

# Most Common Free Throw Shooting Faults

## Front View – Full Body

**1**

**Your feet are not pointed in the right direction.**

Your toes should be pointing either straight at the target or slightly left of the target (if right handed), and they both need to be pointing in exactly the same direction, with the feet about shoulder width apart.

**2**

**You are not square to the target.**

Your chest and shoulders need to be facing directly at the target. By being square to the target you maximize your chances of making the shot.

**3**

**You are palming the ball.**

You should hold the ball on your finger-pads, with your shooting hand/fingers spread to provide excellent control over the basketball, with the ball leaving your fingertips at release. The shooting hand thumb should not be flat on the ball. Grip the ball with the side of the shooting hand thumb in contact with the ball.

**4**

**You are taking too long to shoot.**

You should take a deep breath, dribble two or three times, sight the target and shoot, trusting your muscles. The longer you stand there and think, the harder it will be to maintain confidence that

you are going to make the shot. Locate your target and shoot while the image is fresh in your mind.

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**5**

### **Don't crouch so much.**

You want whatever motion is necessary to shoot the shot, but no extra motion. It is hard to repeat the exact same motion coming out of a deep crouch. The force required for a free throw is easily attained with the arm and by rising up on the toes at release. Do what is necessary to create a least-effort shot but don't overdo it.

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**6**

### **The ball starts too low.**

The ball should start about chest high. By starting the ball too low, the extra motion is hard to repeat the same way every time.

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**7**

### **The ball should start on the shooting side of your body.**

Starting with the ball on the shooting side of your body enables you to balance the ball in your shooting hand quicker. Balancing the ball in your shooting hand before the wrist snap starts is the key to straight shooting. By bringing it up on the wrong side of your body, you are handicapping yourself by having to make a late "crossover" motion just before releasing the shot.

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**8**

### **The elbow on your shooting arm is too far from your body.**

The elbow on your shooting arm should be under the ball and as close to your body as possible, which will help you shoot it straight.

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**9**

### **Your guide hand is in the wrong place.**

It should be on the side of the ball, then moving slightly forward when you shoot. Placing your guide hand on the side of the ball helps control the ball early, so the shooting hand can balance the ball prior to the wrist-snap.

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**10**

### **The elbow on your guide arm is too high.**

The guide elbow should be angled down to about a 45-degree angle from the body. When the guide arm elbow is too high it makes it hard to put the guide hand on the ball in the right place. It also creates unnecessary tension in your shoulder and neck.

### **Front View – Head**

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**11**

### **Your head should be level, square to the target, with a slight upward tilt, and dead steady in that position throughout the shot.**

The head is very heavy in relation to the rest of the body, and any head movement will create a loss of balance.

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**12**

### **Your shooting forearm is blocking your sight in one eye.**

You need a clear view of the target with both eyes for proper depth perception. Move your shooting arm over slightly, so both eyes can see the target. Shawn Bradley was a 62% free throw shooter before being traded to Dallas because he was blocking his right eye as he shot. He moved the ball out so he could see the basket with both eyes and he shot 92% at the line his last year in the NBA.

**13**

**Your eyes are picking up the target too late.**

You should lock your eyes on the target before beginning your shot.

**14**

**You are looking up at the ball.**

Looking up can cause you to move your head up, creating a balance problem. By keeping your eyes locked on the target, you have a better chance to make the shot.

**15**

**You are tilting left or right when you shoot.**

If you tilt your body, the shot becomes harder to make. The reason you are tilting is because you are not raising your heels to the same height when you shoot. Your body should go straight up, like a piston in an engine.

**16**

**Your shooting arm is not extending straight at the target.**

By swaying your arm left or right at the end of the shot, the shot won't go straight. Consistency is enhanced when you are able to control the center of the ball relative to the center of the hoop.

**17**

**Your wrist snap is not straight down.**

A straight down wrist snap provides the best opportunity for the ball to go straight and indicates that you are utilizing the natural pulling direction of your wrist muscles.

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**18**

**Your guide hand shouldn't be facing the target after the shot.**

When it is, your guide hand has twisted around and your thumb will sometimes get involved with the shot, reducing the chance that it will go straight. The guide hand thumb should not be flat on the ball

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**19**

**Your ball is not approaching the rim and backboard at a 90 degree angle.**

At the moment of release, the ball should be directly over the nail, the center of the free throw line. This will give you an 18 inch wide target coming back, in case the backboard comes into play.

**Side View – Upper Body**

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**20**

**You are tilting your head backwards during the shot.**

Some players do this to gain greater arc, but head movement creates loss of balance. To increase your arc, simply raise your shooting elbow.

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**21**

**Your upper body is tilting back during the shot.**

Upper body swayback will cause you to lose power, and your shots will be too short.

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**22**

### **You have a two-piece, upper-body only shot.**

If your arm will shoot the ball at the same time as your heels come off the floor, you can develop a one-piece shot that has a nice rhythm from your toes to your fingertips.

**23**

### **You are taking the ball behind your head before your shot.**

This makes it too hard to judge the distance accurately, and by “slinging it” instead of shooting it from just in front of your body, you lose accuracy and your shot will lack the proper arc. You should begin the shot from high on the front side of your head.

**24**

### **You aren't extending your shooting arm correctly.**

Your shooting arm should extend to its full length on every shot. At the end of the shot, your shooting elbow should be above the level of your eyes.

**25**

### **You aren't holding the follow through long enough.**

Your shooting arm should be held extended after the shot until the ball is well under way. The guide arm should finish extended, just like the shooting arm, which will keep the shoulders from turning.

### **Side View -Feet**

**26**

### **You are not standing all the way up to the line.**

This is the only shot in basketball where you can shoot from exactly the same distance every time, so use that to your advantage.

**27**

**The foot under your guide arm is in the wrong place.**

It should be either at the line or just a few inches behind the line.

**28**

**You are going up too high on your toes.**

You can maintain your balance better by not going up so much.

**Rear View**

**29**

**Your shooting hand is on the wrong place on the ball.**

It should be directly behind the ball, facing the target as the ball is released. The middle of your hand should be centered in the middle of the ball. This technique is called centerline, and additional information on centerline is detailed in Bob Fisher's excellent shooting instruction book, Straight Shooter.

**30**

**You are raising your heels before your arm starts forward with the shot.**

When you do this, you are shooting from an unbalanced position.

**31**

**Your heels are not going up the same height, tilting your body.**

If they go up together to the same height, your body will go straight up, one of the most important keys to good shooting from any distance.

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**32**

**You are falling back on your heels too soon.**

You need to stay up on the balls of your feet, balanced, after every shot. Falling back too soon kills your follow-through.

**Arc and Target Analysis**

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**33**

**Your arc is too flat.**

The ball needs to be approaching the rim from the peak of the arc at an angle of at least 45 degrees or slightly higher. Anything lower than that reduces the size of the target, making it much harder to make.

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**34**

**Your arc is too high.**

It will be hard to control the direction and exact distance effectively with an arc that is too high.

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**35**

**Your arc is inconsistent.**

To be a great free throw shooter, you need to consistently shoot it with the same amount of arc.

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**36**

**Your shot should never hit the front rim.**

The goal is to never miss short. Short misses have little chance of success but shots that are long still might go in. The ball needs to go in the basket just in front of the back rim because the ball is entering from an angle, not from straight up.



