

## NBA RULES HISTORY

### [Changes/clarifications implemented prior to season, except where noted]

*[NOTE: This list is not comprehensive, especially pre-1993, but contains as many rules changes and clarifications as could be compiled from past releases, rulebooks and other sources.]*

#### Initial Rules

- 60-game schedule followed by championship playoffs involving the top three teams in each division.
- Games are 48 minutes long.
- Every time you scored, the other team is given possession of the ball.
- Zone defenses are allowed
- Teams are permitted to carry 12 players.
- Players are allowed five personal fouls.

#### 1946-47

- Zone defenses outlawed on January 9, 1947

#### 1947-48

- Player fouls are increased from five to six.
- Maximum roster size reduced from 12 to 10 players per team - nine must be in uniform.
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#### 1950-51

- Teams are allowed to carry 11 men until 12/1 and then 10 afterwards  
*Last season they carried 12 at first and then reduced it to 11*
- Jump Balls would be used following fouls in the last 3 minutes  
*Last season they were used in the final 5 minutes*
- After a free throw is made in the last three minutes, there is a jump ball [between the player who committed the foul and the player fouled] instead of possession for the team that committed the foul.  
*To eliminate deliberate fouling and roughness*

#### 1951-52

- Lane widened from six to 12 feet

#### 1952-53

- The late-game free-throw rule now required the jump ball to take place between the man who is fouled and the player who is guarding him.  
*To eliminate the advantages of having a tall-man foul a short-man.*

#### 1953-54

- Players limited to two fouls per quarter and if a third foul is committed; the player has to sit out the remainder of that quarter.  
*The rule is rescinded when it fails to prevent late game fouling.*

#### 1954-55

- The 24-second shot clock is introduced.
- A penalty free throw is awarded following a team's sixth foul in any quarter.  
*Both rules had to be adopted to make each one work. The time limit made it unnecessary for the trailing team to foul deliberately, since it would get the ball after 24 seconds. The foul limit made it too costly to foul to prevent a chance at a basket.*
- The present two-minute rule was eliminated. That rule, used in the last two minutes of regulation play, provided for a jump ball, between the fouling player and the player fouled, after each successful foul throw.
- The penalty for a backcourt foul became two shots – three to make two if you are over the limit.
- Offensive fouls are treated as violations, no free throws and the defensive team gets possession. The foul would still count towards a player's limit of six personal fouls.

### **1958-59**

- On all double fouls a personal foul is charged to each man and play is resumed by a jump ball at center between the centers of the respective teams.
- All personal fouls by players on offensive, while their team is in control of the ball, shall be penalized as follows:
  - A. A personal foul shall be called and the ball shall be given to the opposing team at a point nearest to where the foul occurred.
  - B. When the foul is the seventh or greater in a quarter or the fourth or greater in overtime, the penalty is the same as on any other personal foul and the fouled team shall take the required number of shots.  
[Initially a trial rule change in October and adopted in November]

### **1959-60**

- After the offensive team has advanced the ball to the front court area, a defensive player is not permitted to place himself in the key for longer than three seconds without an apparent attempt to play his opponent. The penalty for violation is a technical foul shot by the offensive team. That team also retains possession of the ball out of bounds after the free throw.

### **1964-65**

- Lane widened from 12 to 16 feet  
*Change primarily attributed to the dominance of Wilt Chamberlain*

### **1966-67**

- The team foul limit is reduced to five per quarter. In the last two minutes of any period, a team is allowed only one foul before the penalty, even if it hadn't used up its allotment.
- The following language was added to the Zone Defense Rule: "After the offensive team has advanced the ball to its front court, *a defensive player may not station himself in the key area longer than three seconds* if it is apparent he is making no effort to play an opponent. The three second count starts when the offensive team is in clear control in the front court."
- Effective 12/27: When a defensive player commits a foul on an offensive player who is "off the ball" and not directly involved in the play, the foul shall be treated as a technical foul with no fine imposed. The player committing the foul shall be charged with a personal foul. It is also to be charged as a team foul. After the foul shot is attempted, the offended team puts the ball in play from a point out-of-bounds at center court. Should the offending team be in a penalty situation, a penalty shot shall not be awarded.
- A playoff game would be used to settle ties for first and fourth places. Ties for second and third would be settled by the season's record between the two teams.

### **1967-68**

- When a player is injured, he must resume play or be replaced by a substitute within 20 seconds or an automatic time-out will be charged to his team.
- The shooter of a technical must be in the game when the technical is called.
- When a shot doesn't hit the rim or backboard, any foul committed by the offensive team is an offensive foul. If the defensive team commits a foul, it is a personal foul. If the ball hits the rim or backboard, it should be treated as a personal foul, either by offense or defense.

### **1969-70**

- The scoring rule on tip-ins of free-throws was changed. When a missed free-throw is missed and tipped-in, the man getting the rebound will be credited with two points. Previously, the free-throw shooter was credited with one point.

### **1971-72**

- The uniform of each player will bear his surname on the back.

### 1972-73

- No foul shots are attempted, other than shooting fouls, until the fifth team foul of any period.
- Other than the shooter, players are no longer restricted from entering the lane on free throws attempts.
- Teams have 30 seconds to replace a disqualified player.
- In the last two minutes of a game, once a team inbounds the ball in the backcourt a timeout may not be called until the ball reaches the front court. The old rule permitted a team inbounds the ball under the hoop, call time, and get the ball at midcourt.
- A team with four timeouts remaining in the fourth quarter may use all four in the period, with a maximum of three in the final two minutes, and a maximum of two in any overtime period.
- The official scorer must notify the home coach by the fifth minute of the quarter that no time out has been called.
- Errors in the fourth period and overtime must be discovered before the end of the period to be corrected.

### 1974-75

- Fine increased from \$50 to \$100 for a player or coach ejected after being charged with a technical foul for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- A timeout request made at the instant time expires for a period shall not be granted and the period ends.
- In the last two minutes of the game or overtime, no timeouts are allowed once the ball is inbounded until the ball is in the frontcourt.
- The “force out” rule is clarified as incidental contact near a boundary line, which causes a player to commit a violation or go out of bounds, and neither team is responsible for the action. The offensive team retains possession.
- When there are punching fouls on both teams during the same play, the team last offended is awarded possession.

