

Simple, Fun Youth Basketball Games

Basketball is meant to be fun, although at times it seems to get pretty competitive and serious, as any team sport. But kids should have fun, without stress, playing with their friends on their own, without referees, coaches, etc.

Kids can have lots of fun by just playing some simple games with just a couple or several players, in your driveway, or at the gym. There are several simple, fun games described below that you can play. What's great is that anyone can play these games regardless of age, size, skill-level, etc. That means even Mom and Dad can play too. So get out there in the driveway and have some fun!

"H-O-R-S-E"

This is a great old game that can be played by two or more players. Select an order (maybe shoot free-throws to see who goes first, second, etc). Player #1 shoots a shot from anywhere on the court. Lots of times, kids will invent crazy shots (spins, fade-aways, hook-shots, etc), and this is OK as this game is all about having fun, not worrying about shooting form or technique. The shooter calls his shot... e.g. "left-handed hook-shot from the elbow off the backboard." If he makes the shot, then Player #2 must duplicate and make the same shot. If Player #2 misses, he gets a letter, the first letter being "H" (the next time he misses he gets an "O", and then an "R", "S", and finally an "E"). Once any player gets all five letters, he/she is "out" - eliminated. The last player alive is the winner.

If Player #2 above had made the shot, then Player #3 must make it. If all players make the shot, then Player #1 must make it again or he/she could actually get a letter. The first player to miss that shot gets a letter. Once someone misses, then the next player in order gets to call the next shot. Going back to the first example, if Player #2 makes it and Player #3 misses it, Player #3 would get a letter and Player #4 would then get to call the next shot (any kind of shot from anywhere on the court).

If you have only a short period or time, or lots of players, you can shorten the game to three letters, like P-I-G instead of H-O-R-S-E.

"Knock-Out" (or "Lightning")

This game is played with two or more players... the more the better! Two balls are used and the line starts at the free-throw line (or wherever you want to start it). The line-up is predetermined as each player must follow in order the player in front of him/her. Player #1 and Player #2 each have a ball and Player #1 shoots, after which Player #2 can immediately shoot. If Player #1 makes the shot, he/she passes to Player #3 and goes to the end of the line, while Player #3 then shoots. If Player #1 had missed the shot, he/she must immediately follow the shot, get the rebound and try to score (from anywhere on the court) before Player #2 scores. If Player #2 scores before Player #1, Player #1 is "knocked-out" of the game. If Player #3 scores before Player #2, then #2 is eliminated. The last player left is the winner. Players may not touch the other player's ball.

"Around the World"

This game is played best by two or more players but one person can have fun doing it by themselves.

The game is a shooting game that progresses around the arc (or "around the world"), with predetermined "spots" (see diagram). Player #1 starts by first making a right-handed lay-up. After making the lay-up, Player #1 shoots from the right corner (spot #1). If he/she makes it, then he moves on to the next spot #2 a little toward the right wing and shoots from there. If that shot is made, the player moves to the next spot #3... he/she keeps moving on and shooting until he/she misses. Immediately after a missed shot there are two options... (1) is to "stay" stuck at that spot until it's his/her turn again, or (2) "chance it" where the player shoots again from that same spot. If he/she makes the chance shot, he/she moves on to the next spot and keeps shooting until a miss (at which point he/she again has the two options). Any time a player misses on the "chance" shot, then he/she must go all the way back to the start in the right corner, spot #1. Obviously this gets more risky the further along the player gets around the world.



Once the player makes the shot from the left corner #7, he/she must make a left-handed lay-up. This could be the end of the game or play it so that you have to go all the way around, and then back again in reverse order. So once the left-handed lay-up is made, the player then goes back to the left corner #7 and must go all the way back around in reverse order to spot #1 in the right corner, and then finally a right-handed lay-up must be made.

If Player #1 is the first to reach the end, the other players get their chance yet to complete their around the world, as all players must get an equal number of "turns". If there is a tie, you can leave it as a tie, or settle it with the two players having to shoot it out until the first one misses.

"Firing-Squad"

This is like "around the world", except that each player has a ball and no one waits for his/her turn to shoot. All players start shooting from spot #1 in the right corner, rebound their own shots and continue shooting non-stop. A player advances to the next spot after making the shot. The first player to make the shot from spot #7 (left corner) is the winner. This game tests shooting and quickness, following the shot, etc.

"Golf"

Like in golf, the lowest score wins. The line starts at the free-throw line. Player #1 starts by shooting from the free-throw line. If he/she makes the shot, 1 point is awarded and he goes to the back of the line. If he misses, he gets the rebound and must shoot from exactly where he picked up the ball (no rolling the ball closer to the hoop). He/she keeps shooting and rebounding until the shot is made and his score for that round is the number of shots it took him to score... so if it took him four shots, his score is 4. You might want to put a limit on the number of shots... e.g. 5 - if a player misses 5 times, he/she gets a score of 6 and is finished for that round. If the ball bounces out-of-bounds, behind the basket, or somewhere where it's impossible to score, the player can either shoot it there or take an additional "penalty shot" and shoot from the free-throw line... so that if the ball went behind the basket on his second shot, with the penalty shot, he is now shooting his 4th shot from the free-throw line. Each player takes his turn and records his own score. You can play nine rounds (like 9 holes in golf), or any predetermined number of rounds. For a longer game, you can play 18 rounds, like 18 holes of golf. The lowest score is the winner.

"Fives"

The line forms at the top of the key (or free-throw line for younger kids). Player #1 shoots. If he misses, he follows the shot, rebounds and shoots from where he retrieved the ball. He keeps shooting until a shot is made, up to a maximum of 5 shots. If he fails to make it within 5 shots, he gets 1 point and goes to the end of the line. Then player #2 starts shooting. Player #2 must score in the same or less number of shots that the preceding player required. For example, if Player #1 needed 3 shots, then Player #2 must score within 3 or fewer shots, else he/she gets a point. Player #2 could actually incur 2 points if also fails to score within the 5-shot maximum. Similarly Player #3 must score in the same or less number of shots that Player #2 required. A player is eliminated when he/she gets 5 points. When a player is eliminated, the next following player in line has the shot requirement reset to 5. The last player alive is the winner.

"3-2-1"

This is a two-player game. Each player will shoot nine sets of shots. Each set consists of a 3-pointer, a shot-fake with jump shot, and a lay-up. Start in one corner and rotate around each of the nine spots. The partner rebounds and passes back to the shooter. Shooters rotate after each set of "3-2-1", so the shooter becomes the rebounder and vice-versa. The two players compete against each other and keep track of their individual scores. Each made 3-pointer = 3 points, a jump shot = 2 points, and a lay-up = 1 point. The highest score at the end is the winner.