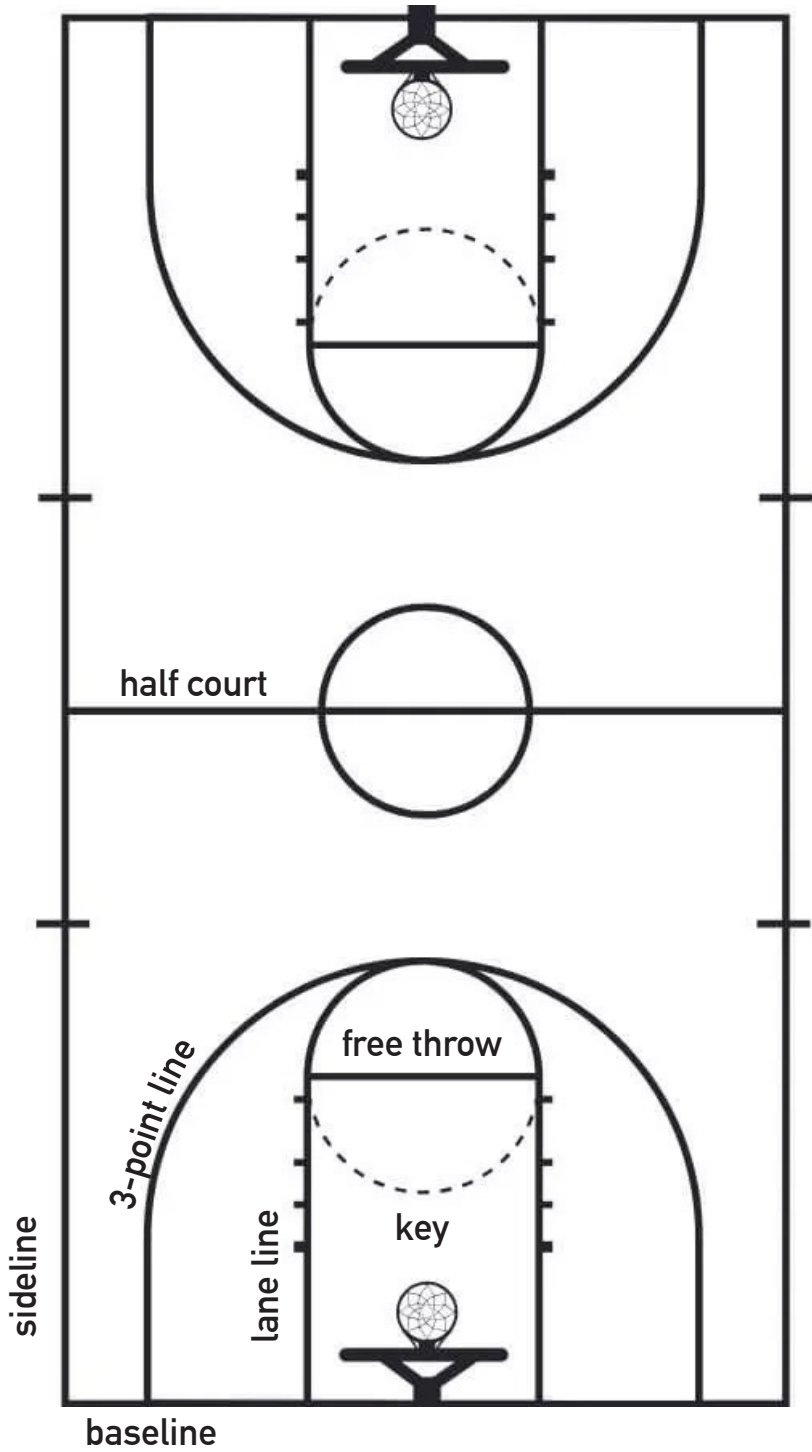


LEARNING **THE GAME OF** **BASKETBALL**

volume 2: shooting



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INTRODUCTION

I came up in a time when there was one way to shoot the ball. Every coach taught the same principles, although they might have used different terminology.

Feet square, toes to the rim. Elbow under the ball. Balance hand forming a “broken-T” with the shooting hand.

No matter what camp you went to, you were bound to learn this form.