### 1975-76

- After any playing court violation, the ball is to be put into play at the sideline.

### 1976-77

- “Hand-checking”: A defensive player is permitted to retain contact with his opponent as long as he does not impede his opponent's progress.
- If a defensive player causes the ball to go out-of-bounds, the 24 second clock is stopped and the offensive team, on regaining the ball for throw -in, shall have the unexpired time or 5 seconds, whichever is longer, to attempt a shot.
- During the last two minutes of play, if a team calls an excessive time out, the ball shall remain at the out-of-bounds spot where the ball was when the excessive time was called
- Excessive and /or vigorous swinging of the elbows, without contact, is a violation.
- Force-Out eliminated. If a player is forced out of bounds, it will either be a foul on the defender or an offensive violation.
- Time-out in the back court -- during the last two minutes of regulation play or overtimes, if a team requests a time-out after the ball is out -of- bounds or IMMEDIATELY after getting the ball from a rebound or change of possession, time -out shall be granted, and upon resumption of play, they shall have the option of putting the ball into play at the out -of- bounds spot or at midcourt.
- If less than five seconds appear on the 24-second clock when the offensive team is entitled to a throw-in, the clock will be reset to five seconds.

The team that gains possession after the opening tap will put the ball into play at their opponent's end line to begin the fourth period. The team losing the opening tap will put the ball into play at their opponent's end line at the beginning of the second and third quarters. [*Note: In putting the ball into play, the thrower-in may run along the end line or pass it to a teammate who is also out-of-bounds at the end line--as after a score*]
- Any player who engages in a fight is subject to a fine of \$10,000 and a suspension.

*This went into effect March 7, 1977.*

### 1977-78

- If a coach wants to discuss a rule or an interpretation of a rule prior to the start of a period, it will be mandatory for the officials to ask the other coach to be present during the discussion. Previously, the rule only addressed pre-game discussions.
- Any field goal that, in the opinion of the officials is intentionally scored in the wrong basket shall be disallowed.
- The 24-second shot clock shall be reset to 24 seconds on all violations, as well as after a zone warning.
- If the ball enters the basket from below, a violation has occurred.
- Fine increased from \$100 to \$150 for a player not in the game who does not remain in the vicinity of his team's bench during a fight.
- A \$25 fine shall be assessed to any player hanging on the rim during pre-game warm-up.
- Following a missed free throw, it is not necessary for a player to return to the floor with a rebound before attempting to score.
- Following a 20-second timeout, a team may only substitute for the injured player. The opponent may then also substitute one player.
- During the last two minutes of regulation or overtime, if a team requests a timeout immediately after getting possession, they shall have the option of putting the ball into play at midcourt or at the out of bounds spot.
- Any player or coach making intentional contact with an official will be suspended without pay for a minimum of one game. A fine and/or a longer suspension may also result.
- In order to protest the result of a game notice must be sent to the Commissioner's office within 48 hours after the game. No protests may be filed after midnight of the day of the last game of the regular season.
- If a player is fouled and is subsequently ejected from the game before shooting the free throw[s], he must immediately leave the court and one of his teammates on the floor will be designated by the opposing coach to shoot.
- Active rosters would be reduced to eleven players on 11/14/77.

### 1978-79

- Number of referees officiating game increased from two to three with equal responsibilities for each official.
- Hand checking, and other illegal use of hands was eliminated.
- "Zone Defense" - Technical foul imposed on team instead of warning for first illegal defense and two technical fouls imposed for second and all subsequent violations. Illegal defense rules modified.
- The minimum number of players required for Playoff participation was increased from 8 to 9.
- Every NBA visitor's locker room must be provided with a chalkboard.
- When the ball is dead and the game clock shows :00, the period has ended even though the buzzer may not have sounded.
- Rolling the ball on the floor from out of bounds now allowed; penalty of loss of possession eliminated.
- At half-time and the end of the game, the coach and his players are to leave the court and go directly to their dressing room without pause or delay. There is to be absolutely no calking to game officials.  
*Previous rule only stated at conclusion of game.*
- During the last two minutes of the game and any overtime period, all deliberate defensive fouls away from the play except loose ball fouls will be treated as follows: The foul is charged as a penalty and team foul but treated as a technical. This technical may be shot by anyone and the team retains possession of the ball
- The three-point field goal is tried in pre-season.

### 1979-80

- NBA schedule for 1979-80 season calls for each team to play teams in its own conference six times and teams in the other conferences two times.
- Three-point line established 22 feet in the corners extending to 23 feet, nine inches at the top of the key.
- Number of referees officiating game reduced from three to two.
- If a team is attempting to bring the ball across the centerline within 10 seconds and a defensive player causes the ball to go out of bounds in the backcourt, the offensive team will no longer receive an additional 10-second count in which to advance the ball past the centerline.

- Coaches and trainers are limited, during games, to a 28-foot area between the baseline and a hash mark to be placed 19 feet from mid-court. The penalty is a technical foul.
  - There was concern that coaches and trainers were roaming too far away from their benches and interfering with the functions of the scorer's table.*
- Any player who shatters a backboard as a result of contact with either the back-board or rim, will immediately be ejected from the game upon a technical foul and will, absent the most. extenuating circumstances, be suspended without pay for at least the club's next regularly scheduled game.
- Tiebreaking to determine playoff positions and participation shall be as follows:
  - “Ties to determine a Divisional Championship must be broken first.
  - In order to break a tie for playoff positions, if one exists at the close of the regular season, the following criteria will be utilized in the order set forth:
    - A. Two-way tie
      1. Results of games against each other
      2. Winning percentage within Conference
      3. Winning percentage within Division [only if tied teams are in same Division]
      4. Winning percentage against playoff opponents in own Conference.
      5. Point differential in head-to-head games.
      6. Point differential between offense and defense.
    - B. More than two team tied
      7. Cumulative winning percentage in total games involving all tied teams.
      8. Winning percentage within Conference
      9. Winning percentage within Division [only if tied teams are in same Division]
      10. Winning percentage against playoff opponents in own Conference.
      11. Point differential in head-to-head games.
      12. Point differential between offense and defense.
  - If a multiple team tie is reduced to a two-team tie at any point using the above criteria, the two-team tie would be broken by beginning with the procedure outlined above in Section A, Step 1.”

