



## Referees Assessment Guidelines

### Introduction:

It is essential for any sports official to improve their skills in each game they are involved with. A small, seemingly inconsequential skill picked up in a domestic game may be the difference between two officials competing for a nomination to a big finals game.

Assessment of referees is an important part of the improvement process, allowing the official to decide what they need to do to improve, and become a better basketball official.

The assessment of a referee should:

- a) aim to give an indication of the standard of the referee on the game
- b) coach the referee and improve the skills they require to be a better official.

### a) Referee Assessment:

Referee assessment has two main areas –

- i) **Assessment from an outside source** (eg. Assessors, knowledgeable friends, fellow referees)
- ii) **Self assessment.**

Traditionally, assessment from an outside source is used to decide in the short term which games an official will referee in the immediate future but that does not lessen the place that both have in the ongoing education of the official, and their improvement for the future.

### i) Outside Assessment

In basketball, referee assessors/evaluators are often ex-officials, sometimes still active officials. They are all very experienced in officiating basketball, some who have been International referees and Commissioners. These are the people in charge of helping officials to improve their skills and become better at their tasks. Each may have slightly differing opinions on various aspects of officiating, but each (within a competition) should be on much the same page to ensure consistent ideas are being offered to the referee, and they know where they stand with assessment.

**basketballscotland** have a comprehensive assessment procedure; after each game where an assessment has been done, the assessor will sit down with the referee and have a brief discussion on how the game went, key incidents, positive and negative aspects, rules application errors and the mechanics used. The referee is always given the chance to have input into this discussion, and other information or aspects may also be discussed with reference to future improvement.

The second stage of the process is for the Assessor to complete an Officiating Evaluation form and send this written feedback to the referee. The Evaluation Form can be very effective, especially for young officials who don't need too much information thrown at them all at once. In using the Evaluation form, positive feedback is just as important for the improvement of the official as identifying areas to work on. Positive feedback encourages the official, and also serves to make the official realise that there are some things in their game that they don't need to change – they already do these well and should have some confidence in their skills.



## ii) Self Assessment

Thinking about your own game in an honest manner is most important in officiating. Looking at video of your games (ask the clubs for a copy) and just thinking about incidents that happen in a game of basketball are most important to identifying what works well for you, and also what you can improve.

Self reflection relies only on the referee being able to make judgements on their officiating, and then put their ideas/opinions into practice. Self reflection consists of five stages:

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Self reflection</b>	<i>thinking about your officiating, and evaluating what works and what doesn't</i>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Things to improve</b>	<i>identifying aspects of your officiating that you would like to change</i>
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Planning improvement</b>	<i>designing practical strategies for change</i>
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Action</b>	<i>implementing the strategies identified by yourself for yourself</i>
<b>Stage 5</b>	<b>Self reflection</b>	<i>follow-up assessment of how successful you have been and what more needs to be done</i>

It is most important for the official to be honest with themselves in this process, which could be recorded and stored in an officiating diary for future reference.

## b) Skills Needed in Refereeing

Referees require a number of skills to effectively officiate a game of basketball. Each official will bring their own personality and skills into the game, making each unique. There is no style, which can be unequivocally defined as "best", as no one has yet found a way to officiate a perfect game of basketball.

The effective implementation of officiating skills are the basis for separating referees into levels, which can be used as an indication of the standard of the official, and the level of game they are capable of effectively running.

## i) Mechanics, Teamwork and Communication

Mechanics are important in any standard of basketball. They involve working as a team with your other official within a basic framework to ensure that between the two (or three) of you the whole game is officiated properly. While mechanics are only a basic guide to helping an official find the best spot to see a given play, they provide a structure to officiating, making it easier for the officials to work as a team effectively.

The understanding of mechanics must increase as an official becomes better. A new or Getting Started qualified referee needs merely to have a grasp of basic mechanics – what trail and lead should do and floor positioning. A level 3 or better official must be more advanced, demonstrating an understanding of the intricacies of the mechanics guidelines, but by the same token being able to be flexible with these guidelines in special situations to ensure that through teamwork they are able to achieve the best result possible.



Teamwork is another area in which the official must improve as they become more experienced. It requires good communication skills and also having trust in their partner to do their part right. This needs to be started in the pre-game conference each game as you rarely work with the same partner on every game you officiate.

Effective communication between officials and players, coaches, other personnel and table officials is paramount to the game running smoothly. Verbal communication must ensure that everyone is informed of what they need to know, with the best official using their voice to manage the game and prevent or resolve conflict. A good official is also sharp and sure in his/her signals – which may lead to others having more confidence in their decisions.

## ii) Consistency

Consistency is something that every player wants from officials, but the fact that there are two, sometimes three officials on court; each with slightly differing experience, personalities and skills means that perfect consistency is almost impossible to achieve within a game. In addition, players want officials to be consistent with the officials they had in their previous games – an almost impossible task.

