

basketball**bas·ket·ball** [basketball basketballs] *BrE* ['bɑːskɒtbɔːl] *NAmE* ['bæskɪtbɔːl]

noun



- 1. uncountable** a game played by two teams of five players, using a large ball which players try to throw into a high net hanging from a ring
 - a **basketball game/coach/team**
- 2. countable** the ball used in this game

Culture:**basketball**

Basketball is the most popular sport played indoors in the US. It was invented in 1891 in Springfield, [↑][Massachusetts](#), by Dr James Naismith. He used fruit baskets for the hoops and baskets, and a **soccer** ball. The first professional organization for male players was established in 1898, and the [↑][NBA \(National Basketball Association\)](#) was set up in 1949. Games are now played by rich basketball stars before huge audiences. The team seen most outside the US is the [↑][Harlem Globetrotters](#). It is mainly an indoor sport but it is also played with just as much enthusiasm by young people on the streets of US cities.

Basketball is played by two teams of five players, but seven other players can be brought on to replace them during the game. The **court** is up to 94 feet/29.7 metres long and 50 feet/15 metres wide. At each end is a **hoop** (= a metal ring) 10 feet/3 metres above the floor. The hoop is attached to a backboard and has a net without a bottom hanging from it. Players score two points when they throw the ball through the hoop from an area near the basket, and three points if they are further away. The team that scores the most points wins. The most exciting score is a **slam dunk** when a tall player jumps up high and pushes the ball down through the hoop. The ball is moved between players by a **pass**, or a **dribble** if a player bounces it on the floor. Players are not allowed to push an opponent, but this often happens. When a **foul** is committed against a player, he or she can have one or two **free throws**, also called **foul shots**, that count one point each. If the **referee** calls five illegal plays on a player, he or she **fouls out** and cannot play the rest of the game.

The NBA teams play between November and June. The season ends when the best eight teams in the **Eastern Conference** and the best eight in the **Western Conference** compete to play in the **NBA Championship**. Women players take part in the **American Basketball League** and the **Women's National Basketball Association** league. There is great interest in basketball at college level when teams take part in the [↑][NCAA \(National Collegiate Athletic Association\)](#) Basketball Championships, called 'March Madness', in March each year. Basketball is also popular in [↑][high schools](#).

NBA players are among the highest-paid sports people in the world. Michael Jordan, the richest of all sports players, who played for the Chicago Bulls, earned more than \$35 million in the 2003–4 season. Famous players in basketball history include Wilt 'the Stilt' [Chamberlain](#) and Julius Erving. Together with many others, they are in the Basketball [↑][Hall of Fame](#).

Basketball is also played in Britain, where there are national leagues for both men and women. But the sport receives less attention than in the US and, in contrast to the names of teams and players in football, the names of the leading basketball teams and players are unfamiliar to most people.

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bas·ket·ball /'bɑːskɒtbɔːl/ *BrE* *AmE* noun

- 1. [uncountable]** a game played indoors between two teams of five players, in which each team tries to win points by throwing a ball through a net
- 2. [countable]** the ball used in this game

basketball

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