

The Fundamentals of Shooting the Basketball

The objective of the offense in Basketball is accuracy of each attempted shot. Most players recognize this; but, only the better shooters learn how to practice correctly and work at improvement year round.

Since most of this practice sessions are alone, every player must be his own critic. This means he\she must understand the proper mechanics that affect the success, or failure, of every shot.

Every player must know his range and know what is a good shot. Therefore, before examining the techniques associated with the various shots, a good basketball player is expected to have in his arsenal, here are the principles at work in every scoring shot from anywhere on a basketball court. These are divided into two parts, the mental aspect and the physical aspect:

1. **Mental.** At no time is psychological conditioning more critical than when shooting the basketball in a game. Knowing when to shoot and being able to do it effectively under pressure distinguishes the great shooter from the ordinary.

Regardless of how much he practices, or how well he conditions himself, only a modest amount of improvement is possible in speed, reflexes, or strength. History gives many examples of players able to achieve greatness despite mediocre physical talent. Usually, however, such successes are due to determination.

- a. *Concentration:* is the fixing of attention on the job at hand and is characteristic of every great athlete. Through continuous practice, good shooters develop their concentration to the extent that they are oblivious to every distraction.

Ability to relax: is closely related to *concentration*. You often hear great shooters have "ice water in their veins".

Watch a good foul shooter as he approaches the foul line. They usually begin the ritual of adjusting the feet and bouncing the ball (nearly always a set number of times). As his/her eyes open wide in sighting the basket, the concentration is so intense, there is little wonder that he/she is undisturbed by the crowd or game pressures.

- b. *Confidence:* That is a "gut certainty" the ball will drop through the basket without touching metal.

Although, a good shooter never takes a shot that he/she is not confident he/she will make, they often miss. Therefore, the probability of making any given shot is somewhat less than 100% that his/her confidence leads one to expect. Clearly, then, when we say, "Don't shoot when in doubt," we have something different in mind than we do when we say, "Don't take a low-percentage shot except in desperate circumstances."

There are reasons why a player might lack confidence when confronted with a shooting opportunity having a good statistical probability of success. He/she may be off balance. He/she may have had his/her confidence shaken by a string of misses; or he/she may be overly tense, or tired, or may have a lapse in concentration. As Coach David Hayden says, "one often contributes to the other."

Every player experiences off nights when nothing works. An equally familiar phenomenon is that a player's returning to peak form in the second half after a miserable first half. This ability to make a mental recovery is like the ability some players have of recovering in mid-air after an off-balance take-off.

2. **Physical:** Shooting a ball and connecting with the target involves the following factors:
 - a. *Sighting or locating the target:* The difference between sighting and aiming is that in aiming, a device (for example, a gun) is visually aligned with a target; thus, visual attention is equally divided between the pointer and the target. In sighting, however, the eyes are used merely to locate, or fix, the target in space, and the computing of an intercept trajectory is left for the brain.

Some coach once said, "To demonstrate the brain's ability to determine a trajectory to a known location, close your eyes and touch either your nose or your ear lobe with a forefinger. To convince yourself of this ability in relation to a visually fixed target, focus your eyes on a nearby object and, without aiming, point your finger at the object. Notice that there is a strong tendency for your attention to shift from the object to your finger and that considerable concentration is required in order to remain focused on the object."

Notice, too, that when concentrating on the object your eyes open quite wide. The reason it is so important for the eyes to remain focused on the target is that they, too, are a kind of computer, continuously updating a three-dimensional fix on whatever is being held in focus. Naturally, the smaller the area focused upon, the smaller the fix, and the greater the potential accuracy.

This brings us to the problem facing a basketball player of not having as his real target not a concrete object, but an open area just over the lip of the basket. Since his eyes can not focus on an empty space, the best he can do is to select a sighting point as nearly on line with the intended trajectory and as near the real target as possible.

When making a bank shot, the shooter solves the problem on a spot related to the painted rectangle above the basket. For all other shots, however, he must decide upon a sighting point somewhere on the rim.

Personal preference determines whether the point selected is on the front or the back rim, but he/she should decide on one or the other and stick with that sighting point for all similar shots. Then, for every shot, he/she should fix upon the same number of cords, while conscious that he/she wants to drop the ball either just beyond front of the rim, or just before the back of the rim, whichever point he chose to sight. The sighting point must be held in constant and clear focus from the moment the shot is begun to the completion of the follow-through.