### **1980-81**

- **Game Clock and Red Light Behind Backboard to be Synchronized** - Behind each backboard a red light will be placed and synchronized to light up when the horn sounds at the expiration of each period.
- **Elimination of Jewelry and any Equipment Dangerous to Other Players** - Players are not permitted to play with any type of hand, arm, face, nose, ear, head or neck jewelry. Any equipment which is of hard substance (casts, splints, guards, braces) must be padded or foam covered and have no exposed sharp or cutting edges. Face masks, eye or nose protectors must conform to the contour of the face and have no sharp or protruding edges.
- **Correcting Errors - Teams Lined Up Improperly** - If any period begins with teams lined up improperly and scores result from this error, all points will be deleted and the period restarted unless 10 seconds have elapsed from the game clock. If 10 seconds have elapsed, all points count and teams shoot for the same baskets.
- **Twenty-second Time-out** - Each team is entitled to one 20-second time-out per half for a total of two per game. All overtimes are considered part of the second half. Only one substitution may be made. If the team calling the time-out substitutes, the opposing team may also substitute one player. The calling of a second 20-second time-out in a half automatically becomes a regular time-out. Teams are not permitted option privileges on a 20-second time-out.
- **Time-out in Backcourt and Option** - During the last two minutes of regulation play or overtime periods, a team will have the option of moving the ball to midcourt if they have not dribbled or passed following a rebound or change of possession after time is called. If the ball has been dribbled or passed following a rebound or change of possession, the ball is put into play at the spot nearest where the ball was when time was called; and time shall remain as it was.
- **Technical Foul on Offensive Team** - Any time a technical foul is called on the offensive team; the 24-second clock remains as is.
- **Resetting Clock on Punched Ball Violation** - On any deliberate kicked or punched ball, the 24-second clock will be reset to 24 seconds.

- **Flagrant Foul - Choosing Substitute Shooter for Man Injured After Being Fouled Flagrantly** - If a flagrant foul is called and the offended player is unable to attempt the free throw/s, his coach may designate any member of the team to attempt the free throw/s.
- **Goal Tending a Free Throw Attempt** - A defensive player may not catch or deflect the ball before it reaches the basket. The penalty is the scoring of the point and the same player receives another free throw. The additional free throw is considered a new play.
- **Double Foul on the Ball - Jump Takes Place in Center Circle** - This replaces the previous rule which had the jump ball in the nearest circle.
- **Flagrant Foul** - A player who commits a flagrant foul is automatically ejected. If the offended player is unable to shoot, his coach may choose any player on or off the floor to attempt the foul/s.
- The 24-second clock shall be reset after a zone warning.
- New CBA contained a provision permitting the Commissioner to fine players up to \$10,000 for certain violent conduct during a game.

### 1981-82

- Zone defense rules clarified with new rules for Illegal Defensive Alignments.
  - A. Weakside defenders may be in defensive position within the outside lane [16'] with no time limit but within the inside lane [12'] for no longer than 2.9 seconds.
  - B. Defender is allowed within inside lane as long as he is closely guarding a player adjacent to the 3-second lane.
  - C. Player without the ball may not be double-teamed from weakside.
  - D. Any offensive player may be double-teamed from strong side.
  - E. Offensive player above foul line and inside circle must be played by a defender inside dotted line.
  - F. If offensive player is above the top of the circle, defender must come to a position above foul line or remain in either outside lane.
  - G. Defender on cutter must follow the cutter, switch, or double-team the ball.
- After the first illegal defense violation, the clock is reset to 24 seconds. All subsequent violations result in one free throw and possession of the ball. If any violation occurs during the last 24 seconds of each quarter or overtime period, the offended team receives one free throw.
- Backcourt fouls considered common fouls and two shots will only be awarded once offending team is over the limit.
- A player fouled on a successful field goal will attempt only one free throw [not 2-for-1] and a player fouled on an unsuccessful field goal attempt will shoot two free throws [not 3-for-2]. Thus Three free throws to make two; two to make one eliminated.
- The following will be the new technique on violations which necessitate putting the ball in play in the backcourt only: "The official will give the ball to the offensive player as soon as the player is in position out of bounds and ready to accept the ball."
- The Toss Back Safety Rim, tested in last year's NBA pre-season and Continental Basketball Association games, was approved following the addition of further safety features.
- A player must report to an area within four feet of either side of the scorer with warm-ups removed before referee beckons player into game. League will provide scorer with official black-and-white-striped cap to aid player in reporting  
*Players were previously required to report "to the scorer."*

### 1982-83

- After the ball is out-of-bounds, the team, not the official, shall designate a player to make the throw-in.
- On a throw-in, which is not touched inbounds, the ball is returned to the original throw-in spot, as opposed to the point where the ball crossed a boundary.

### 1983-84

- If a 20-second timeout has been granted, and a mandatory timeout by the same team is due, only the mandatory timeout will be charged.
- If a shot is taken and made simultaneously with whistle for illegal defense, the basket should count and no penalty imposed.

- Player who goes into shooting motion on free throw and does not complete shot is charged with violation.
- If a player cannot shoot free throw because of flagrant foul or unsportsmanlike act, he may re-enter the game.
- A jump ball shall take place at the center circle following a double free-throw violation or if the ball lodges in the basketball support.
- A throw-in which touches the floor, or any object on or outside the boundary line, or touches anything above the playing surface is a violation.
- Any team that files a player contract with the League that does not incorporate all of the transactions and other consideration, direct and indirect, between the team, and any affiliated or related entity, and the player, may be fined by the Commissioner in an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000.
- The playoff field was expanded from 12 to 16 teams next season. Eight teams from each conference will qualify--the four division winners and the six teams with the next best records in each conference. All teams will play best-of-five first-round series, eliminating the first-round byes and the best-of-three mini-series.
- A rule was passed limiting the amount of cash involved in any transaction between Dec. 15 and the end of the season to \$300,000. This was done to prevent teams with greater financial resources from stocking their rosters at the expense of teams with more limited means.
- Any person who has been convicted or has pled guilty to a crime involving the use, possession, or distribution of heroin or cocaine shall without exception, immediately be expelled and perpetually disqualified from further association with the League or any of its teams. Any expelled person can apply for reinstatement after two years, and reinstatement shall be granted only with prior approval of the BOG.
- Upon request for a timeout, during the last 2 minutes of a game or overtime[s], the official will immediately approach the head coach and ask him if he wishes a regular or 20-second timeout. Upon receiving an answer from the head coach, the official will then notify the scorer.
- All home teams are required to make available a TV feed for any visiting team that desires to videotape a game on its own equipment.

