



UPWARD BASKETBALL  
**REFEREE HANDBOOK**

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**Welcome to Upward Basketball!** This handbook is designed to provide you with everything you need to be successful as an Upward Basketball Referee. The information on the following pages is designed to guide you through the season and includes the rules unique to Upward Basketball.

Along with this handbook, you can find additional Upward Basketball Referee resources at **[MyUpward.org](http://MyUpward.org)**. Here you will find rules to the game, how to make calls and even training videos on how to become an Upward Basketball Referee.





**SECTION ONE**  
**REFEREEING**  
**UPWARD**  
**BASKETBALL**



## ***Becoming an Upward Basketball Referee***

Upward Basketball is designed to promote healthy competition and sportsmanship while also teaching the objectives of game play. Coaches will teach the basic fundamentals of basketball through drills, games and scrimmages along with sharing life lessons through mid-practice huddles. A positive influence to the game is your biggest role in this program.

As an Upward Basketball Referee, you should be able to:

### ***› Understand and know the sport***

- By knowing and understanding the sport of basketball, you will be able to call the game effectively. This also includes knowing the rules unique to Upward Basketball.

### ***› Lead by example***

- It is important that referees are role models on the court. You should demonstrate a Christ-like attitude through your officiating and through the encouragement of players. Provide positive comments to players during the game for their play, effort and sportsmanship.

### ***› Control the game***

- The referee must keep the game under control while promoting a competitive experience. The best way to do this is to blow the whistle sharply to stop play, calling fouls and violations when they occur.
- Any rough play should be stopped immediately. If rough play is not

stopped quickly, it will escalate and undermine the purpose of the league.

- Player safety should be a concern for every referee. Keep players under control by calling all fouls, encouraging players and giving instruction as an extension of the coach. This will shape the overall attitude and atmosphere of the game while improving the players' experience, building their confidence and creating opportunities to develop relationships with coaches, players and players' families.

### › ***Communicate effectively with coaches, players and spectators***

- Throughout the game, teach the game to players as you are officiating. When a foul or violation is called, make the appropriate call and explain to players what happened, how it can be corrected and what the consequence is for the infraction.
- Hand signals should accompany all fouls and violations that are called. Coaches and spectators need to know the result of what was called.
- Talk with coaches during game play and at the end of segments. Communicate what you are seeing; build rapport and confidence with the coaches.
- Before the game begins, it is important to communicate with your referee partner. Talk about positioning, and review the responsibilities for each of you. Basic communication before the game begins will make a positive difference during the game.

# SECTION ONE: REFEREEING UPWARD BASKETBALL

- › Employ proper positioning and refereeing mechanics
  - This includes coordinating efforts with your referee partner, blowing the whistle, using hand signals and keeping the game on track.
- › Manage substitutions
  - For Levels 1-3 ONLY, substitutions take place between each segment. Before the start of each six- minute segment, player matchups occur at mid-court. The coaches will match players up against someone of equal ability. While this process is the coaches' job, you will serve as a monitor. If both coaches and referees foresee a match-up problem due to position and height, players can be shuffled around to create a better game situation. This should be done only when all parties agree to the change.
  - Remember to keep the substitution time moving. The whole process should take only about a minute. Remind coaches that substitution time is not a time when they should be talking to players about strategy.



### ***Pre-Game***

Before the game begins, bring both teams and coaches together to remind them about game rules, common violations, and the spirit of Upward Basketball. Encourage players and coaches to do their best to honor God with their actions and attitudes.

Here are a few things to discuss during this pre-game gathering:

- › Gather both teams and their coaches for a brief word of encouragement and prayer.
- › Be sure all players have their jerseys tucked in their shorts.
- › Check to see that each player has his or her shoes tied tightly. Have players remove all jewelry, hats and watches.
- › Give reminders for game play (no defense in the backcourt, man-to-man defense, three-second violations, etc.).