- b. *Body Balance:* When properly balanced, a shooter can coordinate the efforts of each muscle to produce a force in the direction of the basket. Although the degree of balance may vary from the near perfect stance of a two-hand set shot to the last effort recovery of an aggressive drive-in.

The shooter's ability to control the trajectory of the ball is directly dependent upon his/her ability to control the acceleration forces generated by his/her own body. However, it is doubtful whether a shot ever succeeds unless, at the moment of release, the shooter has enough control to complete a smooth, continuous follow-through.

Some players have such body control they can hit baskets from positions impossible for any other player. Each player must learn whether or not he/she is in a position to take a shot and complete a follow-through that will leave him/her in the position to rebound a missed shot.

- c. *Generating the force:* In their book, *Basketball Concepts and Techniques*, Bob Cousy and Frank G. Power, Jr., tell us, "From physics, we know that when several forces act upon an object, the effect is the same as that of a single force equal to the vectorial sum of the force components..." In simpler terms this means, the more horses pulling in the same direction, the greater the horsepower.

They go on to explain, "To a weightlifter, this means that it is possible to synchronize the efforts of leg, back, shoulder, and arm muscles to lift a heavier weight above the head (as in a jerk) than is possible with the arms alone (as in press). To a basketball player, it means that the force he can impart to the ball ranges from that required for a long *two-handed set shot* to that required for a *tip-in* a few inches from the basket."

Therefore, beginning at the ball, each of the following add to the total transmitted force:

- A forward action of the wrists and fingers.
- A sudden extension of the arm, snapping the shoulder and elbow.
- Rising to the balls of the feet.

"Since the force imparted by a muscle under strain is difficult to control, best results are obtained when all muscles can be brought into a smooth, coordinated effort that is within individual limitations."

Obviously, with a *jump shot*, much of the energy generated is converted to altitude. The remaining force required must be provided by arms, wrist, and fingers.

- a. *Timing or rhythm*: The timing of a shot begins with getting the correct foot down for takeoff (jump shot) and ends with the follow-through and recovery. In a *set-shot*. Perfect timing results in a smooth, continuous thrust from the floor upward, developing a peak force at the fingertips, the instant before, and sustained through, fingertip release.

In a *jump-shot*, body momentum decreases rapidly to zero and the shot must be timed so that fingertip release occurs just **prior** to the **highest point** of the jump. Any non-synchronized acceleration of the body, or its members (for example, jerking the head) will directly affect the path after launching of the ball.

- b. *Hand-eye coordination and fingertip control*: All forces imparted to the ball by the shooter should pass through the fingertips. This technique allows the fingers to make fine trajectory adjustments at release and provides a soft natural backspin.

By stating that the optimum trajectory is that which results in the ball's entering the basket at the highest possible angle commensurate with the lowest possible velocity, we shall have said all that can be said about trajectory.

Combined with a soft natural backspin, a medium trajectory results in the "soft touch" kind of shot that even if slightly off target, will either drop in or hang on the rim for an easy tip-in.

In adjusting his/her hands preparatory to shooting, the shooter should space the fingers comfortably to hold the ball firmly in his/her fingertips and on the heels of both hands. The palms are held slightly clear and the three middle fingers aligned perpendicular to the seams. Players should practice their feel of this until this adjustment becomes instinctive as soon as they catch a ball.

- c. *Follow-through*: Throughout the act of shooting, the brain continues to compute the precise amount and direction of the force needed to reach the target. Although these computations continue automatically in what computer people call, "real time," there is sufficient lag time to make compensations impossible for any abrupt accelerations at, or before, the instant of release.

Therefore, success depends upon the constant sighting and a smooth, continuous build-up of propelling force that reaches its peak at the instant the ball leaves the fingertips. This means that a follow-through period in which the forces generated are allowed to diminish is an essential part of the shooting sequence.

Fundamental Techniques for Specific Shots

Before describing the techniques associated with the various shots a player might have in his offensive repertory, we again emphasize the importance of improvisation to the particular style of each player.

Basketball has changed in recent decades, largely due to innovations of individual players whose experimenting with accepted techniques led to development and recognition of revolutionary new techniques. For example, dunks, behind-the-back passes, jump shots, shot blocking, and one-handed set shots were once considered showboating.

The Basic Shots.

Virtually every shot required can be adapted from a mastery of six basic techniques:

Lay-up: Approaching from the right (technique reverses from the left), the shooter grasps the ball in both hands as his/her right foot hits the floor, keeping the body between the ball and defender.