#### **1984-85**

- The number of timeouts teams are allowed in overtime increased from two to three regardless of the number of timeouts called or remaining during the regulation play or previous overtimes.
- BOG approved the adoption of a 2-3-2 Finals format.
- In the instance of a "breakaway foul," where a player is in the frontcourt heading toward the basket and is grabbed or hit from behind by an opponent who makes no attempt to play the ball, the penalty will be two free throws plus possession of the ball.
- Fine increased from \$100 to \$500 for coaches and players who do not leave the court and go directly to their dressing rooms, without pause or delay, at halftime and the end of each game.
- Fine increased from \$150 to \$500 for a player not in the game who does not remain in the vicinity of his team's bench during a fight.

#### **1988-89**

- Number of referees officiating game increased from two to three.

#### **1989-90**

- "Trent Tucker Rule" - when there is less than three-tenths of a second remaining on the clock, any shot other than a tip-in or an alley-oop must be disallowed.

#### **1990-91**

- Any substitute may be removed after a successful free throw attempt which was to remain in play, if the offensive team requests and was granted a regular timeout.
- The "Breakaway Foul" rule was amended to permit a referee to also call a flagrant foul on the same play (allowing for subsequent ejection and a fine and/or suspension).
- Visiting teams must be provided with at least 36 tickets for games. There would be no more than three assistant coaches seated on a team bench.
- The penalties for flagrant fouls are now divided into two categories. In the first category, where the officials deem the contact to be excessive, but not excessive enough for ejection, the team against whom the foul has been committed will be awarded two free throws and possession of the ball. In the second category, when the officials deem a foul to be unnecessary and/or excessively rough, as well as potentially injurious, the team

against whom the foul has been committed will receive two free throws and possession of the ball and the offender will be immediately ejected. The ejection carries with it a mandatory \$250 fine, with the possibility of a suspension and/or a substantially higher fine to go along with it.

- The Board of Governors also approved a new procedure for breaking a tie for home-court advantage in the NBA Finals. The first tiebreaking procedure will remain head-to-head record between the two teams, with the second tiebreaker now becoming the record of the Eastern Conference team against teams in the West, and the record of the western Conference team against teams in the East.
- :00.3 must expire on the clock when a ball is inbounded and then hit instantly out-of-bounds
- :00.3 is needed on the clock to catch the ball and shoot it into the basket whether the shot is made or not.
- :00.3 must expire on the clock when a player gets possession of a missed free throw and immediately requests a timeout.
- :00.1 is needed on the clock to tip the ball in the basket whether the shot is made or not.
- In the event a team did not shoot merited free throws due to an official's error, the error will not be corrected if, on its next possession, affected team either scores or shoots earned free throws.
- A coach was limited to one All-Star appearance every two years, commencing with the 1992 All-Star Game. In the event that the coach whose team had the best conference record following games played on the Sunday two weeks preceding the All-Star Game coached that conference's All-Star team in the previous All-Star Game, the coach of the team with the second best record in the conference will coach the All-Star team from that conference.

### **1991-92**

- Commencing 1/1/92, Teams were required to put game clocks in visiting team locker rooms.
- There were new infection control guidelines for use during NBA games, to be implemented immediately. The new guidelines apply to team physicians, trainers and equipment managers. The guidelines call for prompt treatment of any injury where there is significant chance of infection, and the use of gloves and other routine sanitary precautions where contact with blood is necessary.

### **1992-93**

- The 24-second clock is reset only when the basketball hits the rim.  
*Previously, the clock would be reset if the ball hit either the rim or the backboard.*
- The rule regarding infection control timeouts, originally adopted by the league last season, provides that in the event of a player suffering a laceration or wound where bleeding occurs, game officials are to suspend the game at the earliest appropriate time and remove the injured player from the game. The player is then allowed to return after receiving appropriate medical attention.
- The new rule allows either team, whether or not it has possession of the ball, to call a timeout when play is suspended in order to allow the team to treat the injured player and return him to the game without missing play. If that player's team has no timeouts remaining, the officials will give the team twenty seconds to treat the wound, and if treatment is not completed in that time, the player must be removed from the game.
- The Board has also modified a by-law, originally adopted in 1983, setting a limit on the amount of cash which could be included in a player trade taking place from December 15 to the end of the Playoffs; the limit has been raised from \$300,000 to \$1,000,000.
- Any player who throws a punch now immediately ejected from the game, suspended for at least one game, and fined an appropriate dollar amount.
- Any player throwing a punch that connects with another player will be ejected from the game, suspended for a minimum of one to five games, and fined an appropriate dollar amount.
- Teams will also be fined an amount equal to the total sum of their players' fines.
- Any player leaving the bench area during a fight will be fined \$2,500, up from \$500, and that player's team will be fined \$5,000 for each of its players who leave the bench area.

### **1993-94**

- The NBA announced it will be enforcing a new "five point" flagrant foul rule for repeat offenders this season, as well as continuing to enforce the fighting rules that were instituted prior to the 1993 NBA Playoffs. Under the new "five point" flagrant foul rules, a player will be penalized one point for every Flagrant 1 foul (unnecessary contact committed by a player against an opponent) and two points for every Flagrant 2 foul (unnecessary and excessive contact by a player against an opponent). If a player's season total exceeds five

points, he will receive an automatic suspension following the game in which his point total exceeds five and for each additional flagrant foul committed during the season.