### ***During the Game***

As an Upward Basketball Referee, you serve as an on-the-floor coach, teacher, and encourager. It is part of the referee's role to talk to players during the game. Communicating with players during play will help them improve their game on the court. Often the referee can stop a violation before it happens by talking to the players. Commands like "out of the lane 33," "watch the pushing," or "pass or shoot - no double dribbling" can keep the game moving and make it more enjoyable for all. Players, parents, and coaches will appreciate a referee who is committed to both officiating and teaching.

## SECTION ONE: REFEREEING UPWARD BASKETBALL

Be sure to encourage players. Words of praise, high-fives, or clapping hands are all effective ways to build a young athlete's confidence and it also establishes a good relationship between you and all players.

Communicating with coaches during the game is also very important because it builds a rapport with the coach while addressing any concerns they may have. As coaches and teams exit the court for halftime, take this opportunity to make adjustments for the second half. Based on the action in the first half, let coaches know what things you will be looking for when play resumes.



**SECTION TWO**  
**RULE LEVELS**  
**TO UPWARD**  
**BASKETBALL**



## ***The Levels of Upward Basketball***

Upward Basketball uses a four-level age appropriate format that grows with each young athlete. Each level of Upward Basketball is tailored to meet athletes where they are in their playing ability, allowing them to reach their full potential.

Each level of Upward Basketball includes a specific game format and rules, which are expressed in this guide. Levels 1-3 use a set of common rules with modifications designed for each level. Level 4 uses an exclusive set of rules that follow a traditional middle school format.

### ***Basic Rules for Levels 1-3***

*\*Note: These rules do NOT apply to Level 4. Except where the following rules apply, play is governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) Rules Book ([www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)).*

### ***Game Format***

1. Referees lead both teams in prayer at center court before every game. This sets the tone and focus for the game.
2. A coin flip or other impartial method determines which team receives possession first. In jump ball situations, possessions will alternate. This promotes fairness for both teams while adhering to the NFHS rule for jump ball situations.
3. Clock format: Running clock throughout the game, stopping only for pre-determined substitutions at the end of each segment and halftime.

## SECTION TWO: RULE LEVELS TO UPWARD BASKETBALL

4. At the end of each segment, the team that receives the ball next is based upon the direction of the possession arrow. This avoids the offensive team that may have possession in the next segment from stalling at the end of a period.
5. All coaches will adhere to the substitution system as detailed in Guide 10. The substitution system allows for equal playing time for all players.
6. There are no timeouts. This allows more playing time and keeps the games on time.
7. Teams switch goals at halftime. This rule is in compliance with NFHS Rules. It also evens any advantage that may occur because of the court.
8. Any game ending in a tie should remain in a tie. No overtimes are played so games stay on schedule.
9. Standings add unneeded pressure to the game and therefore will not be maintained.

## ***Rules for Play***

### ***Defense***

1. Man-to-man defense will be played at all times. Zone defenses are not allowed in Levels 1-3. In a man-to-man defense, players are only guarding the opponent that closely matches their ability and height. This allows for a more competitive system for every player on the court while creating an equal opportunity for each player.
2. Defensive players must stay within arm's reach of the player they are guarding. This prevents defenders from sagging or crowding an area of the court to gain a defensive advantage.
3. Double-teaming is not allowed. However, help defense is strongly encouraged in the following instances:
  - Lane Area: If a defender is in the lane and the player he or she is guarding is within arm's reach, the defender is allowed to provide help defense. Since many goals are scored in the lane, it provides the defense more opportunity to properly defend this area.
  - Picks and Screens: Defensive switching is allowed on offensive picks or screens. The non-screened defender can help his or her teammate by temporarily switching until the teammate recovers to defend their offensive player. This is commonly referred to as "help and recover." This prevents the offense from continually setting screens to gain an advantage.
  - Fast Breaks: When an offensive player has beaten their defender, another defensive player may help. Upon stopping the fast break, defenders should return to guarding their assigned players. This rule

## SECTION TWO: RULE LEVELS TO UPWARD BASKETBALL

is meant to prevent the defenders from helplessly watching the offensive player score without being able to help.

