considered to be taunting, intimidating or other
Start of Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can start with a throw-in if there is a technical foul before the game Non-jumpers not allowed to move onto and off the restraining circle and exchange spots along the circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always start with a jump ball Non-jumpers allowed to move onto and off the restraining circle and exchange spots along the circle
Substitutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On free throws – before last attempt or after last free throw if successful Subs must report before 15 second warning horn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On free throws - before first attempt or after last or only successful free throw Subs can report after warning horn up until the substitution period is over

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitution opportunity does not exist after made basket and clock is still running • A substitute entering the game can leave/be substituted after a live ball phase but before the clock runs i.e. shooting free throw(s) for an injured player if final throw is successful or technical foul throws • All substitutions must be beckoned in by officials except at halftime • 20 seconds to replace disqualified player <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If a team substitutes three (3) or more players the opponents can request a 'match-up' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitution opportunity exists for team scored upon in last two (2) minutes of the 4th period and all extra periods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The scoring team can also sub if the non-scoring team is making a substitution. • Sub entering and player leaving game can't leave / return until the game clock has started/stopped (runs) • Subs don't have to be beckoned in by officials if reported to table during a time-out/interval of play • Disqualified player must be replaced within 30 seconds • If an injured/bleeding player(s) must be substituted before the game or in-between free throws then opponent can substitute same number of player(s)
Team Control in Frontcourt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team is in control of a live ball in the frontcourt when the team is in control and the ball touches a player of that team in the frontcourt or the frontcourt itself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team is in control of a live ball in the frontcourt when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Player on that team is holding, catching or dribbling ball with both feet touching the frontcourt ○ Ball is being passed between teammates in frontcourt, Includes frontcourt throw-ins
Technical Fouls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalty is two (2) free throws and possession • Player not on score sheet can be added at expense of technical foul • Technical foul for admin. errors (i.e. wrong #) • Direct to coach count towards bonus • Coach loses coaching box privileges after 1st direct or indirect technical • Player technical fouls are contact & non-contact fouls during a dead ball or non-contact fouls during a live ball • Player off the bench can come on to shoot technical foul throws and then leave game • Team personnel leaving team bench area for unauthorized reason is direct technical to coach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalty is one (1) free throw and possession • Player not on score sheet cannot play • No technical foul for administrative errors (i.e. wrong #) • Coach "C" type or Bench "B" type do not count towards team total for penalty • Coach doesn't lose coaching box privileges for either of above • Player "P" type technical fouls are non-contact fouls during a live or dead ball • Technical fouls on players count as fouls towards the five (5) personal fouls for disqualification and team total for penalty • Player coming off bench to shoot technical free throws must stay in game for a clock running phase • Team personnel leaving bench area for unauthorized reason is a "B" type technical
Throw-Ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violation to throw over the backboard • Thrower can move back and forth for the five (5) seconds if one foot stays over the designated three (3) foot wide area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal to throw over the backboard • Thrower can move a total of one (1) meter laterally within the five (5) seconds

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defense can touch ball if in hands of thrower if broken the out-of-bounds plane • Technical foul for touching the ball in hands of thrower 1st occurrence • Defender may touch the ball on out-of-bounds side of boundary line once the thrower releases it • Contacting thrower out-of-bounds is intentional foul • Can inbound to front or back court from anywhere • No rule for advancing the ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defense can't touch ball if in hands of thrower even if ball has broken the out-of-bounds plane • Warning for touching the ball in hands of thrower 1st occurrence • Defender can't touch ball until it is on inbounds side of boundary line even after thrower releases • Contacting thrower out-of-bounds could be a common or an unsportsmanlike foul • Can't inbound to backcourt from frontcourt • Advanced to frontcourt throw-in line (3-point line extended if no throw-in line exists) if team in control calls time-out. in last two (2) minutes in their backcourt
Time-Outs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (2) 30 second time-outs & three (3) 60 second time-outs – used anytime • Requested by player or coach while team has player control or ball is dead • Time-out between free throws can be granted • Play resumes if both teams ready to play • Overtime – one (1) extra 60 second time-out per overtime period – all unused time-outs carry over • Excessive time-out request results in a team technical foul and granting the time-out • Team can be granted a time-out in-between quarters and/or extra period (s) Note: cannot be granted extra time-out granted for that extra period until that period has started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-out can be granted once the ball is live for the game or period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (2) 60 second time-outs in 1st half & three (3) 60 second time-outs in 2nd half – no carryover. • Can only take two (2) time-outs in with two (2) minutes or less showing on the clock in last period. If a team hasn't taken a time-out by the 2-minute mark in 4th period then they lose a time-out • Must be requested at scorer's table by coach or assistant coach – granted at first time-out opportunity • No time-out within a set of free throws • Teams must stay in huddle for 50 seconds • Extra periods – one (1) 60 second time-out per extra period – no time-outs carry over • Excessive time-out request is ignored • Time-outs not permitted during intervals of play • Time-out can't be granted before a playing time for a period starts (game clock starts) or after playing time for a period has ended • Official may assess a time-out to a team for delaying coming onto court after a time-out • In the last two minutes of the 4th period and all extra periods following a time-out the ball will be inbounded from the offensive teams' frontcourt.
Travelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal for a player in control of ball to fall to the floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal for player in control of the ball to fall to floor
Uniform Worn Improperly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player directed to leave the game and be substituted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct player to correct. If player doesn't comply could be warned and a technical foul issued if noncompliance continues