Come down hard on the left foot, and thrust sharply upward with the right knee, carrying the ball in both hands as high as possible with the right hand behind the ball, wrist cocked and facing the basket, and the left hand in front, wrist away from the basket.

This last step is a shorter step that enables the shooter to convert his forward motion into vertical jumping thrust. At the top of the high jump, with both arms above your head erect, eyes fixed on a spot high above and to the right of the basket, allow the left hand to fall away. Your right arm, wrist, and fingers extend to place the ball against the sighted point in a motion similar to that of trying to grasp the rim from a running start without the ball.

The backboard should be used for lay-ups approached from the side. After completing his follow-through, the shooter lands with hips down, knees bent, and body weight low, ready to rebound. or go on defense. A lay-up is used in the following situations:

- A player receives a pass, close in, while cutting for the basket.
- A player dribbles past defenders and under the basket.

One-handed underhand: Except in theory, this shot is never used from a set position; however, the usefulness of this technique for such special purposes as underhand lay-ups and pivots will reward the player who spends time mastering them. From the initial position with both hands holding the ball, reach toward the basket with one hand under the ball, allowing the helper hand fall away.

With your shooting arm fully extended and eyes focused on the sighting spot, lift the ball toward either the basket or a spot on the backboard by raising the arm and adding a soft flick of the wrist and fingers. Follow-through with the palm upward and the arm bent slightly at the elbow.

Executed as described, the ball will carry with a minimum forward rotation. Any side rotation of the hand position at release, however, culminating in a follow-through with the hand edgewise and wrist cocked upward, will impart a side-spin that must be compensated for when sighting.

Two-handed set: This shot is hardly used by modern-day players; however, Bob McDermott, the best shooter I ever saw used it with great success. Therefore, it is described here because I feel it is the most accurate shot from long range.

During his era, five-foot-eleven guard Bobby McDermott owned basketball's best two-handed set shot. The dazzling McDermott, who was voted the "Greatest Player of All-Time" in 1946 by NBL coaches, players and sports editors, had the raw athletic ability to score from anywhere inside half court.

At a time when teams played deliberate, slowdown basketball, McDermott often scored more than 20 points in a game. Known as "Mr. Basketball Man," McDermott turned professional after just one year of high school, and starred in the ABL and NBL for 17 years. After leading the Brooklyn Visitations to the ABL title in 1935, McDermott played for the Original Celtics from 1936 to 1939 and 1940 to 1941, and quickly became the player fans wanted to watch perform. In five seasons with the Fort Wayne Zollner Pistons, McDermott landed two straight NBL titles (1944 and 1945) and three straight World Professional Tournament titles.

As player/coach of the Chicago Gears in 1947, "Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside" teamed with George Mikan to bring the Gears an NBL championship. McDermott, the only basketball player to lead three leagues (ABL, NYSL, NBL) in scoring and the only pro basketball player/coach to guide two teams to championships, was annually among the NBL's leading scorers.

McDermott was considered by many to be the dominant player in basketball from the mid-1930s to the late 1940s. He concluded his career in 1950, the year Collier's named him to the All-World Team.

In the set position, the feet are spaced and aligned for balance and comfort. Each player should determine the position of the feet that gives him/her the most confidence. He/she should forever-after use that position for all similar shots. The weight is on the balls of the feet, with the heels resting lightly on the floor. Both knees are flexed. The upper body is bent slightly forward at the waist with the back straight. The ball is held comfortably in the fingertips of both hands about a foot in front of the body slightly below chin level. The fingers are spread wide, the thumbs and little fingers on the same line with the thumbs close together in the rear. The elbows are held fairly close to the body. The head is stationary and erect while the eyes remain fixed on the sighting target.

Execution is a simultaneous thrust with arms and legs, rising from the heels, locking the knees and elbows, with a flick of the wrists and fingers in the direction of the sighted target. This imparts a soft backspin to the ball. The follow-through is a continuation of the inward and downward rotation of the thumbs, leaving the hands declining slightly at the wrists, the palms turned outward. Eye concentration is essential.

One-handed set: This shot retains much of the balance, range, and accuracy of the *two-handed set* while realizing an increase in speed of getting off the shot. Because the technique is essentially the same as all other non-hooking, one-hand overhead shots, including the jump shot, it should be the basic shot for every player.

For the one-handed set shot, position the foot under the shooting hand slightly forward of the other. The level the ball is carried may be a matter of choice.

Some players prefer to shoot from the chest, while others prefer to come from shoulder; however, the higher the ball is carried in the set position, the closer the shooter can be to the defender and still get his shot away.