4. At the beginning of each segment, players will line up at half court and “match up” with whom they are guarding. This act is performed to promote equal player match-ups. Equal match-ups combined with man-to-man defense create five competitive pairings on the court.
5. Full court presses are not allowed. Defensive players may not guard their opponents in the backcourt. This will allow for more play to occur in the front court and create an equal opportunity for each child to participate both on offense and defense.
6. Due to the shortness of the court, backcourt violations will not be called. If playing on a regulation-size court (84 feet) as opposed to cross-court, backcourt violations should be called.
7. A player committing two fouls in one segment must sit out the remainder of that segment. The next player in the rotation comes in as the substitute and is rewarded some extra game time. This does not change the normal rotation as the fouled-out player does not re-enter the game until he or she is scheduled to do so. This rule allows the offending player time to regroup during the remainder of the segment while realizing that there is a consequence for the violation.

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### **Offense**

1. The offense must purposefully attack the defense in every situation – no stalling. After a warning from the referee, a violation will be called resulting in a turnover. This will prevent a team with the lead from running the clock out by staying in the backcourt.
2. Isolation plays will not be a part of Levels 1-3 because they take away the opportunity for improvement for all players and contradict the spirit of the rules.
3. Non-shooting fouls will result in the ball being in-bounded from either the baseline or sideline. All shooting fouls will result in free throws. By not administering “bonus” situation free throws, all players on the court can contribute to consistent game action.
4. No score will be given for a basket in the wrong goal. It will be treated as a turnover. This will prevent further embarrassing a player for making this mistake.

All other rules have specific modifications for Levels 1-3. See the following charts for these modifications:



# SECTION TWO: RULE LEVELS TO UPWARD BASKETBALL



## Rule Adjustments by Division Level 1 Modifications

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS
Goal Height	7 feet
Ball Size	25"
Games consist of six, 4-minute segments and an 8 minute halftime. One minute is allotted for substitutions between segments.	This keeps games to approximately a 45-minute time frame. It also allows each player to be in the game for shorter segments than older age divisions.
Score is not kept	The focus of this age is to learn fundamentals, not winning and losing
3-second violation is not called	Referees should advise players of this potential violation but not penalize.
Coaches are allowed on the floor with players	The focus is for coaches to instruct and encourage players at all times.
Stealing the ball from the dribbler is not allowed	To encourage the offensive player to dribble with correct form without the pressure of having the ball stolen
Stealing the ball off a pass is not allowed	To encourage the offensive player to pass with correct form without the pressure of having the ball stolen

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**Level 1 Modifications (continued)**

<b>RULE</b>	<b>EXPLANATION/COMMENTS</b>
Violation is not called for having two hands on the ball while dribbling	Due to limited hand-eye coordination, this allows a player to establish correct dribbling form through rhythm and pressure on the ball
Violation for double dribbling is called but does not result in a turnover	Players should learn the concept of double dribble but should be allowed the opportunity to correct it without penalty
Violation for traveling is called but does not result in a turnover	Players should learn the concept of traveling but should be allowed the opportunity to correct it without penalty
Violation for traveling is not called when a player shuffles feet when trying to set up for a shot	Because this age group is single skill focused, players will tend to shuffle their feet when focusing on setting up for a shot. This is corrected as the player develops in skill as he gets older.
Fast breaks are not allowed in any transition situation	This promotes a controlled game. Players at this age learn better when the pace is controlled
Shooting fouls do not result in free throw attempts	A player who gets fouled while shooting gets to retry his/her shot from the spot of the foul without being defended. Ball is live after shot is attempted. This allows a player to attempt a shot that he was trying to take prior to the foul from the same spot.

