

Basketball Shooting Errors and Corrections

By Dr. Hal Wissel

The most common errors in shooting are listed below, along with suggestions on how to correct them.

Error: Your shot is short.

Correction: A shot that is short is usually due to not using your legs, an incomplete follow-through, or a slow or uneven rhythm. Through feel you should be able to determine whether you need to emphasize force from your legs, complete follow-through by keeping your arm up until the ball reaches the basket, or an even paced rhythm.

Error: Your shot is long.

Correction: Your shooting arm is extending on too flat a trajectory (less than 45 degrees). Raise your shooting arm higher when you shoot putting a higher arc on your shot (45 to 60 degrees). You are leaning your shoulders back as the shoot. Shoot with your head and shoulders going forward and upward toward the rim as you follow-through. Your hands are positioned too far apart from each other on the ball preventing you from lifting the ball. Move your hands closer together.

Error: Your shot is inconsistently short or long.

Correction: You probably have incomplete and inconsistent elbow extension on your shots. Extend your arm with complete elbow extension on follow-through.

Error: Your shot hits the right side of the rim (right-handed shot).

Correction: You are either not squared up facing the basket, or you are starting your shot with the ball set in front of your head and your elbow out causing your arm to extend to the right on the shot. Start with your body square to the basket. Set the ball on the shooting side of your head between your ear and shoulder with your shooting hand facing the front of the rim. This will enable you to shoot with your arm wrist and fingers going straight toward the basket.

Error: Your shot hits the left side of the rim (right-handed shot).

Correction: You are either not squared up facing the basket, or you are starting your shot with the ball set on your right hip or too far to your right resulting in shoving the ball from right to left as you shoot. Shoving the ball is a fault that results from not using your legs for power. Start with your body square to the basket. Set the ball on the shooting side of your head between your ear and shoulder with your shooting hand facing front and your elbow in. Shoot with your shooting arm, wrist and finger go straight toward to the basket.

Error: Your shot lacks range, control and consistency. You miss short, long or to either side.

Correction: You are probably lowering the ball and/or bringing the ball behind your head or shoulder and throwing the ball to the ball to the basket with an inconsistent follow-through. Lowering the ball or throwing the ball is a fault that results from not using the down and up action of your legs for power. Set the ball high on the shooting side of your head between your ear and shoulder with your shooting hand facing front. Emphasize the down and up motion of your legs and complete follow-through until the ball reaches the basket. Starting your shot high will give you a quicker release, less chance for error and less chance for your shot to be blocked.

Error: Your shot hits the side of the rim and circles out (right-handed shot).

Correction: You shot the ball with sidespin. The most common cause of sidespin is starting your shot with your shooting hand on the side of the ball and then rotating your hand behind it. If you over rotate your shooting hand, the ball will hit the right side of the rim with sidespin and roll left. If you under rotate, the ball will hit the left side of the rim and roll right. Other causes of sidespin are the ball on the palm, the ball sliding off your ring finger rather than shooting off your index finger, moving your hand on the ball, or thumbing the ball with your non-shooting hand.

To prevent rotating your hand, the ball sliding off your ring finger or moving your hand, set your shooting hand behind the ball so it faces the front of the basket and shoot with your hand and index finger pointing straight toward the basket.

To prevent thumbing the ball with the thumb of your non-shooting hand, place the ring finger and pinky of your non-shooting hand under the ball. Squeeze the thumb and index finger of the non-shooting hand together to help you to shoot the ball only with your shooting hand. Set your shooting hand behind the ball and facing the basket and shoot with your hand and index finger pointing straight toward the basket. At first your shot may have a tendency to go to the left due to not getting the extra force from your non-shooting hand. You will learn to adjust by using more power from your legs and shooting hand.

Error: When shooting off the dribble, you miss to the right or left side of the basket.

Correction: You are probably reaching to the side for the ball and starting the shot from the side of your body. When open dribble to the front of your shooting knee, jump behind the ball and pick up the ball with your shooting hand on top of the ball so when you bring the ball up your shooting hand will be facing the front of your target.

Error: When shooting off the dribble, you float forward, back, or to the side.

Correction: When open dribble to the front of your shooting knee. Pick up the ball in front of your shooting knee (shooting hand on top of the ball) with your knees flexed to gain balance for your shot and prevent floating.

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