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STRUCTURE

There are always five players on the floor for each team. Let's take a look at what each position does.



Wilt Chamberlain holds the record for the player to score the most points ever in one NBA game, with exactly 100 points.



Point guard

Point guards are generally the smallest and fastest players on the court. They're responsible for taking the ball down the court, calling the play, and then letting everyone get in position to start executing the play.

There's just one point guard on the court for each team at any time.

Center

There's only one center on the floor for a team at a time and it's almost always the biggest player on the team. The center's job is to hang out near the basket and make high-percentage—some might say “easier”—shots like layups and dunks (see the *Terms* section for a more detailed explanation of these shots). On defense, you'll usually find them fighting down near the basket for rebounds.

Guards

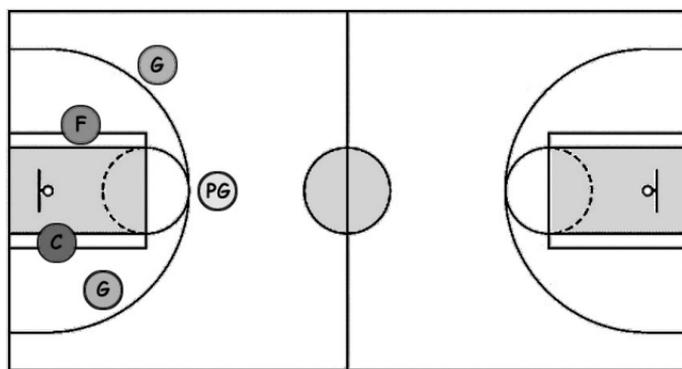
Guards are jacks-of-all-trades. They have to be big enough to get rebounds when they get a chance, but also fast enough to move around the court and get

away from defenders. Depending on the style of basketball the team plays, there can be one or two guards on the court for each team.

Forward(s)

Forwards are similar to centers in that they're pretty big. Some teams use a strategy of no center, and instead use two forwards all the time. Other teams use one guard, two forwards and a center.

In basketball, it all depends on the style of ball the team likes to play that dictates how it's going to organize its players on the court, but if you know the positions above, you'll have a great understanding of who's doing what and why they're there. The following is one very common way teams organize their players on the court:



A common player formation

PG= Point Guard F= Forward
G= Guard C= Center

SCORING

Scoring is another place where basketball has a vocabulary all to itself. Fortunately, there aren't a lot of new words, and most of them make intuitive sense.

Layups

When a player is close to the basket and throws the ball up and in, it's considered a layup. This also includes banking the ball off the backboard (while standing just below or near the basket) to get it through the hoop. Layups are worth 2 points.

Field goals

Farther out than a layup, these are any shots where the ball travels in an arc to the hoop. They're worth 2 or 3 points.

3-pointers

Any shot made from beyond the 3-point line is, of course, a 3-pointer. One thing to note is that high school and college use a 3-point line that is a bit closer in than the NBA's 3-point line. Sometimes you'll see courts with what look like two 3-point lines. Now you know that one of them is used for the pros, and the other one is for everybody else.

Slam/dunks

When a player's hands are above the rim of the basket and she throws the ball downward through the hoop, that's a dunk. It's also worth 2-points.

Free-throws

If a player is fouled in the middle of taking a shot, he gets to go to the free throw line to take undefended shots. As we saw under the rules section about fouls, there are also times that a player gets fouled even when not in the middle of a shot and can take free throws.