Consistency within a game is something that an official will improve with experience, and exposure to more game situations. Coupled with the increased teamwork requirements of these officials, they must maintain this call pattern within the officiating team on court.



Diagram 5 Cylinder principle

## iii) Decisiveness, People Management and Game Control



Grasp wrist upward

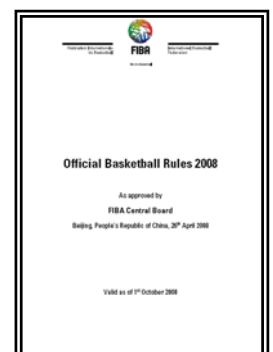
Decisiveness requires the referee to identify what is going to happen, or what just happened in a game, and react accordingly. Referees need to anticipate the play but not the call. They can identify problems before they appear, enabling them to proactively prevent a situation, or deal with it effectively when it does occur.

This also relies on the management of people within the game (in particular the players and coaches.) The more experienced a referee is the more capable they are of reading situations which may become volatile and consequently they are able to act appropriately to prevent it from happening or escalating. This is displayed in the way they control the game.

## iv) Rule Knowledge and Judgement

**Rule knowledge** is paramount for an official in any sport, but how to apply those rules on the court is just as important. A good official should make very few mistakes about the rules because the rules are something that can be read and learned away from the court, without any pressure.

**Judgement** requires the official to take in as much as possible and make a relatively informed decision almost immediately on any given situation within a game.





### Conclusion:

The best officials are those officials who have been educated by others and have educated themselves both on and off the court, who have been appropriately assessed and are chosen to progress through the officiating system. The many officiating skills required are varied, yet each is equally important to the game, and each can be achieved in a slightly different way depending on the individual involved.



Each game of basketball is different, and will test different skills in the official. The official should strive to referee every game to the best of their ability, and their assessment will reflect and facilitate that.

However the best conclusion may be left to the official conclusion on page 77 of the FIBA Two Person Officiating Manual. Those who read this manual may already be familiar with it, otherwise please see the appendix for this article!



#### Acknowledgement:

This referee article was written in 2005 by David Farmers, of the National Referees Development Programme of Basketball Australia. It has been reproduced and adapted where appropriate to help train and educate basketball referees in Scotland.



Original Article – Building Better Basketball – Referee Assessment Guidelines was published in May 2005 by Basketball Australia.

If you wish to upgrade your current refereeing qualification through the **basketballscotland** referee pathway, referee in the National Leagues and Cups or train to have the possibility to become a FIBA International Basketball Referee, please contact:

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### **FIBA Two Person Officiating Mechanics – Article 12 Conclusion**

The officials are entrusted to see that the game is played within the framework and guidelines of the Rules. They have to make instantaneous decisions.

Inevitably any decision that is taken quickly will, at times, lack rationality and occasionally may even be wrong.

'No official is perfect'. There will never be a game after which the official can look back and say, 'I was faultless'. Human activity necessitates human judgements.

Basketball is competitive. It is a game charged with emotion, where tempers and friction can run high, especially when the score is close. The officials must always have the game under control. This means the officials must be firm, decisive and unshakeable.

Officials must understand something about the players and coaches and be aware of what makes them tick and how they perform. No official can have an excellent game without a reasonable amount of cooperation from the players and coaches.

Officials need an awareness of the game, an insight into the aims and objectives of players' and coaches' tactical manoeuvres, as well as an understanding of the strains and pressures affecting them. Officials must understand the frustrations of playing and coaching. The players, the coaches and the officials all belong together; they are not members of separate factions.

Concentration is vital for officials. It is usually learned the hard way. While the player has the opportunity to break concentration when not directly involved with the ball, the official can relax only briefly when time-outs and substitutions are made. Concentration diminishes with the onset of fatigue, as the game progresses into its final stages.

**Physical and psychological preparation becomes very important.** You are not anticipating what will actually happen; rather it is preparation for the most likely eventualities. Simply expressed, it is an awareness of the best possible position from which to watch the play and striving to get to that position.

**Officiating is being in the right place at the right time to make the right call.  
Positioning is the key factor.**

**There is a high correlation between the location of the official and the accuracy of his decisions.**

Officiating is not an easy task. The players are big and fast, the pace of the game intense. It is difficult to control or even see everything that happens. Good officials try to follow the play away from the ball, but of course, just as everyone else, there is always the tendency to focus on the spectacular scoring plays.

An official's greatest virtue is consistency. It is important to try to call the same play the same way, irrespective of the stage of the game or other pressures.

The best officials have an easy authority, a rapport with players and coaches, the ability to keep a calm and steady presence in the most demanding circumstances, a thorough understanding of the game and acute powers of observation. They are intelligent people in excellent physical condition.

Basketball is a game of passion, of involvement and commitment, requiring officials with a feel for the game.

When you become an official, you will never again see the game as a mere spectator.

Nevertheless, it is still a game and should be enjoyed by everyone. **Even officials may smile!**