Nowadays, there are more flexible approaches to shooting technique (and it’s a good thing, in my opinion). Historically, there have been plenty of good shooters who shoot the ball differently. Ray Allen probably has the most textbook style of shooting. Larry Bird brought the ball near the back of his head. Kevin Durant takes the ball across his body during his shooting motion. Different body types require different methods for accurate shooting.

Shooting used to be a specialty skill, allowing for a shorter or slower player to find a useful role on the team. Today’s game has evolved to become one in which shooting is a necessity for a player to find a spot on a team. It’s almost expected that a player will be able to shoot the ball.

This book is intended to be a broad look at shooting the basketball. Maybe you will be able to take away something that will help you improve. Maybe you will read a new thought to expand your thinking about shooting the basketball. Or, perhaps, like me, you are just a lover of the game of basketball and will enjoy reading what I have to say. On the other hand, it could be that you think I don't know anything. In which case, I would love for you to share your thoughts with me (connect with me at salemhoopsproject.org).

Regardless of why you are here, I hope this book can be thought provoking for you as you play, coach, or simply appreciate this great game.

SECTION 1
**PIECES OF A JUMP
SHOT**

FEET

The placement of your feet is important for maintaining balance during your shot. If you watch players in the NBA shoot the ball, you can notice the foot positioning can look different.

However, there are some basic principles you should consider when trying to master the skill. It's important to note that solid positioning of the feet will translate from a set shot to a jump shot with ease. Typically, you will want your feet separated to about the width of your shoulders. As with anything related to shooting, you can watch a game of basketball and see players with different spacing between their feet.

The important thing to remember is that the position of your feet is the foundation of having balance.

Next, most coaches will encourage you to place your dominant foot slightly in front of the opposite foot. You will see most players doing this in their shooting stance. The distance varies, but it's always a slight step in front. I see this as being a mechanical necessity for balance. As we bring the ball into our shot, the shooting hand is in front of our non shooting hand. Having a slight step forward with our feet matches that and reduces any compensation our body may try to make.



LEGS

Efficiently using your legs to generate strength for your shot leads to a softer touch. Just as with the feet, there's no magic depth you need to bend your legs. Again, you will see variations as you watch games. There's no need to do a full squat before your shoot.

Error on the side of a slight bending of the knees rather than going for major depth. Yes, you need your legs to generate force, but you also want to generate that force quickly. The lower you go, the more time it will take you to get into your shot.

The goal for your legs is not to jump as high as you can, but to efficiently provide strength for your shot.



SHOOTING POCKET

The shooting pocket is the position of your hands and the ball as you prepare to extend your arm for the release. A traditional shooting pocket will specifically say to have the ball at eye level, wrist and elbow at 90 degrees and the elbow placed straight under the ball.

While these are great guidelines, not every shooter can mechanically hold true to them. Restrictions in shoulder rotation can make it difficult to get into this position. You will see many great shooters (Ray Allen included) who have their elbow slightly pointed out. So, remember, there must be a balance between textbook and comfort.

A good shooting pocket will prepare you for an efficient release.

