NBA and Basketball Trivia Questions

4 rounds · 30 questions · about 45 min

How to run it

1. Print one host sheet for yourself and one team answer sheet per team. The host sheet has the key on it — keep it face down.
2. Three to five people per team, mixed if you can: a casual fan and a superfan remember different things.
3. Read each question twice, then give about thirty seconds.
4. Teams swap sheets at the end of each round and mark each other while you read the answers. One point for each correct answer.
5. The line under each answer on the host sheet is there to be read out once the answer is in.

ROUND 1 — Origins, Rules & Equipment

1. Who invented the game of basketball in 1891?

- A Amos Alonzo Stagg
- B Luther Gulick
- **C James Naismith**
- D Walter A. Brown

Answer: C — James Naismith

Worth adding: Naismith, a Canadian physical education instructor at the YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts, was asked to create an indoor game to keep students active during winter.

2. What objects served as the very first basketball 'hoops' in 1891?

- A Wooden barrels
- **B Peach baskets**
- C Metal buckets
- D Fishing nets on poles

Answer: B — Peach baskets

Worth adding: Naismith nailed two peach baskets to the gymnasium balcony railing, and because the baskets still had their bottoms, someone had to retrieve the ball after every score.

3. How many original rules of basketball did James Naismith write down?

- **A 13**
- B 17
- C 11
- D 9

Answer: A — 13

Worth adding: Naismith typed out 13 basic rules and pinned them to the gym wall; the original two-page document survives and is one of the most valuable sports artifacts in the world.

4. How many players from each team are on the court at the same time in a standard basketball game?

A 4
B 7
C 6
D 5

Answer: D — 5

Worth adding: Five per side became the standard early in the game's history, even though Naismith's very first game famously used nine players on each team.

5. What is the standard height of a basketball rim above the floor?

A 9 feet (2.74 m)
B 11 feet (3.35 m)
C 10 feet (3.05 m)
D 12 feet (3.66 m)

Answer: C — 10 feet (3.05 m)

Worth adding: The 10-foot height is an accident of history — that was simply how high the balcony railing was in the Springfield gym where Naismith hung the peach baskets.

6. How long is one quarter in an NBA regular-season game?

A 8 minutes
B 12 minutes
C 10 minutes
D 15 minutes

Answer: B — 12 minutes

Worth adding: Four 12-minute quarters give the NBA a 48-minute game, longer than FIBA's four 10-minute quarters (40 minutes) used in international play and the Olympics.

7. How long is a single overtime period in the NBA?

A 10 minutes
B 3 minutes
C 7 minutes
D 5 minutes

Answer: D — 5 minutes

Worth adding: Each NBA overtime lasts five minutes, and as many are played as needed because basketball rules do not allow a tie to stand.

8. How many personal fouls does it take for a player to foul out of an NBA game?

A 6
B 4
C 5
D 7

Answer: A — 6

Worth adding: The NBA allows six personal fouls because of its longer 48-minute game, while FIBA and college basketball disqualify a player after five.

9. In which year did the NBA introduce the 24-second shot clock?

A 1961
B 1970
C 1954
D 1946

Answer: C — 1954

Worth adding: Syracuse Nationals owner Danny Biasone pushed the clock through for the 1954–55 season to stop teams from stalling, and scoring averages jumped immediately.

10. As of 2026, how many seconds does an NBA team have to advance the ball past midcourt after gaining possession in its backcourt?

A 8 seconds
B 6 seconds
C 10 seconds
D 5 seconds

Answer: A — 8 seconds

Worth adding: The NBA cut the backcourt limit from 10 seconds to 8 starting in the 2001–02 season to speed the game up and match the FIBA standard.

11. In which season did the NBA first use the three-point line?

A 1986–87
B 1979–80
C 1972–73
D 1967–68

Answer: B — 1979–80

Worth adding: The NBA borrowed the three-pointer from the rival ABA, adopting it for 1979–80 — Chris Ford of the Boston Celtics is credited with the league's first three-point field goal.

12. As of 2026, how far is the NBA three-point line from the basket at the top of the arc?

A 22 feet 0 inches
B 22 feet 6 inches
C 24 feet 3 inches
D 23 feet 9 inches

Answer: D — 23 feet 9 inches

Worth adding: The arc measures 23 feet 9 inches at the top but shrinks to 22 feet in the corners, which is why the 'corner three' is considered the most efficient shot on the floor.

13. How many points is a successful free throw worth?

A 2 points
B 1 point
C It depends on the foul
D 3 points

Answer: B — 1 point

Worth adding: A free throw is worth one point and is taken unguarded from the line 15 feet from the backboard, nicknamed the 'charity stripe'.

ROUND 2 — Franchises, the Finals & Trophies

14. Which NBA franchise plays its home games at Madison Square Garden?

A Brooklyn Nets
B Philadelphia 76ers
C Boston Celtics
D New York Knicks

Answer: D — New York Knicks

Worth adding: The Knicks have called Madison Square Garden home since the franchise's founding in 1946, making it one of the most famous arenas in sports — 'The World's Most Famous Arena.'

15. Which rival league merged with the NBA in 1976, sending four of its teams into the NBA?

A The ABA (American Basketball Association)
B The ABL (American Basketball League)
C The NBL (National Basketball League)
D The CBA (Continental Basketball Association)

Answer: A — The ABA (American Basketball Association)

Worth adding: The ABA merger brought the Nets, Nuggets, Pacers and Spurs into the NBA, along with ABA innovations like the three-point shot and the Slam Dunk Contest.