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## Level 2 Modifications

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS
Goal Height	8 feet
Ball Size	25"
Games consist of six, 6-minute segments and an 8 minute halftime. One minute is allotted for substitutions between segments.	This keeps games to approximately an hour time frame.
Score is NOT kept	Young athletes at this age should not focus on the score but rather the developmental skills being taught.
3-second violation is NOT called	Young athletes at this age should focus on offensive basics (dribbling, passing, shooting, and rebounding).
Coaches are allowed to walk the sidelines to encourage and instruct players	The focus is for coaches to instruct and encourage players at all times.

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**Level 2 Modifications (continued)**

<b>RULE</b>	<b>EXPLANATION/COMMENTS</b>
<p>Free throws are awarded on all shooting fouls.</p>	<p>Two shots are attempted by the fouled player at the 10' line. Coaches may quickly come onto the court to line up players in proper free throw positions. After the second shot, the ball will be inbounded by the opposing team regardless of shot result.</p>
<p>Stealing the ball off a dribble or pass is allowed</p> <p>Double dribble violation is called in all circumstances</p> <p>Traveling violation is called in all circumstances</p> <p>Fast breaks are allowed in any transition situation</p>	<p>Players at this age should be taught and held to these basic basketball rules.</p>

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## Level 3 Modifications

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS
Goal Height	9 feet
Ball Size	28.5"
Games consist of six, 6-minute segments and an 8 minute halftime. One minute is allotted for substitutions between segments.	This keeps games to approximately an hour time frame.
Score IS kept	Young athletes at this age should learn how to handle winning and losing after competition. This translates into life lessons.
3-second violation is called and results in a turnover	At this age, young athletes should understand the concept of offensive movement by not allowing an offensive player to stay in the lane more than 3 seconds.
Coaches allowed to walk the sidelines to encourage and instruct players	The focus is for coaches to instruct and encourage players at all times.

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## Level 3 Modifications (continued)

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS
<p>Clock runs continuously with special rules in effect with fewer than two minutes remaining in the game:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-shooting fouls result in the offensive team getting one point and the ball.</li> <li>• Shooting fouls result in the offensive team scoring two points. The opposing team then takes possession.</li> <li>• Players fouled in the act of shooting and making the basket are credited with the basket plus one point. The opposing team then takes possession.</li> </ul>	<p>Because the clock does not stop, this rule keeps the game moving without wasting the running game clock on lining up for free throw attempts</p>
<p>Free throws are awarded on all shooting fouls.</p>	<p>Two shots are attempted by the fouled player at the 12' line. Remaining players assume proper free throw positioning. Ball is live if second shot is missed.</p>
<p>Stealing the ball off a dribble or pass is allowed</p>	
<p>Double dribble violation is called in all circumstances</p>	
<p>Traveling violation is called in all circumstances</p>	
<p>Fast breaks are allowed in any transition situation</p>	<p>Players at this age should be taught and held to these basic basketball rules.</p>

# SECTION TWO: RULE LEVELS TO UPWARD BASKETBALL

## Level 4 Rules

*\*The following rules are exclusive to Level 4. They follow a more traditional middle school format and game play. Except where the following rules apply, play is governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) Rules Book ([www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org))*

### Game Format

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS
Referees lead both team in prayer at center court before every game	This sets the tone and focus for the game
Goal Height	10 feet
Ball Size	28.5" (girls), 29.5" (boys)
Games consist of 4, six-minute quarters	Follows middle school rules and allows game to begin and end within an hour timeframe
The clock stops at each whistle	Stoppage of play includes violations, fouls, out-of-bounds play, timeouts, and injury
Overtimes are 2 minutes in length (regulation clock)	Gives both teams the opportunity to win the game with reasonable extended time. If still tied at the end of the overtime period, the game ends in a tie.
Teams are allowed one (1) 30-second timeout per half (1 per team per half)	This allows a coach to meet with players and adjust strategy during a game.
All games are played on a full-sized regulation court (no cross court)	This is appropriate floor size for players at this level.