The starting point also affects the range. The higher the ball, the shorter the range. The shooting hand is positioned on the low-back side of the ball, fingers spread comfortably wide, with palm facing the basket and held clear of the ball by the fingertips and heel of the hand. The off hand is on the low-forward side, palm away from the basket. The function of the off-hand is to provide balance and control.

The off-hand falls away the instant **before** release and the driving force to the ball is transmitted solely by the shooting hand. Otherwise, shot execution is the same as a two-handed set. The shooter rises to his toes and thrusts with his legs. Simultaneously, he thrusts his shooting arm to full extension, his hand and fingers flexing downward at the wrist in order to impart a gentle backspin as the ball is released.

Jump Shot: This shot is the most used, today. When preceded by a fake, a quick accurate jump shot is virtually impossible to block. In fact, the fake is essential to its effectiveness. Unless he/she is considerably taller, to defend the jump shooter, the defender must be able to synchronize his/her own jump perfectly with that of the shooter. This is a difficult task by even the simplest of fakes.

From shoulders-up, if movement is toward the basket, the shot execution is the same as for a one-handed set shot. Therefore, once the technique of set shooting has been perfected, it becomes easy to expand one's arsenal of shots to include the many varied jump shots.

Takeoff can either be from a stationary position, facing any direction, or from a position on the move after dribbling, pivoting, or receiving a pass.

Takeoff from the stationary position is generally with both feet, but, when moving, it is usually from the foot opposite the shooting hand. The position of the legs once in the air is a matter of preference. It all depends on what is comfortable for the individual. I have seen some great shooters tuck their legs, others leave them extended and spread and some extend them, but keep them together. It is my opinion that all this depends upon balance, distance from basket, and the defensive pressure. Regardless of individual style, the following technique is essentially the same for all jump shots. As he/she begins the crouch, the jump shooter carries the ball in both hands to a preliminary position near the shoulder of the shooting side.

If the player is moving, the crouch occurs on count two of a two-count stop and is initiated by the foot opposite the shooting hand. If he is stationary, the crouch is with both legs and weight evenly distributed on balls of both feet. The

elbows are held slightly forward and not necessarily under the ball. The hands are positioned with the off-hand leading and the shooting hand trailing. Spread the fingers comfortably wide as for a one-handed set shot. While sighting the target and as the legs unflex at the start of the jump, the shooter raises the ball with both hands to a shooting position slightly forward and either straight above, or above and to the shooting side of the head.

Taller players tend to prefer a more overhead position than short players. Just prior to reaching the apex of the jump, the shooter with palm of the shooting hand facing the basket, the shooter cocks the wrist so that the palm faces up and forward and his off-hand rides high and in front. Considerable concentration is necessary to ensure continuous sighting as the shooter's hands and forearms cross his line of sight.

As mentioned above, when nearing the apex of his jump, the shooter uncocks the forearm and wrist in a quick supple motion, allowing the off-hand to fall away. The forward motion of the hand and fingertips impart a gentle backspin to the ball. The follow-through is completed with the shooting arm fully extended and hand and fingers declining as if taking a cookie from a jar.

Hooks: The hook shot is an extremely versatile and effective shot from close-in to medium range. Both centers and forwards should, early in their careers, master its technique with both hands. This type shot can be executed after dribbling to either side, receiving a pass and pivoting, or after rebounding and a pivot.

In each instance, the shot is taken off the foot opposite the shooting hand. For a right handed hook, the shooter pivots to the left, pushing off his right foot, turning his/her body and head to pick up the sighting point, while his/her right hand, palm up, extends out parallel to the floor.

Taking off on the left foot, he/she completes a continuous, sweeping overhead arc toward the basket. As in every other shot, success depends upon effective sighting, a soft wrist, fingertip control, and a smooth continuous follow-through.

Other check points include high knee lift, two hand raising of the ball for added control before extending the ball away from the body, and extension of the weak-hand elbow to a position parallel to the floor to keep his defender at a distance. A correctly executed follow-through will leave the shooter facing the basket and in good rebounding position.

Adaptations and Variations

After a player masters the fundamental techniques of hook shooting from various distances within his own optimum-percentage area, he/she should begin to elaborate upon the technique by incorporating the specialized fakes, pivots, turns, etc., that apply to the play situations most often developing from his team position. Informal practice to perfect close-in shots with either hand will add greatly to a player's value as an offensive threat.

Special Purpose Lay-ups: Although one of the two variations described previously, should be used in most lay-up situations, the exceptionally talented player may find that two additional lay-up shots will increase his scoring opportunities.

