

12 of the Most Confusing Basketball Rules

When taking a charge, does the defensive player have to be still?

Basketball rules state that if a defensive player is in a legal defensive stance or position, the defensive player has the right to move in order to maintain his legal positioning. A charging call can be made even if the defensive player has one or both feet off of the ground when the offensive player makes contact with the defensive player. The basketball rule of “verticality” applies here. If a defensive player jumps straight up to block a shot and the offensive player jumps into and creates contact with the defender, an offensive charging call could be made. (Therefore, it is more important if a defender is squared up and contact is made to the defender’s chest than if the defender is moving.)

Is a dribble illegal if it goes over the ball handler’s head?

Basketball rules states if the ball handler doesn’t “palm” the ball or place their hand under the ball, there is no dribbling violation. There is no basketball rule or restriction on how high a dribble can go.

Is reaching into an offensive player's area a foul?

If a defensive player “reaches in” to attempt a steal or distract the offensive player they are guarding and doesn’t create any contact, no foul should be called. Reaching in isn’t necessarily a foul until contact is created. Basketball rules state that the foul isn’t called reaching in, but holding or pushing.

Is over the back a foul when rebounding a basketball?

Officials should only make a foul call when contact is made. Just like the basketball rules term “reaching in,” over the back is not a foul until contact is made - then it should be called a pushing foul. Even if a smaller player has good rebounding position against a taller player, a foul should not be called if the taller player can get the rebound without touching the smaller player.

Can an offensive player travel when he is not in control of the ball?

If an offensive player attempts to catch a pass and bobbles or fumbles the ball, that player is not in control of the ball. There cannot be a traveling call when the offensive player doesn’t have the ball under control. Basketball rules states that once an offensive player has control of the ball and establishes a pivot foot, then a traveling violation should be called when appropriate.

Is there a violation when an offensive player stops his dribble, fumbles the ball away, and then recovers the ball?

Basketball rules determine that if an offensive ball handler accidentally loses the ball after they have picked up their dribble, they may go and recover the ball without a violation being called. Typically, a traveling call would be made, but it is always legal to recover a fumble.

Should calls be made by refs that decide the game’s outcome?

Referees need and should be consistent. If they perceive a foul early in the game and

make a correct call, that same call should be made at the end of a close game. Players and coaches decide the outcome of games with their decisions and actions. It is up to the refs to interpret and enforce the basketball rules.

When is there no three-second-lane violation?

Offensive players may position themselves in the free throw lane and move out before the ref counts to three seconds. As soon as the offensive team moves the ball into the offensive end of the court, the referee will be able to call a three second violation. When a shot is taken, the three second count for someone in the lane stops. During a shot, during the rebounding of a shot, and during an immediate put back off of the rebound, no three-second violation can be called.

When should over and back be ruled against an offensive team?

When an offensive ball handler approaches the half court line, the ball and both feet need to cross the line before an over and back call can be made. If a ball handler crosses the half court line with the ball and one foot, they are allowed to go into the backcourt to elude the defenders. Basketball rules provide that once the ball and both feet cross the line, then when any foot or if the ball crosses back into the defensive end, then over and back can be called.

When is a five second violation called against an offensive player?

A referee will call a five second violation if the same defender closely guards (within six feet) their offensive player who is dribbling the ball or is holding the ball for five consecutive seconds. Once a defender moves more than six feet away from their offensive player, who is in possession of the ball, the five-second count will stop. Basketball rules says if a player catches a pass and is being closely guarded, the offensive player may dribble the ball for four seconds, pick up and hold the ball for four seconds, then pass the ball with no violation being called.

When is an inbound pass called for five seconds?

The offensive team has five seconds to put the ball into play from out of bounds. Once the offensive player who is inbounding the ball takes control of the ball after a basket or takes control of the ball from the referee, the five second count starts. The five second count stops once it leaves the inbounder's hands—not when it is touch on the court.

Is traveling allowed when trying to inbound the ball?

There are two situations where an in bounder may travel when trying to inbound the ball. Basketball rules states that after a made basket, the inbounder may run the baseline as they look for a teammate to pass the ball too. The inbounder can run the baseline after a timeout if the timeout was taken after a made basket. The second situation is an out of bounds play other than after a made basket. Once the referee hands the ball to the in bounder, the player must stay within a three-foot area of the place they were given the ball. The in bounder may move both feet, but once they move beyond the three foot area, it becomes a violation.