

YOUTH BASKETBALL GUIDELINES: AGES 7-8 4 on 4 Play



The below playing standards and rules are to serve as guidelines and recommendations for those administering basketball competitions. We understand that organizations and facilities may not always be able to accommodate some of the recommendations. In that case, we suggest that modifications are allowed where limitations exist (i.e. inability to raise or lower the height of a basket, re-drawing court lines, or not having a shot clock).

EQUIPMENT & COURT SPECIFICATIONS

TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION
Size of Ball	Boys and Girls size 5 (27.5")
Height of Basket	8'
Size of Court	50' x 42' Do not keep track of fouls
Distance of 3-Point Arc	Not Applicable
Distance of Free Throw Line	14' - 10 feet

NOTE: 3-on-3 half-court play is also recommended for young players to foster enhanced participation and development.

GAME STRUCTURE

TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION
Game Length	Four 8-minute periods Two 18 min. halves-Running clock-stop on Time Outs
Time Between Periods	1 minute 4 minutes
Extra Period(s)	2 minutes
Scoring	Free throw: 1 point, all field goals: 2 points, no 3-point field goals
Timeouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two 60-second timeouts permitted in the first half of play. 3 Time-outs per game One 60-second timeout granted for each extra period 1 minute Unused timeouts may not carry over to the next half or into extra periods
Start of Game Possession	Coin flip. Team awarded possession starts with throw-in at half court

GAME TACTICS

TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION
Playing Time	Equal playing time
Set Defense	Only player-to-player defense throughout the competition
Pressing Defense	Pressing is not allowed throughout the competition
Double-Team/Crowding	Double-team/crowding is not allowed throughout the competition
Stealing From the Dribbler	Stealing from a dribbler is not allowed throughout the competition

HIGHLIGHTED GAME PLAY RULES

TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION
Backcourt Timeline	Not applicable
Shot Clock	Not applicable
5 Seconds Closely Guarded	Not applicable
Clock Stoppage	On any dead ball. Running clock for entire game-stoppage on time outs
Length of Time for a Free-Throw	10 seconds
Number of Players Permitted on Free-Throw Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offense may have 3 players on the lane, including the shooter Defense may have 3 players on the lane
Substitutions	Either team may substitute when the clock is stopped or on a dead ball
Advancement of Ball after a Timeout	Not applicable

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DEFINITIONS

Player-to-Player Defense

- ▶ Each player is responsible for guarding and moving with one offensive player. This requires the defensive player to move according to the offensive player's movements with or without the ball.
- ▶ The defensive player must stay on the same side of the court as the offensive player, divided by the rim line.
- ▶ If an offensive player with the ball advances past their defensive player, another defender may rotate to guard that offensive player.

Pressing Defense: Defensive guarding, either on or off the ball, within the backcourt.

Double-Team/Crowding: Two or more defensive players guarding a single offensive player.

RATIONALE

Distance of 3-Point Arc: For 7-8 year-olds, although the 3-point arc may exist on the floor, all baskets made beyond this arc only count as two points. Therefore, the distance of the line is not applicable for these age segments. Eliminating the 3-point basket will encourage players to shoot from within a developmentally-appropriate range.

Distance of Free Throw Line: 7-8 year-olds should take free throws 14 feet from the basket to develop proper form and increase success.



Height of Basket: Utilizing a lower basket height for 7-8 year-olds allows children to develop proper shooting form and increases the opportunity for shooting success.

Scoring: All field goals for 7-8 year-olds are worth two points to encourage children to shoot within a developmentally-appropriate range. This allows for proper mechanics and form. While these age segments may attempt a shot behind the 3-point arc, any field goal made behind the arc will only count as two points.

Size of Ball: A smaller basketball for the younger age segments is advised due to the size of a child's hand as well as their developing skill level. A smaller ball allows for better control and success.

Size of Court: For 7-8 year-olds, a 50'x 42' court is contemplated to be a cross-court game on a full-sized basketball court. This dimension is more appropriate for younger children based on their relative size in space.

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Start of Game Possession: For 7-8 year-olds, a coin flip will determine the team that will start with the ball to mitigate significant differences in height and coordination among children. Alternating possession rules will then ensue throughout the game.

Timeouts: Managing the way timeouts are called allows for better game flow and decision-making by the player(s).

Double-Team/Crowding: Crowding the ball with multiple players (referred to as “double-teaming”) is not allowed for 7-8 year-olds due to skill and size discrepancies among children at these ages.

Playing Time: To ensure that all young children participating in the sport have an opportunity to experience the game, equal and fair playing time is recommended for 7-8 year-olds. Equal and fair playing time is encouraged throughout all segments.

Pressing Defense: Pressing defense is prohibited for 7-8 year-olds to help children develop principles of movement with and without the ball in a half-court setting.

Set Defense: The player-to-player requirement for 7-8 year-olds encourages physical activity and movement, and promotes the development of individual skill related to guarding a player both on and off the ball.

Stealing from the Dribbler: At ages 7-8, players are not allowed to steal the ball from an active dribbler. This allows ball-handlers to develop dribbling skills and confidence with the basketball.

Backcourt Timeline: Not having a timeline violation for 7-8 year-olds allows coaches to communicate to players before they reach half court. This assists coaches in teaching children, particularly for those first learning the game.

Clock Stoppage: Fewer clock stoppages for 7-8 year-olds allows for a better game flow.

Advancement of the Ball after a Timeout: For 7-8 year-olds, the focus is on development over strategy. Therefore, there is no pressing defense at this level, and the ball will not automatically advance after a timeout.