- 1. The floating two-handed underhand lay-up:** Can be used by a hard driving guard coming down the lane in front of a closely defended basket. Instead of the high jump of the conventional lay-up, a broad jump is begun toward the basket, from six to nine feet out, with a takeoff from either foot. After takeoff, the player tucks the feet under the thighs and floats toward the basket, the ball held between both hands. The release is timed for the apex of the jump and is effected by extending both arms forward and flipping the ball up with wrists and fingers.
- 2. The driving one-handed underhanded lay-up:** This is useful either for a miscalculated takeoff too far from the basket or as a calculated tactic to counter pressure from a defender in position to block a conventional overhead shot. Again, this shot is made from a broad jump, but in this case the takeoff foot is the same as that of a conventional lay-up. That is left-foot for a right-hand shot and right-foot for a left-hand shot.

The ball is initially held in both hands, the body between the ball and the defender; however, after takeoff the hand nearest the defender falls away, and the shot is accomplished by a reaching motion. The arm extends forward at shoulder level, the shooting hand under the ball, and the wrist and fingers flick the ball

toward a sighting spot on the backboard, slightly above and to the shooter's side of the basket. Some rotation of the wrist may be required in order to impart a slight carrying spin to get it into the basket.

Under-the-basket shots: Frequently, a player cutting under the basket finds himself/herself with the ball too close in for a lay-up of any type. In this case, he has two alternatives for a high percentage shot:

1. **A semi-hook or short-hook:** Takeoff for both these shots is from the foot opposite the shooting hand, with the ball held high and in both hands. In the semi-hook, however, as the shooter rises from the floor, he turns to face the basket, allowing his off-hand to fall away, and hooking overhead and toward the basket with his shooting arm, the elbow and wrist inclined in a shallow arc. For a short-hook the shooter does not turn toward the basket. Instead, he gets the ball away by a full overhead hook, with the arm relaxed, extended, and a soft flick of the wrist and fingers.
2. **A layback or reverse lay-up:** Initiated from the side opposite the side from you approach the basket. The side can be approached from the side or from the rear, utilizing the four-foot area between the backboard and end line. You takeoff from the foot opposite the strong hand. Tilt the head back to see the sighting point, carrying the ball upward with both hands. At fullest extension, let the helping hand fall away with the shooting hand rotating inward toward the little finger. Release the ball with a flick of the wrist and fingers. If you are ambidextrous, try to master this shot with either hand.

Drive-in hook: An important weapon in the repertory of smaller back-court players is used when a taller defender switches to block a drive to the basket. While still in motion, the shooter begins with the same takeoff as for a conventional lay-up; however, when the ball is level with the shoulders, it is extended out, held in the shooting hand, away from the defender. A high trajectory shot is then effected with an overhead hook with the arm fully extended.

Close-in jump shot: Following a quick stop and fake, this shot can often be executed before the defender can react. The attacker moves from his weak to his/her strong side, stops, fakes, and takes off on his strong-side foot. Turning toward the basket in mid-air, he/she shoots quickly, with one hand slightly before reaching the top of his jump. The attacker uses the same technique when moving from the strong side, except that a slight fall-away may be necessary in turning toward the basket.

Close-in pivot shots: Most of these shot opportunities come to low or medium post players or a forward when his back is to the basket. Therefore, players at these positions must master the following:

1. **Right and left-handed hooks:** A close-in back-to-the-basket hook shot is almost impossible to block. Because of the three-second rule, however, speed in getting the shot away is essential.

Ideally, the pass-in should be shoulder high, with the ball caught with both feet off the ground, landing in a position where both feet in position for a pivot in either direction. However, should pass reception require establishing one foot as the pivot by taking a step in the direction of the pass, then the step should be taken with the foot nearest the basket.

Upon receiving the ball, the shooter should execute a head-and-shoulder fake while bringing the ball shoulder level and elbows extended. Obviously, the shooter must be capable of shooting with either hand if a fake is to be convincing. Depending upon opportunity and ability, the shooter follows his fake with a quick pivot obliquely toward, parallel to, or away from, the end line.

2. **Turn-arounds:** This is simple to master. A successful execution requires that a step, pivot, take-off, and shot be effected in one continuous motion. The ball is received in both hands, with the weight evenly distributed on both feet so that a turn may be made in either direction.

For a right hand shot, a head-and-shoulder fake to the right is quickly followed by a step to the left with the left, or non-pivot, foot. In the same motion, pivot to face the basket, thrust upward with the right knee, and a left foot takeoff. During execution of the turn, bring the ball up to a shooting position, above the head, with both hands.

