

How to choose a basketball

Basketballs come in varying sizes for different types of players. Generally, the size of basketball to purchase is determined by the age of the players – as younger players have smaller hands, they will use smaller basketballs.

When it comes to choosing a basketball based on the material it is made from, selection is usually determined by the type of court that games will be played on.

Different basketball sizes for different groups

Full-sized basketballs are used in professional National Basketball Association (NBA) and the international Basketball Federation (FIBA) leagues. They measure 29.5 inches (75 cm) in circumference and are recommended for older players, usually ages 12 and up.

New international size 6 basketball have a circumference that range between 28.5 to 29 inches (72.4 cm) and is the official size for Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) league.

The recommended basketball sizes for youths aged 12 years and below have a circumference that range between 27.25 to 27.75 inches (68.5 cm).

Different kinds of courts

The surface ground of outdoor courts are generally rougher compared to indoor courts which are usually less abrasive. Using the wrong type of basketball can make bouncing awkward, and will cause the surface of the ball to wear off faster. There are mainly three types of materials used for producing basketballs, for different types of basketball courts.

Leather basketball

Professional leagues use basketballs made from genuine leather as these are the softest and most comfortable material. Prolonged use will season the basketball giving it a softer feel. They are also the most expensive basketballs available and should only be used on indoor court surfaces.

Synthetic basketball

Composite leather is a synthetically produced material that feels like leather. Synthetic basketballs can be used on both indoor and outdoor surfaces. Unlike leather, synthetic leather does not need prolonged usage for the material to break in. Such basketballs give better control and grip.

Rubber basketball

Basketballs made from rubber are the most affordable and generally used by beginners. Such basketballs which are more durable can bounce well and are great for outdoor courts with asphalt surfaces.

Selecting the right gear for your basketball game

One of the best things about playing basketball is that you don't have to invest in hefty equipment. Besides a basketball, the other basketball gear you require to play the game is basic and relatively affordable. The overall aim is to have the right gear for better comfort and to improve performance. So, what to wear for a basketball game? You'll need a basketball jersey, basketball shorts and basketball shoes.

Basketball Gear

1. Basketball jersey

How do you choose a basketball jersey?

Basketball jerseys have evolved over the years as the fabrics has gradually become lighter.

These days, the ultra lightweight fabric available are durable and they should allow players' skin to "breathe," providing ventilation to help players stay cool and prevent overheating. A good jersey should "wick" moisture away and keep players from getting too sweaty and uncomfortable.

At the same time, the jersey should not be so absorbent such that it retains sweat, causing the jersey to become heavy, in turn and adding unnecessary weight.

2. Basketball shorts

Basketball shorts typically share the same fabric as jersey tops, but it is important to get bottoms that are neither too snug nor loose.

Basketball shorts will usually have an inner layer to provide better absorption of perspiration and prevent abrasions. The rubber waistband should not be too tight or else it will cause discomfort from constant abrasion due to body movements when playing a game.

Basketball shorts should be long enough to reach the knee caps. The length varies but generally, longer shorts help to keep thighs warm during games and prevent muscle cramps.

3. Basketball shoes

Getting the right shoes that fit is important as basketball requires a lot of running and jumping. Shoes that fit poorly can cause injury, especially if they do not provide sufficient support.

High-top Cut

The high-top shoe cut has been associated with basketball. They are popular with basketball players because they provide a high level of ankle support. The shoe extends all the way up to protect the ankles, but as a result, they tend to be heavier as a result of using more material.

Mid-top Cut

Shoes with a mid-top cut rises just below a player's ankle. Although it lacks ankle support, it helps players increase speed as the ankle can bend unhindered by the shoe's material, allowing players to react and run faster.

Choosing the right shoe size

Basketball shoes should not be too tight as they need to allow the foot to have some flexibility and breathing room to manoeuvre about.

To find out how much room to leave in the shoe is appropriate when the shoe is worn, press your thumb into the space between the front end of the shoe and your big toe. If the space available is roughly the length of a thumbnail, the shoe is a good fit.

The other thing to note about shoes is that the upper on the top of a shoe that the foot slips into when it is worn must keep the foot securely in place within a basketball shoe while a player is in action.

The Basketball Player's Style

Players should assess which type of player they are before purchasing basketball shoes, as different playing styles, such as being a power player, all-around player, or fast player, require different shoes.

Power players will require a high level of cushioning and stability from a heavier shoe. All-around players need a moderate amount of shock absorption from relatively lightweight basketball shoes. Fast players need moderate support as they have quick reaction times and flexibility.