- Additionally, any player in street clothes who leaves the bench area during a game will be ejected and suspended for one game.
- Any player in street clothes coming off the bench and getting involved in an altercation will be ejected, fined a minimum of \$10,000 and suspended for a minimum of one game, and his team will be fined \$25,000.
- Team officials (other than coaching staff) coming onto the court during a game will be barred from attending the team's next two home games, and the team will be fined \$10,000.
- The Board of Governors extended the "five point" flagrant foul system to the playoffs – any player who exceeded 3 points was suspended for at least one game. The system was adopted for the 1993-94 regular season at the 11/4/1993 BOG meeting.

#### **1994-95**

- Shortened the three-point line [22 feet in the corners extending to 23 feet, nine inches at the top of the key] to a uniform 22 feet around the basket.
- Awarded three foul shots for any player fouled while attempting a three-point field goal.
- Any player who leaves the bench during a fight automatically suspended for a minimum of one game and fined a maximum of \$20,000; in addition to losing 1/82nd of his salary for each game, he is suspended. [If more than five players are suspended, teams will be allowed to stagger the suspensions in order to have at least eight players available for a game. In that case, some players would be suspended for the next game with the remainder of the players suspended the game after that. The order of suspensions would be determined by the alphabetical order of the players' last names.]
- Any player who commits two flagrant fouls in one game will be ejected.
- Hand-checking eliminated from the end line in the backcourt to the opposite foul line.
- There will be stricter enforcement of taunting rules and any behavior that could provoke a fight.
- Technical foul fines increased to \$500 each. Previously, the fines were \$100 for the first technical and \$150 for the second.
- "Clear path" rule changed to include contact in the backcourt. If a defender, grabs a player when the player has a clear path to the basket on a breakaway, two foul shots will be awarded.
- The second or more of back-to-back timeouts when the ball is not inbounded will be limited to 45 seconds.

#### **1996-97**

- A team that calls timeout without having any remaining will be assessed a technical foul and lose possession of the ball.
- No illegal defense violation may occur when the ball is in the backcourt.

#### **1997-98**

- The three-point line, 22 feet from the basket, lengthened to its original distance of 23 feet, nine inches, except in the corners, where the distance remained 22 feet.
- A defender will not be permitted to use his forearm to impede the progress of an offensive player who is facing the basket in the frontcourt.
- A player will not be allowed to call timeout [regular or 20-second] if both of his feet are in the air and any part of his body has broken the vertical plane of the boundary line.
- The "no-charge area," previously a two-by-six foot box where an offensive foul is not called if contact is made with a secondary defensive player who has established a defensive position, will be expanded to the area consisting of a half circle with a four-foot radius measured from the middle of the goal.
- The rule modification now states that if two offensive players on the weakside (i.e. the side of the court away from the ball) are positioned above the tip-of-circle extended, one of the two defenders may now legally occupy any area on the weakside, except that he may not enter the inside lane other than to:
  1. Aggressively double-team the ball
  2. Defend an offensive player(s) who is open because of a double-team on the ball, or
  3. As a normal reaction to a "ball fake." Following a "ball fake," the defender must immediately return to a legal position or double-team on the ball.

*Previously, if two offensive players were positioned above the tip-of-circle extended either on the strongside or weakside of the court, both defenders had to be positioned above the free throw line extended.*

### 1999-00

- A defender may not make contact with his hands and/or forearms on an offensive player except below the free throw line extended.
- A five-second rule that mandates that a player must either shoot, pass or pick up his dribble within five seconds if he begins dribbling the ball with his back toward the basket below the free throw line extended.
- The 24-second shot clock will be re-set to 14 seconds if the violations listed below occur with less than 14 seconds remaining on the 24-second clock, and will remain unchanged if the violation occurs with 14 or more seconds remaining on the 24-second clock:
  1. A personal foul that does not result in free throw attempts.
  2. Kicking the ball or blocking the ball with any part of the leg.
  3. Punching the ball with a fist.
  4. An illegal defense violation that does not result in free throw attempts.
- No illegal defense guidelines will apply to a player who is defending an offensive player who is positioned on the strong side [ball side] of the court.

### 2000-01

- The number of timeouts per team per game was changed to six from seven.
- The number of fourth-period timeouts per team was changed to three from four.
- The number of timeouts per team during the last two minutes of the fourth period or last two minutes of an overtime period was changed to two from three.
- Full timeouts in regulation and overtime will be reduced from 100 to 60 seconds with the following exceptions: [1] the first two timeouts in each period, regardless of which team calls them. [2] the two mandatory timeouts in the second and fourth periods. In those two instances, timeouts will continue to be 100 seconds.  
*Previously all full timeouts were 100 seconds.*
- During 20-second timeouts in the last two minutes of the fourth period and/or any overtime period there are unlimited substitutions.  
*Previously the team calling the timeout could substitute one player. The other team could substitute only if the team calling timeout substituted.*
- After a change of possession in the last two minutes of regulation or any overtime period, the offensive team can call a regular or 20-second timeout and advance the ball to midcourt. The team has the option of inbound the ball in the frontcourt or backcourt. If it passes into the backcourt, the 10-second rule applies.  
*Previously teams could advance the ball only by calling a regular timeout and had to inbound the ball into the frontcourt.*
- If neither team has taken a timeout in the second and fourth quarter when there is 8:59 remaining, there will be a mandatory timeout after the first dead ball. If neither team has taken a timeout in all four periods when there is 5:59 remaining, there will be a mandatory timeout after the first dead ball.  
*Previously, timeouts were taken after dead balls after 9:59 in the second and fourth periods and after 6:59 in every period.*
- If the offense retains possession after a jump ball, the clock is reset to 14 seconds or remains the same if there are more than 14 seconds on the clock. If the defense gains possession, the clock is reset to 24 seconds.  
*Previously, if the offense retained possession, the clock was reset to 24 seconds.]*
- If a player is fouled when he has a clear-path-to-the-basket, he gets one free throw and his team gets possession of the ball at midcourt.  
*Previously, the player received two free throws.*
- No contact with either hands or forearms by defenders except in the frontcourt below the free throw line extended in which case the defender may use his forearm only.
- Neither the offensive player nor the defender will be allowed to dislodge or displace a player who has legally obtained a position.
- Defender may not use his forearm, shoulder, hip or hand to reroute or hold-up an offensive player going from point A to Point B or one who is attempting to come around a legal screen set by another offensive player.
- Slowing or impeding the progress of the screener by grabbing, clutching, holding “chucking” or “wrapping up” is prohibited.