3. **Step-in pivots:** From a close-in pivot position, it is sometimes possible to take advantage of a defensive lapse by following a fake with a pivot directly toward the basket. If the player sees that his defender is moving in the direction of the fake, the pivot player, synchronizing his movements with the defender's lapse, can drop his/her non-pivot foot quickly toward the basket, pinning the defender behind. The shot can either be a hook, a turn-around, and underhand pivot, or a simple lay-up.
4. **Underhand pivots:** Whenever a pivot player is close-in, back-to-the-basket situation and feels pressure of the defender on his back, he/she can fake to the side of the pressure, execute a step-in pivot in the opposite direction, and shoot under the defender's arm with an underhand upward motion. The ball is released toward the basket with a lifting rotation of the forearm and wrist of the shooting hand, imparting a soft carrying spin. Sighting must take into account both the spin and lower arc. Rhythm and follow-through are essential.
5. **Step-aways:** This is useful when the back-to-the-basket pivot player has the ball but not closely guarded because of a mental lapse by his defender. For example, when the defender reacts to a fake by moving away from the shooter and toward the basket, the shot can be executed by stepping away from the basket with the non-pivot foot, pivoting on this foot to face the basket, simultaneously thrusting upward with the other knee for a rear-foot takeoff, executing a one-handed shot. Since this shot is easily blocked by a close defender, the fake, pivot, and shot must be perfectly timed.
6. **Jump-turns:** Most pivot players consider the turn-around jumper to be their best back-to-the-basket offensive weapons. Its success is largely due to its simplicity and to the effectiveness of an easily executed fake. In making the shot, the back-to-the-basket pivot brings the ball up to the shooting position while simultaneously executing a straight-up jump-turn to face the basket, timing the one-handed release prior to the apex of the jump. The fake is accomplished by a quick straightening of the knees and upward motion that simulates the beginning of a takeoff, making it impossible for the defender to synchronize his jump with the shooter.

Tip-ins are not lucky slaps at the ball. They are practiced as any other shot in the shot repertory of any tall basketball player. An offensive rebounder should be ready to make a *tip-in shot* of any rebound in his area and within six feet of the basket.

Facing the basket, with knees flexed, hands up, and elbows wide at the shoulders, the tip-in shooter times his takeoff to make fingertip contact just prior to reaching the top of his/her jump. The shooting hand first controls the ball with fingers spread and flexible wrist, flicking the ball upward in a soft trajectory toward the basket. Even if control is not possible, some type of contact, such as a slap, should be made with the ball.

Sighting, fingertip control, and follow-through are the same for any other one-handed shot. Although some players, and coaches, prefer to go up for the ball with both hands in order to rebound, most players can jump quicker and higher with only one hand up. To me, the recommended method is the one hand-up around the offensive board.

The free throw shot should be a regular part of every practice session and should take place under as near game-conditions as possible. Every player must determine his/her best-percentage medium, or long-range, shot and use that shot for *all* free throws. To be proficient, a shooter should make at least 80% of his free throws in practice; however, should a player not be particularly proficient in any one medium or long-range shot, he should be taught to master the one-handed set shot with particular attention in getting him to use the legs to propel the ball in a high soft arc toward the basket. The following fundamentals should be practiced until they become second nature for any free throw, regardless of style:

1. **Dry hands and fingers:** Before entering the free-throw circle, dry hands on trunks and shake the arms, wrists, and fingers to relieve tension.
2. **Look to both sides and behind:** Before accepting the ball from the official, look all around to check the opponent's offensive alignment and teammate's positions.
3. **Receive ball from official:** Always accept the ball **before** taking position at the free-throw line.
4. **Take exact position:** Move up to the line and set feet in the exact position you always use for free-throws. Most all basketball courts have a nail indentation in the center of the free-throw circle. Use this as your marker to position your feet.
5. **Spin ball in hands:** Do this to acquire proper feel of the ball; then, bounce the ball a certain number of times to relax the arms and body to accentuate the feel.
6. **Inhale and exhale softly:** After, assuming final hand placement, inhale and exhale, slowly.
7. **Shoot the ball high and soft with gentle backspin:** Rising to the toes with a thrust of the legs and simultaneous extension of the shooting arm, hand and fingers flexing downward smoothly at the wrist in order to impart a soft

backspin to the ball. Hold the follow-through and keep the eye on the target until the ball strikes iron. Do not watch the flight of the ball.

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