

Fundamentals of Shooting

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1. Balance:

The key to basketball shooting balance is having the player's head centered between the feet. The feet should be shoulder width apart, with the shooting side foot (right foot for a right-hander) slightly ahead of the other. The toes should be facing the target with shoulders square or perpendicular to the flight of the ball. When the toes are facing the target, the shoulders will naturally line up.

2. Focus on Target:

The eyes must hard focus on the target and remain on the target until the ball goes in. Do not follow the flight of the ball. When shooting at the rim focus on leading edge of rim, when shooting bank shots focus on upper near corner of box on backboard.

3. Holding the Ball:

Place your strong hand underneath the ball with your fingers comfortably spread with pointer and long finger (shooting fingers) directly under. There should be equal spacing between fingers, with a slightly bigger gap to the thumb. Bring the ball up to the shooting position, shoulder height. Place the off hand (left hand for most) on the lower side of the ball. This position will keep the ball in place on the shooting hand and prevent the off hand from helping to push the ball. Focus on feeling and shooting the ball with your fingertips and hand pads, not your palms.

4. The Shooting Line:

The ball should be in line with the foot, knee, elbow, shoulder, wrist, & hand on the shooting side. To get a good shooting line start with the feet as discussed in the balance section and hold the ball in front in shot pocket. Keep your shooting elbow in and under the ball, close to your side. Check your ball position by noticing how it seems to cover half of your face when in the correct position. The ball should roll off the tips of the pointer and long fingers.

5. The Shooting Motion:

Once you are in position, start by bending at the knees in a down and up motion. As you extend your legs upward, begin raising the ball. Your back and shoulders will extend upwards. Push your arm, wrist and fingers towards the basket. The snap of the wrist sends the ball towards the basket, avoid throwing. The forearm goes up rather than out to the basket. The ball should roll off the tips of the pointer and long fingers as the wrist snaps down. Moderate backspin on the ball will result, creating a soft shot that holds on the rim. Keep your shooting arm up as a follow through motion.

6. Arcing the Shot:

Proper arc in a shot makes the ball come in more of a downward motion at the rim, thus a better chance of going in. All the mechanics of the shot may be correct, but if the arc is low, the percentage is going to be low. Increased shooting arc can be achieved by making sure that the shooting forearm goes up instead of out towards the basket, and holding the shooting arm up as a follow through. Use your wrist to guide the ball towards the basket not so much your arm.

7. Power Production:

Power comes from two sources: 1) momentum, 2) the extension of the joints during the shooting motion. Momentum is the strongest form of power. If a shooter falls away from target during a shot, it is very hard to get the distance needed comfortably. Leaning in towards the basket makes the shot easier. Utilizing the joints (legs, arm and wrist) is the second source of power. The longer the shot the more leg and joint power is required. The shorter the shot the less momentum and joint power is needed. Examples would be an 18' shot will require more momentum and lots of leg and joint power where as a 2' shot would only require a hard jump and soft wrist motion. Lots of practice is required to learn proper power usage.

Shooting a free-throw:

1. Square your feet with shoulders and point toes towards basket.
2. Take your time, relax and think about the fundamentals.
3. Develop a rhythm in pre-shot, bounce the ball three times, etc.
4. Good shooting line, keeping elbow in, lined up, on shooting arm.
5. Focus on target; don't take your eyes off until ball goes through.
6. Shot should have fluid, continuous motion with arc.
7. Focus on releasing ball off proper fingers.
8. Follow through holding shooting hand up high, forcing this will help arc.

Shooting a lay-up:

This shot requires the same fundamentals with the exception of jumping off the proper single foot rather than being balanced on two. Timing must be just right coming into basket. If you are shooting from the right side you must jump off the left foot with ball resting on right hand from head location and being released after arm extended towards basket. It is important to lay ball off backboard at proper location and allow it to just drop through the basket. Throwing the ball off the backboard creates too hard of shot. Shoot lay-ups, not a throw-ups.
Available

Before Each Shooting Lesson:

Start each shooting session with short shots in the 3-6' range. Focusing on the fundamentals and note how you are doing. Next move back to mid-range shots in the 10-15' (free-throw line) range and review your progress. Make mental notes during your shooting and adjust your shot as required, see troubleshooting guide. After you have shot the short and mid range shots, if you are a guard, move further back to the three point range and begin shooting. Once again make mental notes of your progress. After you have shot from all three distances start mixing them up shooting in and out. Always shoot practice shots like you were in a game. Jumping hard, moving fast, dribble to get free are all part of practicing shooting. I say to shoot game shot, at your game spot at game speed. Chart your shooting progress.

Checklist of shooting fundamentals

1. Shooter balanced? (Shoulders square to basket, feet shoulder width and jumping off both feet)
2. Ball sitting comfortably on the shooting hand? (Shooting hand under ball, using finger tips and hand pads, not resting on palm)
3. Shooter "in line"? (Ball, elbow, shoulder, knee, foot all in line)
4. Shooter using proper targeting? (Hard focus on basket or target)
5. Is the ball being shot without off-hand interference? (Shooting with strong hand under ball and weak hand as a guide)
6. Is the arc in the optimum range? (Ball going high enough, good follow through and arm stays up)

Shot Troubleshooting Guide

Problem	Solution	Reference
Shot goes left or right and not straight to basket	Better balance and proper shooting line.	See paragraphs 1 & 4
Shot skips across rim	More arc in shot needed	See paragraph 6
Shot falls short	Focus and not enough power in shot. Use your legs.	See paragraphs 2 & 7
Shot goes to long	Focus and too much power in shot. Use less power.	See paragraphs 2 & 7