- A five-second count will begin if an offensive player with the ball and not facing-up starts dribbling below the free throw line extended while being closely guarded or starts dribbling outside and then penetrates below the free throw line extended while being closely guarded. [The five-second count commences when the offensive player penetrates the free throw line extended]. After five seconds, a violation will have occurred and the offensive team will lose possession.
- The shot clock shall remain as it is or be recycled to 14 seconds if it is below 14 for a common foul requiring no free throw attempts occurs, kicked or punched ball violation, or an illegal defense requiring no free throw attempts.
- On the strongside, any defense is legal.
- On the weakside, defenders must remain on the weakside outside the paint unless [i] they are double-teaming the ball, [ii] picking up a free cutter or [iii] closely guarding an offensive player.

### 2001-02

- Illegal defense guidelines will be eliminated in their entirety.
- A new defensive three-second rule will prohibit a defensive player from remaining in the lane for more than three consecutive seconds without closely guarding an offensive player.
- The time that a team has to advance the ball past midcourt will be reduced from ten seconds to eight.
- Brief contact initiated by a defensive player will be allowed if it does not impede the progress of the player with the ball.

### 2002-03

- The Board of Governors approved the use of instant replay to review certain last-second plays at the end of each quarter and overtime periods. The call made during play will only be reversed when the replay provides the officials with a "clear and conclusive" basis to do so. Instant replay review will be triggered automatically- and not at the discretion of the officials or teams - in the following situations:
  - **FIELD-GOAL ATTEMPTS**
    - A. A field goal that could affect the outcome of the game is made with no time remaining on the clock (0:00) at the end of the fourth quarter or any overtime period.
    - B. A field goal is made with no time remaining on the clock (0:00) at the end of the first, second and third quarters.
 

*Once replay is triggered in either of these two situations, the officials will review instant replay to determine whether time on the game clock had expired before the ball left the shooter's hand. If the shot was timely, the officials may also review tape to determine if the field goal was scored correctly as a two-point or three-point basket, whether the shooter committed a boundary line violation when he released the ball and whether a 24-second clock or 8-second backcourt violation occurred before the shot.*
  - **FOULS**
    - A. A foul for which the resulting free throws could affect the outcome of the game is called with no time remaining on the clock (0:00) at the end of the fourth quarter or any overtime period.
    - B. A foul is called with no time remaining on the clock (0:00) at the end of the first, second and third quarters.
 

*In these situations, officials will review instant replay to determine only whether the called foul occurred prior to the expiration of time on the game clock and not whether the call itself was correct.*

#### 2003-04

- For a 20-Second Timeout, the official shall instruct the timer to record the 20 seconds and to inform him when the time has expired.
- If a team calls a 20-second timeout because one of its players is injured and, at the expiration of the 20-second timeout limit, play is unable to resume due to that player's injury, a full timeout will be charged to that team and 20-second timeout returned.
- The 24-second clock shall remain the same as when play was interrupted or reset to 5 seconds, whichever is greater, any time on jump balls retained by the offensive team as the result of a held ball caused by the defense.

#### 2004-05

- New rules were introduced to curtail hand-checking, clarify blocking fouls and call defensive three seconds to open up the game.

#### 2005-06

- Teams will be allowed to carry 13-man playoff rosters although only twelve players will be eligible to play in each playoff game. Teams will be required to deactivate one player prior to each game.  
*In the past, teams carried 12-man rosters during the playoffs.*

#### 2006-07

- The head coach may request a timeout [20-second or full] at any time during a game as long as his team has possession of the ball or there is a suspension of play.  
*Previously - The head coach may request a timeout (20-second or full) only if there is a suspension of play due to a player suffering an injury where bleeding occurs*
- Free substitution is permitted during all 20-second timeouts.  
*Previously - Free substitution is permitted only during 20-second timeouts called in the last two minutes of the fourth quarter and/or overtime period. During all other 20-second timeouts, the team calling the timeout may only substitute for one player, and if that team replaces a player, the opposing team may also replace one player.*
- On a clear-path-to-the-basket foul, the team that is fouled is awarded two free throw attempt and the ball on the sideline.  
*Previously - The team that is fouled is awarded one free throw attempt and the ball on the sideline.*
- If a player not listed on a team's Active List participates in game play, the officials, upon noticing or being made aware of the ineligible player, will disqualify the player at the first dead ball and the player's team will be assessed a technical foul.  
*Previously - If a player not listed on a team's Active List participates in game play, the officials, upon noticing or being made aware of the ineligible player, will disqualify the player at the first dead ball.*
- Players occupying lane spaces during free-throw attempts are prohibited from extending any part of their bodies into the space in front of an opponent until the ball is released by the free-throw shooter. Players not occupying a lane space during a free- attempt must remain behind the three-point line and above the free-throw line extended until the ball is released by the free-throw shooter.  
*Previously - Players occupying lane spaces during free-throw attempts are permitted to extend their bodies into adjoining lane spaces. Players not occupying a lane space during a free- attempt must remain behind the three-point line until the ball is released by the free-throw shooter.*
- If a flagrant foul/penalty 1 is called and the fouled player is unable due to injury to shoot his free-throws, his team's coach (not the opposing team's coach) selects a replacement free-throw shooter from among players on the floor (not players on the bench) at the time of the foul, and the injured player is not permitted to return to the game.  
*Previously - If a flagrant foul/penalty 1 is called and the fouled player is unable due to injury to shoot his free-throws, the opposing team's coach selects a replacement free-throw shooter from among the players on the fouled player's bench, and the injured player is not permitted to return to the game.*  
**Note:** The rules for unsportsmanlike acts (elbow and punching fouls) and flagrant fouls/penalty 2 state the fouled player's coach selects the replacement free-throw shooter from any eligible player on his team (whether on the playing floor or the bench) and the injured player is permitted to re-enter the game following the free-throw attempts. There is no change to this rule.

