



Youth Basketball Rule Book

2026-2027

Foreword

The Zones Youth Basketball has been a Santa Rosa tradition for over sixty years with the support of our staff, volunteers, sponsors, and our community. Personally, this will be my eighth year helping run this league. I have coached and been the score keeper - but most of you probably know me as the referee. I am consistently a part of our league here because of my love for the game of basketball, and to hopefully show the youth in my community to love the game as well.

This league would not exist without the help of my friend Ron Williams. Ron volunteered as a coach *and* a referee for so many years to keep our league going. He loved the game of basketball and teaching kids how to play the right way. More importantly, Ron loved his community. I continue this league in his memory, hoping to instill what he taught me, and to spread joy through basketball as he did.

At the end of the season, each team will name one player to win the Ron Williams Award. This award is not about being the best scorer, or winning all of your games. It is given to players who show true sportsmanship and play the game the right way.

With that said, it is important to us at The Zones to communicate that this is an instructional league. A lot of our players have never played before, or are trying to refine their skills to help make their school basketball team. We pride ourselves on helping kids get better, learn the rules of the game, and (most importantly) have fun while doing it.

We will use the first few games to familiarize the players with the rules, especially in the younger age groups. Travels, double dribbles, and other violations will result in the referees explaining to the players what they did wrong, and the ball will be given back to them out of bounds. After the first few weeks, the calls will be stricter in hopes of the players gaining understanding. Please remember to be respectful to the referees and coaches that volunteer their time to help us out. If there are any issues, please come to me, rather than to them. Thank you and good luck this season!

Signed,

Joshua Smith

Athletic Director

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Schedule:

5-6 Age Group

- There are 5 total teams
- Every team will play a total of 8 games for the season (over 9 weeks)
- 2 games are played every week
- 1 team will have a bye every week
- Week 9: 4 total games, 2 teams play twice in one day (in order to have all teams play 8 games)

7-9 Age Group

- There are 8 total teams
- Every team will play a minimum of 8 games for the season
- 4 games are played every week
- No byes
- Week 8 matchups for playoff and non-playoff teams will be determined following Week 7 results

10-13 Age Group

- There are 4 total teams
 - Every team will play a minimum of 8 games for the season
 - 2 games are played every week
 - No byes
 - Week 8 playoff matchups will be determined following Week 7 results
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Standings:

- Season standings will be determined based on overall record
- Standings will be updated every Monday
- Final standings determine playoff seeding (for 7-9 and 10-13)
- In the event of a tie in the standings, tie breakers will be used in this order:
 1. Head to head record
 2. Total point differential
 3. Total points allowed
 4. Coin flip

Playoffs:

5-6 Age group

- There are no playoffs for this age group

7-9 Age Group

- Playoffs begin Week 8
- The top four teams make the playoffs (seeds 1 - 4)
- The 3 seed plays the 2 seed, and the 4 seed plays the 1 seed in Week 8
- The winner of 3 vs 2 plays the winner of 4 vs 1 in Week 9 in the Championship Game

10-13 Age Group

- Playoffs begin Week 8
 - All 4 teams make the playoffs (seeds 1 - 4)
 - The 3 seed plays the 2 seed, and the 4 seed plays the 1 seed in Week 8
 - The winner of 3 vs 2 plays the winner of 4 vs 1 in Week 9 in the Championship Game
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Equipment:

Hoop Height:

5-6 Age Group - 8'

7-9 Age Group - 8' 8"

10-13 Age Group - 10'

Ball Size:

5-6 Age Group - Size 4 (25.5" circumference)

7-9 Age Group - Size 5 (27.5" circumference)

10-13 Age Group - Size 6 (28.5" circumference)

Uniform:

- Zones jerseys must be worn to play. If a player forgets or loses their jersey, a temporary replacement may be provided to them
- Appropriate, closed-toe footwear must be worn to play
- No jewelry or other accessories that may cause risk for injury may be worn during games

