

How to shoot the basketball free throw

"CP drives for the rim in the dying seconds.....!!! He was fouled!!

Chris is shooting two at the line; his team is trailing by two points.

The crowd in dead silence, all eyes on Chris and all ears awaiting the sound of the net"

Have you ever been in that kind of situation, where there is physically nothing between you at the free-throw line and the rim, but it seems to be the toughest shot to make? The free throw is regarded as the most important shot in basketball for several reasons:

- - **It is an uncontested way to gain points. Not making it reduces morale.**
- - **Shoot poorly, defense will seek to exploit you. (i.e. hack-a-Shaq)**
- - **Shoot accurately, defense will not defend you as aggressively, giving you more room to do your thing**
- - **One point can make the difference of a victory and a defeat**

To shoot free throw correctly, let's look at some facts first

The free throw line is 15 feet from the rim. You have 10 seconds to shoot and there is no one guarding you. In theory, it should be the easiest shot. However, inside the real game, although you are physically unguarded, the pressure and stress keep disturbing you and it can easily ruin you, especially when a bunch of clamorous spectators are booing you and waving their balloons to distract you.

The free throw is all about consistently executing a proper technique. And you know how they say *practice makes perfect*. The mechanics are the same for all types of shooting. So everything I have discussed previously in shooting will work here.

Sometimes your genetic makeup might not be as great as your opponent. You know why Boykins can start for Denver for quite a while? It is because he can draw the foul and make the free-throws. Hence, free throw is a great equalizer. With enough practice, you can beat anybody else in this important aspect of the game. The take-home message is: Free throws take 3Cs - Confidence, Coordination, Consistency and these 3Cs can be acquired by relentlessly practicing.

Steps of shooting a free throw:



Free-throws basically have no time pressure. Therefore, we must optimize our shooting by fixing our shooting stance that gives us the most accurate shot. We must also minimize the amount of movement that may induce inconsistency (in other words, minimal movement: the less movement, the less discrepancy). In order to do so, we will approach it by setting up a squared up posture with the ball, minimize the arm movement and use our legs to propel the basketball towards the basketball hoop.

1. (Assume right-handed) position your legs (right leg forward) so that the invisible line joining the toes roughly makes a 30 degrees angle with the free-throw line.
2. Hold your right hand in the 90-90-90 position with the ball on your finger tips

3. Place your left hand on the side to support the basketball
4. Take a deep-breath now, and bend your knees without moving your arms
5. Hold the semi-squat position for 1 second until everything is stabilized
6. Exhale slowly and extend your knees by 90% (i.e.: don't hyperextend them)
7. As soon as you feel that you are just before hyperextending your knees, propel your right hand forward only along with the ball, flick your wrist gently as the ball leaves

In this way, the vertical force is provided by solely by the legs, thereby minimizing inconsistency