- The first four seeds in each conference will continue to be given to the three division winners and the team with the next best regular season record, but these four teams will now be seeded in order of their regular season records. Among other things, this change will ensure that the two teams with the best records in the conference will not meet earlier than the Conference Finals.
- If a team has two 60 second timeouts left in the last two minutes of regulation or in overtime, one of the two timeouts will be shortened to a 20 second timeout.
- Instead of having three 60 second timeouts in overtime, teams will have two 60's and one 20 second timeout. Teams will no longer be permitted to carry over a 20 second timeout from regulation into overtime.
- Playoff roster size will be expanded from 13 to 15 players, with each team designating 12 active players and up to three inactive players prior to each game.

### 2007-08

- The NBA Board of Governors approved the use by officials of instant replay to review all Flagrant Foul Penalty Two calls and player altercations, beginning with the 2007-08 season. **With respect to Flagrant Foul Penalty Two calls**, the Competition Committee decided that viewing instant replay was appropriate in light of the serious consequence to a player of committing such a foul, which is ejection from the game. **With respect to player altercations**, the Committee thought that the game officials' first priority should be ending the altercation and that, in the course of doing so, they might not see a punch or other unsportsmanlike act committed by a player that might call for ejection. The use of instant replay will assist the officials in sorting out penalties after they have ended the altercation.
- If two officials differ on a block/charge foul involving the restricted area and/or lower defensive box, they will conference and share information in an attempt to make the correct call. If no resolution is reached it will be treated as a double foul.
- All assistants and trainers must remain on the bench.
- If a team has two (2) or three (3) full timeouts remaining when the fourth period reaches the 2:00 mark, one (1) of the timeouts will be changed to a 20-second timeout and they will retain only one (1) full timeout. Therefore, if a team has not yet used its allotted 20-second timeout for the second half, it shall have two 20-second timeouts at its disposal.
- A team will not be given an additional 30 seconds should bleeding occur from a wound reopened which is not the result of additional contact.

### 2008-09

- Referees are allowed to use instant replay for the following scenarios:
  - A. To determine at any point during a game whether a field goal was correctly scored as a two- or three-point field goal, and, for the purposes of awarding the correct number of free throws, whether a shooter was fouled while taking a two- or three-point attempt. {The review would occur at the discretion of the game officials, and would be based on a conclusion by the crew that they cannot be reasonably certain whether the shot was a two- or three-pointer.}
  - B. When the game clock malfunctions during a play concluding with no time remaining on the clock (0:00) at the end of any quarter or overtime period. {The game officials are currently required to reconstruct the timing of a play occurring during a clock malfunction; the use of replay would enable them to do so with substantially greater accuracy.}
- A rules change in regards to "too many players on the court", which will take effect beginning Friday, March 27. Under the playing rules change, when a "too many players on the court" violation is called, a technical foul will be assessed against the offending team and the non-offending team will have the option of either accepting or nullifying the game action that occurred during the violation.

### 2009-10

- Referees will now be permitted to use instant replay in the following situations:
  - A. To determine at any point during the game whether a 24-second shot clock violation occurred prior to the release of a successful field goal attempt OR prior to a foul being committed.
  - B. To determine during the last two minutes of regulation play and the last two minutes of any overtime period which player last touched the ball prior to it going out-of-bounds or whether the ball was last touched simultaneously by two opponents.

### **2010-11**

- Instant replay may now be used:
  - A. During the last two minutes of regulation and the entire duration of any overtime period, to determine whether the ball touched the rim and thus whether the shot clock should be adjusted.
  - B. During the last two minutes of regulation play and the entire duration of any overtime period, to determine which of two players on opposing teams caused the ball to become out-of-bounds. This modification expanded the previous rule to include the entirety of an overtime period instead of just the last two minutes of an overtime period.
  - C. During a replay review of an out-of-bounds call, to determine when the ball is out of bounds for purposes of adjusting the game clock and shot clock.
  - D. At any point during the game, to determine which player should attempt free throws after a foul occurred.
  - E. At any point during a game, to determine whether a foul that was called a clear-path-to-the-basket foul met all the criteria of a clear-path-to-the-basket foul.
- Horn procedures were changed to incorporate use of a warning horn during timeouts and period breaks (including halftime) to speed up the game.

### **2011-12**

- All 24-second shot clocks will display tenths of a second when less than five seconds remain on the 24-second clock.
- In order to avoid disruptions, instant replay reviews no longer will be conducted during 20-second timeouts prior to the final mandatory timeout in the fourth period. Previously, instant replay reviews could be conducted during any timeout [20-second or full] or period break. As before, once the final mandatory timeout occurs in the fourth period, instant replay reviews are conducted at the next stoppage in play.
- During the last two minutes of regulation play and of any overtime period, if a team requests a timeout and, separately, officials determine they must conduct an instant replay review that might result in a scoring or possession change, the officials will first conduct the instant replay review and, pending the outcome of the review, the team that requested the timeout may reinstate, or withdraw, its request for a timeout.
- During the first of two free throws [or first and second of three], a player entering the lane and continuing to move while the shooter is in the act of shooting will be considered disconcertion.
- To save time and improve the flow of the game, during free throws, a substitute may only enter the game prior to the last free throw that will remain in play [e.g., before the second free throw of a two-shot penalty that will remain in play] or after the final free throw that will not remain in play [e.g., after a free throw for a technical foul] unless necessitated by disqualification, injury or ejection. Under the previous rules, a substitute could enter the game prior to any free throw attempt and/or after a free throw attempt that will not remain in play.

### **2012-13**

- Instant replay may now be used:
  - A. To review Flagrant 1 calls. Officials will now call a foul “Flagrant” on the floor and then use instant replay to make a determination as to whether the foul is a Flagrant 1, Flagrant 2, or a common foul [if they decide after viewing replay that the foul was not Flagrant];
  - B. To determine whether a defender was inside or outside the “restricted area” for purposes of block/charge calls during the last two minutes of regulation play or at any point during overtime;
  - C. To determine the accuracy of goaltending calls made in the last two minutes of regulation play or at any point during overtime.
- The NBA adopted an anti-flopping rule beginning with the 2012-13 season. “Flopping” will be defined as any physical act that appears to have been intended to cause the referees to call a foul on another player. The primary factor in determining whether a player committed a flop is whether his physical reaction to contact with another player is inconsistent with what would reasonably be expected given the force or direction of the contact. Physical acts that constitute legitimate basketball plays [such as moving to a spot in order to draw an offensive foul] and minor physical reactions to contact will not be treated as flops. Any player who is determined to have committed a flop during the regular season will be subject to the following:
  - Violation 1: Warning
  - Violation 2: \$5,000 fine
  - Violation 3: \$10,000 fine

- Violation 4: \$15,000 fine
- Violation 5: \$30,000 fine

If a player violates the anti-flopping rule six times or more, he will be subject to discipline that is reasonable under the circumstances, including an increased fine and/or suspension. The league will announce at a later date a separate set of penalties for flopping that will apply during the playoffs.