## Rules for Play

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS
A jump ball is used to start the game and overtime period	Athletes at this age have the physical ability to jump for the ball to obtain possession. It also follows the NFHS rules for starting a game or overtime
Zone and man defenses are allowed (both should be used throughout the season)	Players at this level possess the ability to defend and attack both zone and man principles. Zone and man defenses are a part of the game of basketball and should be understood by players as they prepare for the next level.
Press defense is allowed in the backcourt at all times except if a team has a 15-point advantage	To promote fairness and integrity of the game, teams with a 15-point advantage should drop into a basic half-court defense.
All players are allowed five (5) fouls each game. After the 5th foul is committed, the player is out for the remainder of the game	This rule follows traditional middle school rules format
After the seventh team foul in each half, bonus free throws are awarded to the fouled team (1 and 1)	
Three point shots are allowed only if the court features a three-point arc.	Courts without a 3-point line should not award 3 points no matter the shot distance

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# SECTION TWO: RULE LEVELS TO UPWARD BASKETBALL

## Rules for Play (continued)

RULE	EXPLANATION/COMMENTS
<p>Playing time requirements for each player in Level 4 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each athlete plays a minimum of ¼ of each game</li> <li>• Each athlete must play in both halves of each game</li> </ul>	<p>Level 4 does not use the substitution system found in Levels 1-3. This allows flexibility in managing playing time for each coach based on the game situation while promoting fair game participation for all players</p>
<p>End of season tournaments are highly encouraged for Level 4</p>	<p>End of season tournament play adds excitement to your league. A minimum of 2 games per team in tournament play.</p>

## ***What to Watch For (Levels 1-3 ONLY)***

If you are refereeing in Levels 1, 2 or 3, there are some common violations that will frequently occur on the court, as well as situations that specifically relate to the rules unique to Upward Basketball.

### ***Common Violations***

#### ***Defense in the Backcourt***

No full-court press defense of any kind is permitted in Levels 1-3. Referees must keep the flow of traffic away from the ball in the backcourt so that the offense can move the ball up court. Saying things such as, “Defense, get back” helps keep the flow of the game smooth. This is especially important in the first few weeks, when some players are new or still getting reacquainted with this rule.

#### ***Zone Defense and Sagging Defenders***

No zone defense of any kind is permitted in Levels 1-3. Some teams like to “sag” back in the lane and almost present themselves in a zone. This is illegal in Upward Basketball. Defensive players must stay within arm’s reach of the player they are guarding.

#### ***Double-Teaming***

While double-teaming is not allowed, help defense is encouraged in the following three situations:

- › In the Lane Area
- › Offensive Picks and Screens
- › During Fast Breaks

## SECTION TWO: RULE LEVELS TO UPWARD BASKETBALL

### ***Fouls on Picks and Screens***

Protect players by watching for the following fouls on picks and screens:

- › Moving While Setting Pick - A common form of moving pick is for the offensive player setting the screen not to plant his or her feet or give the defender room to move. A moving pick or screen is illegal. Offensive players may attempt to block the defender any way they can. Make the call early, and teach players the correct way to set a pick.
- › Arms Out While Setting Pick - Along with a moving pick, players will want to make themselves a larger pick by using the span of their arms to gain an advantage when shielding defenders. This is illegal. Players need to learn to protect themselves with their arms by their sides, not extended like a clothesline.
- › Players Running Through Picks - Defenders must try to avoid picks and screens and not simply try to shove through them. It is illegal for a defender to push through the offensive player setting the pick.

For further explanation regarding fouls on picks and screens, refer to the NFHS website ([www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)).