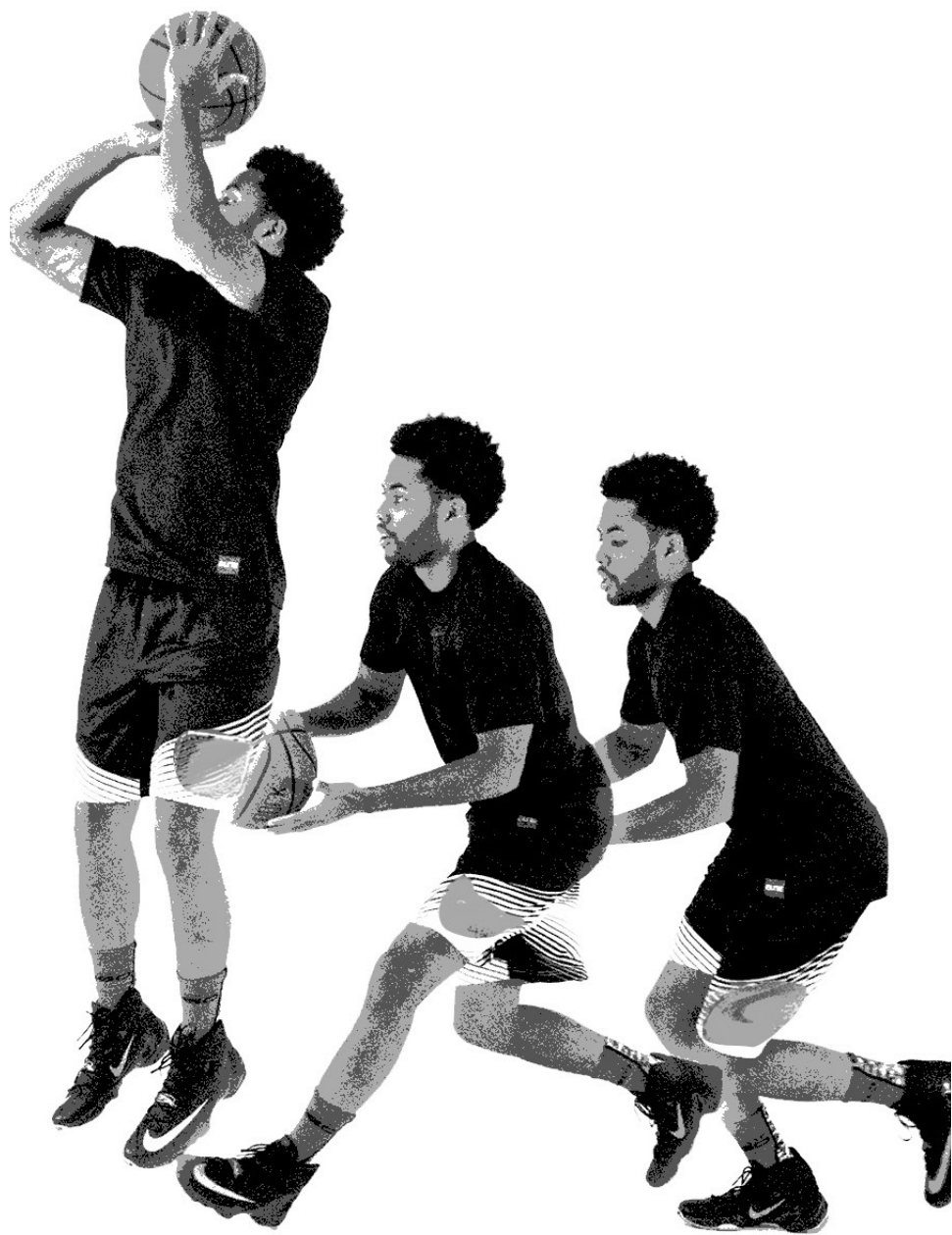


SHOOTING MOTION

From the catch to the release, the movement you make throughout the shot is your shooting motion. The more movement on the ball the less consistent your shot will be.

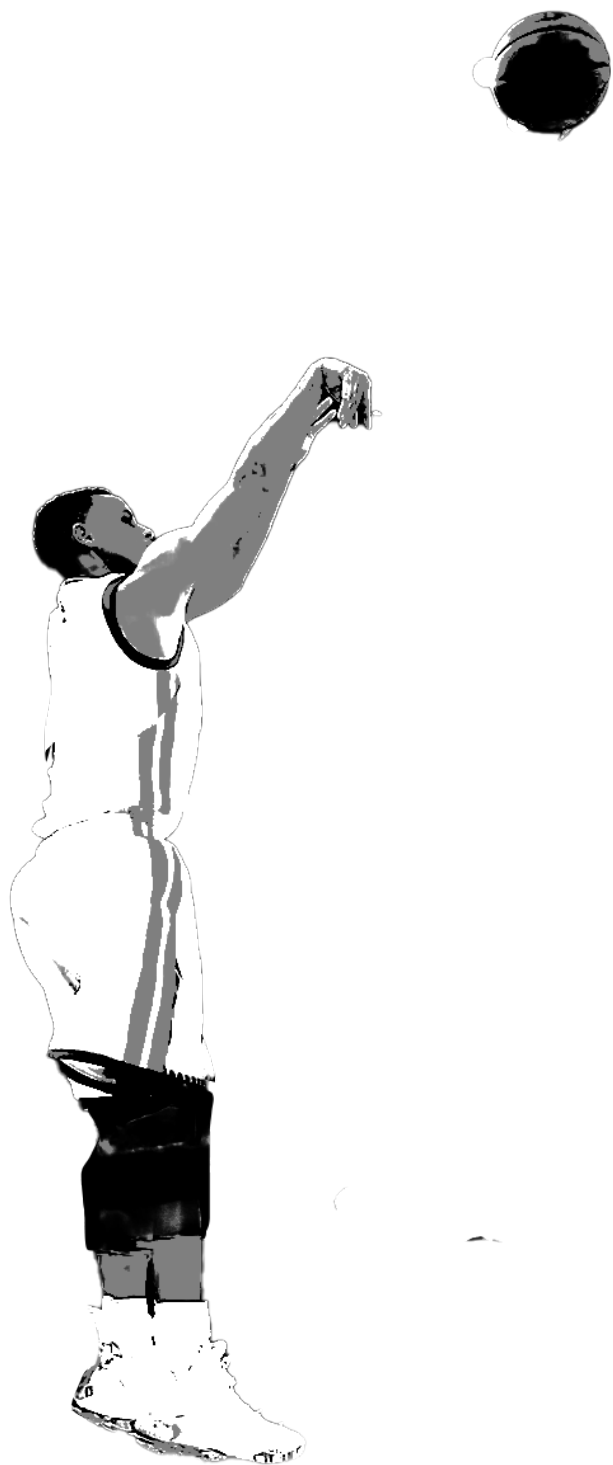
The goal is to keep the ball in a straight line from the beginning of your shooting motion until the release.

