

# Jump Shot Mechanics

By Dr. Hal Wissel

**1. Balance:** Spread your feet comfortably to shoulder width with your toes straight and knees slightly flexed.

**2. Sight:** Focus your eyes on the basket, aiming just over the front of the rim.

**3. Hand Position:** Hand position is the most misunderstood part of shooting. Start with your shooting hand set high (between your ear and shoulder) and facing the front of the basket with your index finger at the ball's midpoint. Your non-shooting (balance) hand should be slightly under the ball. The ball balances on at least two fingers: the ring and the little finger. This leaves your shooting hand free to shoot the ball, rather than having to balance and shoot the ball. A relaxed hand position (like a handshake) forms a natural cup, enabling the ball to be released off the pads of your index finger and not your palm. This leads to a soft touch and your shooting hand going straight.

**4. Elbow-In Alignment:** Keeping your shooting elbow in, aligns the ball with the basket. Some players do not have the flexibility to place the shooting hand facing the basket while keeping the elbow in. In this case, the shooting hand facing front takes preference over the elbow in. First place the shooting hand facing the basket, then move the elbow in as far as your flexibility allows.

**5. Rhythmical Shooting Motion:** Shoot the ball with a smooth, evenly paced, rhythmical lifting motion. Rhythm and range come from the down-and-up motion of your legs. Your legs and shooting arm work together. As your legs go up, your arm goes up. As your legs reach full extension, your back, shoulders, and shooting arm extend in a smooth, continuous upward direction. Use the down-and-up motion of your legs for rhythm rather than lowering the ball for rhythm. Keeping the ball high fosters a quick release and also provides less chance for error. The amount of force you impart to the ball depends on the range of the shot. For short distances, the arm, wrist, and fingers provide most of the force. Long-range outside shots require more force from your legs, back, and shoulders. Smooth rhythm and a complete follow-through will also improve 3-point shooting. The final force and control of your shot comes from flexing your wrist and fingers forward toward the basket.

**6. Follow-Through:** Direct your arm, wrist, and fingers straight toward the basket at a 45- to 60-degree angle, extending your shooting arm completely at the elbow. Keep your balance hand on the ball until the point of release. Hold your arm up in a complete follow-through position until the ball reaches the basket, then react to the rebound or get into defensive position. Keeping your follow-through up is not only good mechanics, but it also makes you look and act like a shooter and increases confidence.



Jump Shot graphic by Dave Eames and Sharon Wissel

Jump Shot Mechanics edited from Dr. Hal Wissel's best selling instructional books and DVDs:

- Basketball: Steps to Success*. 3rd Edition. Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL. 2011
- Basketball Shooting: Confidence, Rhythm and Mechanics* DVD. Basketball World, Suffield, CT. 2005
- Basketball Shooting: Off the Pass, Off the Dribble and In the Post* DVD. Basketball World, Suffield, CT. 2005
- Basketball Shooting: Make Your Shot Automatic* DVD. Basketball World, Suffield, CT. 2009
- Basketball Shooting: Creating Your Shot Off the Dribble* DVD. Basketball World, Suffield, CT. 2009
- Basketball Shooting: Post Moves and Drills* DVD. Basketball World, Suffield, CT. 2010

Dr. Hal Wissel's books and DVDs available to purchase at [www.basketballworld.com/store.html](http://www.basketballworld.com/store.html)