## SECTION THREE

# CALLING THE GAME

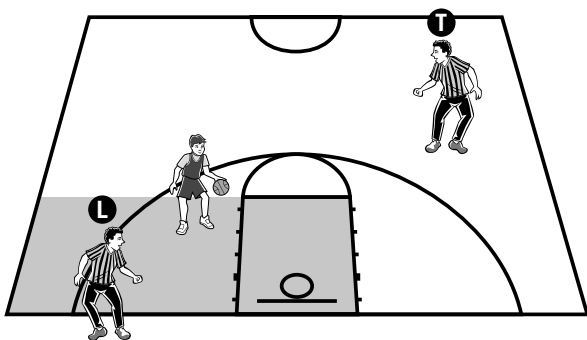


# SECTION THREE: CALLING THE GAME

## **How to Make a Call**

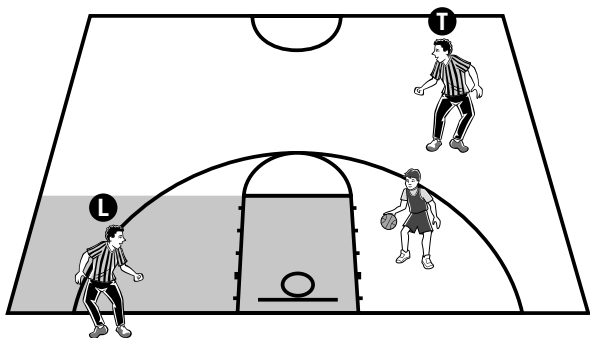
### **Positioning and Responsibilities**

You can't call what you don't see. Refereeing at any level is about being in the right position. This requires good communication between you and your partner. Each game will require two referees that alternate as lead and trail duties with each change of possession. The lead referee is the first official down the court and positions himself along the baseline in the near court. The trail official positions himself diagonally from the lead in the near court beyond the top of the key or three point line. During a change of possession, the lead and trail officials switch, making the lead the new trail and the trail the new lead.

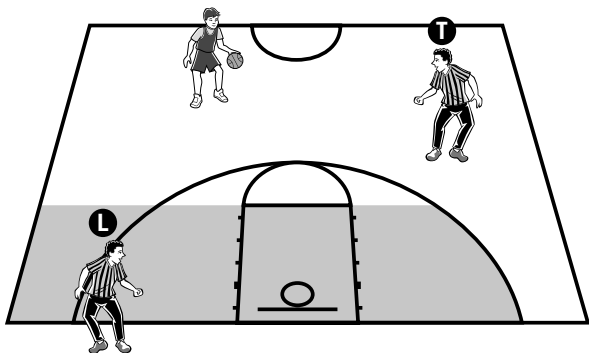


In the above diagram, the lead official (L) has on-ball coverage (shaded area) because that official is near the ball. The trail official (T) is off the ball and covers the rest of the court. The lead official's coverage area extends to the free-throw line and includes the entire free-throw lane.

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If the ball moves outside the lead official's coverage area, the trail official then assumes on-ball coverage, and the lead official's coverage is now off the ball (see above).



Above, you can see that the ball has now moved up high near midcourt on the lead official's side. In this situation, the trail official has ball coverage, and the lead official has off-ball coverage. The lead official's coverage area has now extended beyond the free-throw lane. This extended coverage helps the trail focus on the action occurring around the ball.

## SECTION THREE: CALLING THE GAME

### ***Responsibilities of both referees:***

- › Watch for fouls and violations (traveling, double dribble, etc.)
- › Watch down the sideline and baseline
- › Administer free throws (help line up players along the lane if necessary)
- › Administer dead ball throw-ins (baseline or sideline)
- › Blow the whistle to end the play. When one referee blows the whistle, the other should blow the whistle as well.

