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Professional [basketball games](#) generally take about two and a half hours to play.

Standard basketball games include five players on each of two teams with one basket at each end of a playing surface. Score is kept by keeping track of how many times each team penetrates the other's defenses and scores goals. Employing either man-to-man or zone defenses, the defense tries to keep the offense from generating additional points.

There are limitations about the amount of physical contact a defensive player can have with the individual he is guarding. Players from offensive teams often are awarded uncontested shots at the basket, called free throws, when defensive players become too aggressive while guarding them.

A simple game

- Two baskets (though one works)
- Willingness to follow simple rules
- flat playing surface

In accordance with the rules, a player must bounce the basketball while moving forward with the ball under his control. Dribbling is bouncing the ball off the ground with each step the player takes. "Traveling" constitutes a rule violation when the player with the basketball moves forward without bouncing the ball, a violation that transfers possession of the basketball from one team to the other.

Whenever an offensive player is fouled in the act of shooting, he is sent to the free throw line for two, and sometimes three free, unchallenged shots.

Other than free throws, which count one point each, there are two types of scores in basketball; two-pointers and three-pointers. A player makes a three point play by shooting the ball from outside the arc, which is a painted line quite a distance from the basket. The definition of a two point basket is any successful shot on goal that was launched inside the arc.

Look at the scoreboard once the final horn has sounded, and the score will tell you who won and lost the game. In the event the two teams have the same score once regulation is ended, they will extend their play into overtime with the team with the most points at the end of overtime declared the winner.

The rules are very simple but basketball games result in some of the most highly watched and entertaining sports at every level of play.

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