- Athletic shorts and short sleeve undershirts are recommended, but not required (sweats or long sleeves may be worn)
 - There are no rules regarding color coordination for shorts, undershirts, socks, shoes, etc.
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Sportsmanship:

- All players should play the game with respect for their teammates and opponents
 - No players, coaches, or observers shall curse or direct complaints of any form at any other player, coach, or referee
 - Intentional fouls and rough play are strictly prohibited
 - A referee may ask a coach to remove a player from the game for a certain period of time if they do not follow the sportsmanship rules
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The Game:

- All games will be played by two teams, with five players on the court for each team
 - Each team must have a minimum of four players for the game to begin
 - If a team cannot field a four player team by game time, they may be forced to forfeit the game. However, the game will still be played even if players from the other team have to join the short-handed team
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Starting the Game and Quarters:

- All games begin with a jumpball at center court between one player from each team
 - All remaining players stand *outside* of the large circle at center court
 - The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters begin with a throw in from the opposite baseline
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Possession:

- A possession arrow will be used in place of a jumpball to determine possession after the opening jumpball
- The possession arrow changes between the two teams every time a jumpball is called, or when a new quarter begins

- The team that loses the opening jumpball will gain possession on the next jumpball or at the beginning of the next quarter
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Scoring:

- A field goal is made when a live ball passes through the basket from above
 - A made field goal by a player in their own basket may be waived off by the referees if they see fit
 - A made field goal attempted from within the three-point line will be awarded 2 points
 - A made field goal attempted from behind the three-point line (while not touching the line) will be awarded 3 points
 - A made free throw will be awarded 1 point
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Timing:

One hour will be allotted per game. In order to keep all games on schedule, please have players arrive 5-10 minutes before game time to warm up.

- Four quarters of 8 minutes each will be played in each game (32 minutes total)
 - The clock will only stop:
 1. During a charged time out
 2. During the last 2 minutes of the fourth quarter at every whistle or dead ball, unless there is a twenty or more point difference between the teams
 3. During the last 30 seconds of the fourth quarter after a made basket
 4. During substitutions/out of bounds/after fouls if score keeper deems necessary
 - If the clock is ever stopped, it will resume once a player in bounds touches or receives the ball
 - There will be a 2 minute maximum rest between quarters and a 5 minute maximum rest between halves to keep all games on schedule
 - There is no shot clock
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Timeouts:

- Each team is given 1 timeout per quarter
 - Only 1 timeout can be used per quarter
 - Timeouts do not advance the ball at any point in the game
 - When timeouts can be called:
 1. When the ball is in play and the team with the ball calls timeout
 2. When there is a stoppage (either team can call timeout)
 3. After a made basket and the team with imminent possession calls timeout
 - Each time out will be a 1 minute timeout
 - Timeouts do not carry over to the next quarter or half if unused
 - If there is an injury or other emergency, timeout can be called without a team being charged with their quarterly timeout
 - Referees may call timeouts for any reason at any point
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Sudden Death Overtime:

In the event of a tie at the end of the 4th quarter, all age groups will play by these rules

- Jumpball at center court will determine possession
 - The first team to score wins the game
 - If no team scores at the end of 2 minutes, the game is over, ending in a tie
 - The clock only stops in overtime during a dead ball (a made basket is NOT a dead ball)
 - Teams are *not* allowed timeouts during overtime
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Substitutions:

- Any time a coach would like to make a substitution, they should have their players stand or kneel at half court, out of bounds. At the next dead ball, the referees will allow the sub to be made. If the referees do not see any subs waiting to enter the game, a coach may shout "SUB" in order to make their substitution
 - Substitutions may only be made during a dead ball. However, 5-6 and 7-9 age groups are allowed to ask for a sub after a made basket in order to keep playing time fair for all players
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Out of Bounds:

The boundaries for the court are the black sidelines and baselines. Touching the boundary lines is considered out of bounds