16. What is the name of the trophy awarded to the NBA champion?

A The Naismith Cup
B The Commissioner's Cup
C The Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy
D The Maurice Podoloff Trophy

Answer: C — The Larry O'Brien Championship Trophy

Worth adding: The trophy was renamed in 1984 for former commissioner Larry O'Brien; before that it was called the Walter A. Brown Trophy.

17. Since 2009, the NBA Finals MVP award has officially been named after which legendary player?

A Wilt Chamberlain
B Bill Russell
C Jerry West
D Oscar Robertson

Answer: B — Bill Russell

Worth adding: Russell won 11 championships with the Boston Celtics, the most by any player, so the league attached his name to the Finals MVP trophy in 2009.

18. The first game in the history of the Basketball Association of America (the league that became the NBA) was played on November 1, 1946, in which city?

A **Toronto**
B New York
C Boston
D Chicago

Answer: A — Toronto

Worth adding: The Toronto Huskies hosted the New York Knickerbockers at Maple Leaf Gardens, meaning the league's very first game was played in Canada — Naismith's home country.

19. The silhouette in the NBA's logo is widely reported to be based on which player?

A Elgin Baylor
B Oscar Robertson
C **Jerry West**
D Bob Cousy

Answer: C — Jerry West

Worth adding: Designer Alan Siegel used a photo of Jerry West for the 1969 logo, which is one reason West earned the nickname 'The Logo'.

ROUND 3 — Legends, Coaches & Terminology

20. Which jersey number is most associated with Michael Jordan during his years with the Chicago Bulls?

A 12
B 33
C 6
D **23**

Answer: D — 23

Worth adding: Jordan wore No. 23 for nearly all of his Bulls career, and the Bulls retired it in 1994 — he briefly wore 45 after his first comeback.

21. In which year did Wilt Chamberlain score 100 points in a single NBA game?

A **1962**
B 1958
C 1967
D 1971

Answer: A — 1962

Worth adding: Chamberlain scored 100 for the Philadelphia Warriors against the New York Knicks on March 2, 1962, in Hershey, Pennsylvania — a game that was never televised and has no known film.

22. Which player's signature shot was the unblockable 'skyhook'?

A Patrick Ewing

B Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

C Hakeem Olajuwon

D Bill Walton

Answer: B — Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Worth adding: Abdul-Jabbar released the skyhook high above his head with his body shielding the ball, which made it practically impossible to defend over a 20-season career.

23. Which coach led the Boston Celtics to their run of championships in the late 1950s and 1960s and famously lit a victory cigar on the bench?

A John Kundla

B Alex Hannum

C Red Auerbach

D Red Holzman

Answer: C — Red Auerbach

Worth adding: Red Auerbach won nine titles as Celtics head coach and would light a cigar once he was sure the game was won, a gesture that infuriated opponents.

24. Who coached the Los Angeles Lakers' 'Showtime' teams to multiple titles in the 1980s?

A Jack Ramsay

B Chuck Daly

C Phil Jackson

D Pat Riley

Answer: D — Pat Riley

Worth adding: Riley took over the Lakers in 1981 and guided the fast-breaking 'Showtime' era led by Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar; Phil Jackson's Lakers titles came later, starting in 2000.

25. In which city is the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame located?

A Chicago, Illinois

B Springfield, Massachusetts

C Lawrence, Kansas

D Indianapolis, Indiana

Answer: B — Springfield, Massachusetts

Worth adding: The Hall of Fame sits in Springfield because that is where Naismith invented the game in 1891; its building is topped by a giant basketball-shaped dome.

26. In basketball terminology, what is a 'triple-double'?

A Double figures in three statistical categories in one game

B Scoring 30 or more points in three straight games

C Three made three-pointers in a row

D Three consecutive double-overtime games

Answer: A — Double figures in three statistical categories in one game

Worth adding: A triple-double means reaching 10 or more in three categories — usually points, rebounds and assists — and the term was popularized by a Lakers PR staffer tracking Magic Johnson.

ROUND 4 — The Olympics & the 1992 Dream Team

27. In which city did the 1992 USA 'Dream Team' win Olympic gold?

- A Atlanta
- B Seoul
- C Los Angeles
- **D Barcelona**

Answer: D — Barcelona

Worth adding: Barcelona 1992 was the first Olympics with NBA professionals, and the Dream Team won every game so easily that coach Chuck Daly never called a timeout all tournament.

28. Who was the head coach of the 1992 USA Olympic 'Dream Team'?

- A Bobby Knight
- B Pat Riley
- **C Chuck Daly**
- D Lenny Wilkens

Answer: C — Chuck Daly

Worth adding: Chuck Daly, fresh off back-to-back titles with the Detroit Pistons, was chosen partly for his skill at managing superstar egos.

29. Which member of the 1992 Dream Team was still a college player at the time of selection?

- A Shaquille O'Neal
- **B Christian Laettner**
- C Grant Hill
- D Alonzo Mourning

Answer: B — Christian Laettner

Worth adding: Duke's Christian Laettner filled the single roster spot reserved for an amateur, chosen after leading the Blue Devils to back-to-back NCAA titles.

30. In which Olympic Games did men's basketball first appear as an official medal sport?

- A 1924 Paris
- B 1904 St. Louis
- C 1948 London
- **D 1936 Berlin**

Answer: D — 1936 Berlin

Worth adding: Basketball debuted as a medal sport in Berlin in 1936, where the final was played outdoors on a dirt court in the rain and James Naismith himself presented the medals.