



10 Common Rules That Officials, Fans Will Often Get Wrong

It seems every game, fans yell the same things: "Three seconds," "That's a travel," "Over the back," etc.

A team misses its third straight shot, and you can almost count on a cry of "Over the back" from the stands. When a high dribble is made the fans will often yell, "That's a carry," or "Travel!" When the ball is passed, it hits the player's hand, then the floor, they pick it up and dribble, and we hear, "Double dribble." Those are common pleas at almost every game. Unfortunately, many officials buy in to those pleas and respond with an inaccurate ruling.

There are many myths and incorrect interpretations of the rules, which fans and even newer officials have heard and believe are correct. Improving the spectator's knowledge would solve many problems, but that's not about to happen anytime soon. High school, men's college, women's college and the NBA all have their own rules. Many are the same but each has special nuances.

Here are 10 rules to clarify for those boisterous fans and, yes, even officials.

1. Three-second rule. The three-second restriction does not begin until the ball is in the frontcourt. An allowance is made for a player who has been in the restricted area for less than three seconds, dribbles in or moves immediately for a goal. There is no three-second count during a shot, rebounding action or during a throw-in. Every time a shot goes up the three-second clock is off.

2. Over the back. Nowhere in the rules book or case book is there an over-the-back foul. However, officials often call, report and make signals for the

contact foul. Over the back is legal. On the back or through the back is a push and is illegal. Don't penalize a player for being taller and reaching over to rebound a ball. It can be an illegal use of hands or a pushing foul. Not all contact is illegal. Illegal contact is that which hinders an opponent from performing normal defensive and offensive movements.

3. Fumble. Most fans have no idea that the word fumble is in the basketball rules book. A fumble is the accidental loss of player control when the ball unintentionally drops or slips from a player's grasp. A dribble is an intentional push to the floor. It is not possible to travel during a dribble. A player must be holding and in control of the ball in order to travel. A player may fumble the ball all the way down the court if it is an unintentional act to gain control of the ball. A player attempting to end a dribble may fumble the ball and run to gain control without a violation. A player can fumble, dribble, fumble. But not dribble, fumble and dribble.

4. Palm/carry rule. A dribble has no limit on the height of a dribble. A high dribble is just that, a legal high dribble. It may be ugly but not illegal. A dribble ends when the ball comes to rest in one or both hands, the player "palms"/carries the ball as it comes to rest in one or both hands, the dribbler simultaneously touches the ball with both hands, the ball touches or is touched by an opponent if it results in loss of player control. Batting a ball from an opponent is not a dribble as the player is not in control of the ball; a player can bat a ball away, pick it up with both hands and start a dribble.

5. Sliding/traveling. A player may dive for a loose ball and once secured has no limit on how far he or she may slide. After coming to a stop, a player may not roll, but may pass, shoot, request a time-out or begin a dribble. Any attempt to stand is a traveling violation, unless a dribble is started.

6. "Boxing out" vs. displacement. Legal rebounding position is an attempt

to secure control of the ball. A player may not displace, charge or push an opponent. Every player is entitled to a spot on the playing court, as long as the player gets there first without illegally contacting an opponent.

Moving an opponent off an occupied space is displacement and a foul. A good box-out is securing a spot with your body. When a player uses his or her body to "drive" an opponent off of a spot, it is a foul.

7. Slapping the backboard. If it is a legitimate attempt to play the ball, it is not an unsporting technical foul. If it is not an attempt to play the ball, it can be an unsporting technical foul.

8. Goaltending. NFHS has no rule that a player may not touch or block a shot after it hits the backboard. NCAA rules are different. In NFHS, it is a legal play as long as the ball is not on its downward flight, nor in the imaginary cylinder that is above the ring (basket interference). The ball must not be touched when it is above the basket ring level and have the possibility of entering the basket.

9. Block/charge. It is legal for a player to move or be moving and still be able to draw a charge, if legal guarding position has been obtained. A player may move in any direction other than into the opponent, if legal guarding position has been obtained prior to contact. The player who causes the contact is responsible for the foul.

If the offensive player can get his or her head and shoulders past the torso of the opponent, legal guarding position is no longer in place. When a shooter becomes airborne, the defender can draw the charge if the defender obtained legal guarding position before the shooter became an airborne player. If the defender moves in, or under, after the shooter has left the floor, it is a blocking foul.

10. Verticality. A player who has a legal position on the floor has that spot with an unlimited height. Many believe because the defender jumped, if there is contact, that it must be a defensive foul. It's not. □

QUICK TIP

When a player receives a verbal warning, **inform that player's coach of the warning.** The coach then knows you are aware of the player's actions and can choose to address those actions. If the player then receives a penalty for his or her actions, the coach will know you warned the player but the player didn't heed your warning.