- The ball is out of bounds when:
 1. A player touching the ball is out of bounds
 2. The ball touches anything that is out of bounds (including the sidelines)
 3. The ball touches any of the supports for the hoop behind or above the backboard
 4. The ball touches a referee that is standing out of bounds (referees are considered a part of the court or in-play if they are in bounds)
 - If the ball is called out of bounds, the team that last touched the ball loses possession, and the other team gets a throw in at the spot where the out of bounds was called
 - A player may legally jump from in bounds to save a loose ball and keep it in play. If the player did not establish possession of the ball prior to the save, they may return in bounds and be the first player to touch or possess the ball
 - A player who had established possession of the ball prior to saving the ball, may *not* return in bounds and be the first player to touch the ball (this would be considered a pass to themselves and called a travel)
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Throw-Ins:

- When the ball is awarded out of bounds for a throw in:
 - After a made basket
 - After a made free throw
 - After any non-shooting violation or foul
 - After a held ball/jumpball is called
 - To begin the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters
 - After a timeout
- After a made basket, the player that takes the ball out of bounds to throw it in may move/run along the baseline out of bounds. The referee does *not* have to touch the ball before the player passes the ball in bounds
- During any other out of bounds throw in, the player taking the ball out of bounds must remain in the spot determined by the referee. The referee *must* touch the ball and hand it to the player before the player passes the ball in bounds
- During *any* throw in, a player defending the throw in must remain completely in bounds. This includes keeping their arms inside the boundaries without reaching across and out of bounds

- If an out of bounds is called under the basket, the referee will move the throw in to either the left or right side of the backboard (to ensure the pass does not hit the backboard)
 - Players have 5 seconds to pass the ball in bounds once they receive the ball. Referees may disregard this rule any time they see fit
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Free Throws:

- Free throws will only be taken when a referee calls a shooting foul. There are no bonuses or technical fouls
 - When free throws are awarded, the player that was fouled will line up behind the free throw line. Six players will fill in the six spaces of the free lane in alternating team order. The team called for the foul will have their players closest to the hoop. The three remaining players will be positioned anywhere outside of the three-point line
 - Once all players are in position, the referee will give the ball to the shooter to take their first shot
 - Once the shooter is about to shoot their last free throw, the referee will signal that the ball is live. If the shot is made, the team that committed the foul takes the ball out of bounds. If the shot is missed, the ball is live and play continues
 - The shooter may not cross the free throw line until after the ball has touched the rim, and no players may enter the paint until the shooter has released the ball
 - Referees may have younger players stand at a spot closer than the free throw line to attempt their free throws
 - If the last attempted free throw does not touch the rim, a free throw rim violation will be called and the ball will be taken out of bounds by the team that committed the foul
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Press:

5-6 Age Group:

- Players may only play defense within their own three-point line. Defenders may reach over the three-point line with their arms, as long as their feet stay within the line
- If there is a loose ball outside of the three-point line caused by a defender who played defense legally, any defender may attempt to retrieve the ball

- Any other loose ball outside of the three-point line may not be touched by a defender, or the referees will stop play

7-9 Age Group:

- Players may only play defense on their side of half court. Defenders may reach over the half court line with their arms, as long as their feet stay on their side of the line
- If there is a loose ball in the backcourt caused by a defender who played defense legally, any defender may attempt to retrieve the ball
- Any other loose ball on the other side of the court may not be touched by a defender, or the referees will stop play

10-13 Age Group:

- Players are allowed to play defense anywhere on the court
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Violations:

Kicked Ball:

- No player shall kick the ball
- For a kicked ball violation to be called, the kick must be apparently intentional

Travelling:

- No player shall travel with the ball
- A travel is considered walking or running with the ball for more than two steps without dribbling
- If a player is running and catches a pass, they may take two steps after gaining control of the ball without dribbling before shooting, passing, establishing a pivot foot, or dribbling
- If a player attempts a side-step or step-back, the two steps must come immediately following a dribble or receiving a pass
- A travel is also called if any player with the ball picks up or slides their pivot foot
- A travel is also called if any player passes the ball and is the first player to touch the ball after the pass (unless the ball touches any part of the basket or is intentionally thrown at a defender)
- A travel is also called if any player with possession of the ball while lying, sitting, or kneeling on the ground stands up without first starting a legal dribble. A player in this position may pass, shoot, or start a dribble from the floor as long as they have not already ended their dribble (i.e. fell down with the ball after they already used their dribble)