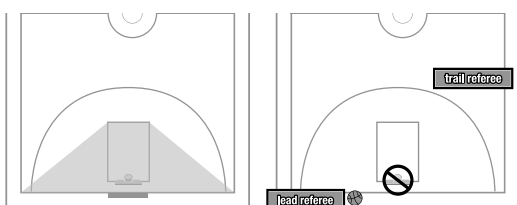
If you desire to be a quality referee, there are four common positioning traps to avoid:

- › Both officials stay in the trail position or on opposite sidelines – If this occurs, there is no way to make an accurate call on action “in the paint” or near the baseline.
- › Both officials watching the ball – If this happens, who is watching action away from the ball? The only time the lead official watches the ball is when the ball is in his or her area. The lead official does not watch the ball if it is in the trail official’s area or the perimeter area.
- › Being lazy – Doing one’s best is a big part of Upward Basketball. This effort is expected from the coaches, players, and the referees. Remember, hustle up and down the floor the entire game to get in the proper position to make the call. This will make your job as well as your partner’s job much easier.



## SECTION THREE: CALLING THE GAME

Allowing the ball to be thrown-in under the basket - If action is stopped from the free-throw line corners to the baseline corners, the ball should be thrown-in along the baseline closest to the stopped action. Never allow the basketball to be thrown-in directly under the basket or parallel to the lane area. (see diagram below)



### ***Fouls/Violations Hand Signals***

Often times, referees will blow the whistle to signal either a foul or a violation. In order to make this call, you must be able to recognize not only what represents a foul or violation, but also what the appropriate hand signals are for each. Remember, coaches, parents, and players want to know why the whistle was blown. Using proper hand signals is an effective way to communicate what is happening on the court. Below is the definition of a foul and a violation as well as their basic hand signals. Please view training videos on the referee resources of MyUpward.org for demonstrations of the following hand signals.

## **Fouls**

A foul is defined as any illegal contact made between a player and his/her opponent. A personal foul can be committed by an offensive or defensive player. When a foul is committed, the referee should blow the whistle sharply and raise their fist high in the air above the head. The hand signal that follows details the type of foul that was committed.

Below are the different types of fouls and their proper hand signal:

### ***Holding***

Foul involving grabbing onto the arm, hand or wrist of the offensive player.

- › **Signal:** Hold one arm at a 90-degree angle with fist turned with knuckles facing outward as the other hand grabs the wrist.

### ***Blocking***

Illegal contact which impedes the progress of an opponent. A blocking foul is called when the defender blocks with the body and his/her position is not clearly established.

- › **Signal:** Place both hands on hips.

### ***Player Control Foul (Offensive Foul)***

A foul called when an offensive player runs into a defender who has an established position (both feet are in a stationary position).

- › **Signal:** Place one hand behind the head at a 90-degree angle.

### ***Pushing***

A foul in which a defender pushes or shoves an offensive player in order to impede his/ her movement or progress.

- › **Signal:** Sign a pushing motion with both palms facing opposite the chest.

## **Violations**

A violation is defined as an infraction of the rules by the offensive team that does not result in a free throw; the ball is turned over to the opposing team for a throw in. If there is a violation, the referee should blow the whistle sharply, and raise an open hand high in the air above the head. Then the referee should make the appropriate hand signal that corresponds to the violation being committed.

The following are definitions of common violations and their proper hand signals:

### **Traveling**

When the ball handler takes too many steps or moves the pivot foot without dribbling.

- › **Signal:** Rotate clenched fists and forearms around each other.

### **Double Dribble**

Occurs when a player stops dribbling and then dribbles again without giving up possession, or when a player dribbles the ball with both hands at the same time.

- › **Signal:** Sign a patting motion in front of the body with one hand at a time.

### **Palming or Carrying the Ball**

When a player moves his/ her hand under the ball and scoops it while dribbling.

- › **Signal:** Hold one arm to the side of the body as the other hand waves back and forth in a side-to-side motion.

After the play has ended, the referee should address what occurred by:

- › Quickly explaining the violation/foul to the players by telling them how it can be avoided and the result of the infraction.

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The extent of the explanation will vary according to the age and understanding of the players and should decrease as the season progresses.

- › Communicating whether the consequence results in alternating possession (violation or non-shooting foul) or free throw attempts (shooting foul).