- Interpretation reinforced whereby a delay-of-game penalty was issued by the officials when teams were not prepared for tip-off (90 seconds following conclusion following game introductions prior to tip off).
- The NBA set the league's anti-flopping disciplinary schedule to be used during the 2013 Playoffs:
  - Violation 1: \$5,000 fine
  - Violation 2: \$10,000 fine
  - Violation 3: \$15,000 fine
  - Violation 4: \$30,000 fine

If a player violates the anti-flopping rule five times or more, he will be subject to discipline that is reasonable under the circumstances, including an increased fine and/or suspension.

### **2013-14**

- Instant replay may now be used:
  - A. When reviewing a block/charge play to determine whether the defender was inside or outside the restricted area, officials will now be permitted to reverse a charge call, or uphold a blocking call, when the defender was outside the restricted area but was not set when the offensive player began his upward shooting motion.
  - B. To determine whether an off-ball foul occurred before or after a player has started his shooting motion on a successful shot attempt, or before or after the ball was released on a throw-in.
  - C. During the review of any instant replay situation to permit the officials to assess the appropriate penalties of any unsportsmanlike and unnecessary acts [e.g. flagrant fouls] that are observed during the instant replay reviews.
- On clear path to the basket fouls, it will no longer be considered a clear path foul if at any point before the foul is committed; the defender who commits the foul is positioned ahead of the offensive player in the frontcourt.
- A team on offense will lose possession if its player leaves the floor and does not immediately return to the floor, unless he is injured, attempting to save the ball or in other extenuating circumstances.
- The Board of Governors approved a change to the format of The Finals effective with the 2013-14 season. Over the previous 29 seasons, The Finals featured a 2-3-2 setup in which the team with home-court advantage hosted Games 1, 2, 6 and 7, while the opponent hosted Games 3, 4 and 5. Beginning with The Finals 2014, the format will shift to a 2-2-1-1-1 schedule, where the team with home-court advantage will host Games 1, 2, 5 and 7, and the opponent will host Games 3, 4 and 6. The format change will include an extra day between Games 6 and 7.

### **2014-15**

- **Expansion of Instant Replay Rules**
  - Officials may utilize instant replay whenever they are not reasonably certain a team had an improper number of players on the court while the ball was in play.
- **Modification of Instant Replay Rules**
  - Instant replay triggers that are currently in effect only during the last two minutes of regulation and the entire overtime period[s] instead shall be in effect only during the last two minutes of regulation and the last two minutes of overtime period[s].
  - Officials may now conduct an instant replay review whenever they are not reasonably certain as to which team should be awarded possession after a ball becomes out of bounds or whether an out of bounds in fact occurred during the last two minutes of regulation and the last two minutes of overtime period[s]. Previously, officials could only use replay if they weren't reasonably certain as to which of two players on opposing teams caused the ball to become out of bounds.
  - Officials are now permitted to utilize instant replay whenever they are not reasonably certain whether a foul that was called meets the criteria of a flagrant foul. Previously, the foul had to be called a flagrant on the floor in order to utilize instant replay.

- Officials are now permitted to utilize instant replay whenever they are not reasonably certain whether a foul that was called meets the criteria of a clear-path-to-the-basket foul. Previously, the foul had to be called a clear-path foul on the floor in order to utilize instant replay.
- Officials may now utilize instant replay any time they are not certain when any player [offensive or defensive] without the ball was fouled relative to the timing of a successful shot. Prior to this change, officials could only review the timing when an offensive player without the ball was fouled.
- **Rules Changes**
  - If a team has too many players on the court while the ball is in play,
    - [i] the offending team would both be assessed a non-unsportsmanlike technical foul and lose possession if it had possession at the time the violation was discovered, and ...
    - [ii] the non-offending team would continue to have the option of either accepting or nullifying the game action that occurred during the violation. Previously, if the offending team had possession, it would keep possession of the ball despite the violation.
  - Teams may freely substitute players whenever any timeout is called. Prior to this change, there were limited circumstances in which a team couldn't substitute for certain players at timeouts.
  - The shot clock will no longer be reset to five seconds when a held ball is caused by the defense with fewer than five seconds remaining on the clock.

### **2015-16**

- As part of the playoff seeding modifications, the eight playoff teams in each conference will be seeded in order of their regular-season record.  
*Most recently, every division winner was guaranteed a top four seed in its respective conference regardless of its record but did not receive home-court advantage if its playoff opponent had a better record.*
- The Board also approved changes to tiebreak criteria for playoff seeding and home-court advantage. Head-to-head results have become the first criterion to break ties for playoff seeding and home-court advantage between two teams with identical regular-season records; the second criterion is whether a team won its division. Under the old tiebreak system, a division winner was awarded the higher seed and received home-court advantage in a series if the two teams met in the playoffs.

### **2016-17**

- The current rule for away-from-the-play fouls applicable to the last two minutes of the fourth period [and last two minutes of any overtime] – pursuant to which the fouled team is awarded one free throw and retains possession of the ball – will be extended to the last two minutes of each period.
- For inbounds situations, a defensive foul at any point during the game that occurs before the ball is released by the inbounder [including a “legitimate” or “natural” basketball action such as a defender fighting through a screen] will be administered in the same fashion as an away-from-the-play foul committed during the last two minutes of any period [i.e., one free throw and possession of the ball].
- The flagrant foul rules will be used to protect against any dangerous or excessively hard deliberate fouls. In particular, it will presumptively be considered a flagrant foul if a player jumps on an opponent's back to commit a deliberate foul.  
*Previously, these type of fouls were subject to being called flagrant but were not automatic.*