- A travel is *not* called for a player who attempts a legitimate shot and catches their own airball

Double Dribble:

- No player shall dribble the ball with two hands simultaneously
- No player shall begin a second dribble after they have already ended their dribble (unless they lost and regained possession of the ball)

Carrying/Palming:

- While dribbling, no player shall carry or palm the ball by allowing it to come to rest in their hand

Goaltending and Offensive Basket Interference:

- No player shall touch the ball, rim, or net while the ball is on, above, or in the cylinder
- No player shall touch the ball, rim, or net after the ball has touched the backboard after a shot attempt and has the possibility of entering the basket
- No player shall touch the ball during a shot attempt while it is in its downward flight and has the possibility of entering the basket

3, 5, and 8 Seconds:

- There is *no* violation for occupying the paint for 3 or more seconds
- There is generally *no* violation for not inbound the ball within 5 seconds
- There is *no* violation for not bringing the ball into the frontcourt within 8 seconds

Over and Back (10 - 13 only):

- An over and back violation is called if the ball is brought back into the backcourt by the offensive player after possession has been established in the front court
 - Possession is established in the front court after the ball *and* the player with the ball are fully across the plane of the halfcourt line
 - An over and back is *not* called if an inbound pass is thrown into the backcourt
 - An over and back is *not* called if a defensive player causes the ball to enter the backcourt
 - An over and and back is *not* called if a missed shot attempt goes untouched into the backcourt and retrieved by the offense
 - An over and and back is *not* called if a missed shot attempt is batted backcourt by an offensive player and retrieved by the offense
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Fouls

- Fouls are *not* tracked for any players. Players cannot foul out of the game, and there is no bonus
- There are no technical fouls. However, referees may stop the game or remove a player from the game if they do not follow the sportsmanship rules
- Any non shooting foul results in a side-out throw in for the team that was fouled

Personal Foul:

- No player shall hold, hit, trip, elbow, push, hook, or impede the progress of any other player (illegal contact)
- No player shall use any rough tactics
- A personal foul/illegal contact can occur between any players with or without the ball, while the ball is loose, while rebounding, etc.
- Any marginal contact by a defender when in contact with the ball is excused

Blocking:

- A block is called when a defender impedes the progress of an offensive player that has established a legal path (the defender did *not* beat the offensive player to the spot in a legal guarding position)
- If a block is called during a shot attempt, free throws are awarded to the shooter

Charging:

- A charge is called when an offensive player forcefully runs into a defender that beat them to the spot in a legal guarding position
- If a charge is called during a shot attempt, the shot is waived off

Offensive Foul:

- No offensive player shall use their forearm or hand to prevent a defender from making a play on the ball
- No offensive player shall hook a defender's arm, or swing their elbows to prevent a defender from making a play on the ball

Illegal Screen:

- An illegal screen is called when an offensive player attempts to screen a defender but is moving (i.e. does not have their arms still, leans into a defender, does not have their feet set)
- To avoid an illegal screen call, the ball handler should wait to move around the screen until the screener is set

- The screener must stay set until the the ball handler is past them or they are no longer in contact with a defender

Over the Back:

- An over the back foul is called when illegal contact occurs while a player jumps over or through an opponent while attempting to rebound the ball
- Merely reaching over an opponent is not an over the back foul unless illegal contact occurs

Shooting Foul:

- A shooting foul is called for any illegal contact of a defender on a player who is shooting the ball
 - For a shooting foul to be called, the player with the ball must actually be in the act of shooting or making an obvious attempt to put the ball in the basket
 - Two free throws will be awarded for a foul on a two-point attempt, and three free throws will be awarded for a foul on a three-point attempt
 - If a shooting foul is called and the shot is made, the shot will count and the shooter will be awarded one free throw
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