Steph Curry maintains a straight line from his catch to his release. Kevin Durant brings the ball from the left side of his body diagonally to his shooting pocket before he extends to his release. Both good shooters with different mechanics.



FINISHING THE SHOT

I have not taken an official survey, but I would assume that nearly 100% of coaches would agree on how to finish the shot: fully extend your elbow, snap your wrist, fingers pointed down. I'm yet to meet a coach that teaches something different. This is an important way to finish your shot to get the correct spin on the ball. It also leads to the correct velocity.



SECTION 2

IMPROVING AS A SHOOTER

TECHNIQUE

As I said in section one, there are basic principles to shooting form that can slightly vary from individual to individual. However, it is important to develop a consistent shooting technique that can be replicated over and over.

Each time you shoot a jump shot, it should look the same.

Watch any great shooter and you will see their shot will look identical (outside of specialty shots such as floaters and fadeaways, etc.).

KEYS TO FINDING YOUR TECHNIQUE

Feet placement should give you balance.

Legs should bend enough to develop power.

Elbow should be under the ball in the shooting
pocket.

Arm extends and the wrist snaps on the release
of the ball.

REPETITION

This is the key to consistency. Becoming an elite shooter requires a time commitment. The great thing about this, is all you need is a ball and a hoop. There are many different shooting drills that you can find to keep things creative. However, a starting place can be to aim for a certain number of quality shots per day. This is easier done with someone to rebound and pass you the ball, but if there is no one to assist you, using a self-spin method to give yourself a “pass” works well. Following your shot for your own rebound may be tiresome, but provides extra conditioning.

KEYS TO REPETITION PRACTICE

Start by tracking your attempts.

Level up your practice by tracking your makes.

Set a target for each day or week.

Repetitions need to be quality shots taken with a purpose
(game shots).

CONDITIONING

Being able to make shots in an empty gym is one thing. Being able to knock down your opportunity in the flow of a competitive game is completely different.

You don't know when your opportunity to shoot the ball will come.

It also depends on your role on the team. Maybe you get 15 shots per game, but maybe you only get 3 shots per game. For this reason, it is important to include a conditioning aspect when you are practicing shooting. While some shooting sessions should be focused on maximizing repetitions, other sessions should be more geared towards shooting within the flow of the game. Whether that's running in transition, coming off of screens or simply moving without the ball, being able to make a shot within the flow of a game needs to be practiced.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hi, I'm Matt Espinoza, the founder and director of Salem Hoops Project, a 501(c)3 that provides free basketball clinics to the city of Salem, OR. After playing in college, I spent 15 years coaching high school basketball. I'm on a little hiatus to be a father and husband right now, but plan to return in the future. I've coached league title teams and have also coached a winless team. While the winning teams were more fun, it was the teams where individual talent was limited that made me grow as a teacher. I hope I can share something of value with you in this book series. If you have something to share with me, head over to salemhoopsproject.org and connect with me.



