Name: _____ Date: _____

Ten Feet High

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 823 words

A basketball hoop hangs 10 feet above the floor. Stand under one and you have to tip your head far back. The rim is a metal ring, 18 inches wide. A white net hangs below it. Every point in the game comes from getting the ball down through that ring.

Basketball is a young sport. In the winter of 1891 and 1892, a gym teacher named James Naismith needed an indoor game for his class at Springfield College. He asked a janitor for two boxes to use as goals. The janitor brought two peach baskets instead. Naismith nailed them to the gym balcony rail. It happened to be 10 feet high. Hoops are still 10 feet high today.

Naismith wrote 13 rules for the first games. The NBA rule book is much longer now, but the heart of the game is still simple. Each team has five players on the court. A game starts with a jump ball in the center circle, at the middle of the floor.

Each player has a job, and each job has a name. The point guard is usually the shortest player on the team, and the best at dribbling and passing. The others are the shooting guard, the small forward, the power forward and the center. Each job also has a number, from 1 to 5.

A shot from inside the three-point line counts 2 points. A shot from outside it counts 3. The curved line is 23 feet 9 inches from the middle of the basket. A free throw is a free shot for a player who was fouled. It counts 1 point.

An NBA game has four quarters. Each one is 12 minutes long. The clock stops whenever a whistle blows, so a real game takes much longer than the clock says. If the score is tied at the end, the teams play an extra period. It lasts 5 minutes.

Another clock counts down the seconds. It is called the shot clock. When a team gets the ball, it has 24 seconds to take a shot. The NBA began using one in 1954, because teams had been holding the ball to stall. If time runs out, the other team gets the ball.

A foul is a rule break between players, and the NBA keeps count. A player who is fouled may get free throws. A player who gets a sixth personal foul has to leave the game. So players have to be careful.

The NBA has 30 teams: 29 in the United States and one in Canada. Each plays 82 games. Then eight teams from each half of the league make the playoffs. To win a series, a team needs four wins. The last round, the NBA Finals, is in June. In November 2026, one player is in his 24th season. His name is LeBron James.

LeBron James was born in Akron, Ohio, on December 30, 1984. Today he is 6 feet 9 inches tall and weighs about 250 pounds. He began playing organized basketball in the fifth grade. In

his last year at St. Vincent-St. Mary High School, one of his games was shown across the country on ESPN2.

In February 2002, Sports Illustrated put LeBron on its cover. He was 17 and still in high school. The headline called him The Chosen One. He came to the photo shoot alone, at 8 in the morning. No parents, coach or friends came with him.

Every June, NBA teams take turns choosing new players. This is called the draft. In 2003, Cleveland won the draft lottery, though the team had less than a one-in-four chance. On June 26, 2003, the Cavaliers picked LeBron James first. There were 58 picks in all.

His first NBA game was in Sacramento on October 29, 2003. He was 18 years old. He played almost 43 minutes and scored 25 points. His team lost. But no player who came straight from high school had ever scored more in a first NBA game.

LeBron has won four NBA titles. In 2016, Cleveland was behind Golden State, three games to one, in the Finals. No team had ever come back from that. The Cavaliers won the last three games. It was Cleveland's first championship in a major sport in 52 years.

On February 7, 2023, LeBron scored his 38,388th point. It was a jump shot late in the third quarter. He passed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who had held the career scoring record since 1984. The game paused, and Abdul-Jabbar handed LeBron the ball. Through early November 2026, he has scored 43,537 points in regular-season games, more than anyone.

In July 2026, LeBron joined the Philadelphia 76ers. It is his fourth team. As of early November 2026, he is 41. He is the oldest player in the NBA, in his 24th season. No one has played more. Each night the hoop is still 10 feet high. The shot clock still counts down from 24.

Questions

1. How high above the floor is the rim?

A. Eight feet
B. Ten feet
C. Twelve feet

2. What did the janitor bring James Naismith instead of boxes?

A. Paper bags
B. Wooden crates
C. Two peach baskets

3. Why does a real NBA game take longer than the 48 minutes on the clock?

A. The clock stops whenever a whistle blows
B. Players take a break every quarter
C. The teams play extra quarters

4. In "teams had been holding the ball to stall," what does stall mean?

A. Score quickly
B. Pass faster
C. Waste time

5. What happened to Cleveland in the 2016 Finals?

A. They lost every game
B. They came back from three games to one
C. They never reached the Finals

6. What does a player have to do after a sixth personal foul?

A. Leave the game
B. Take a free throw
C. Switch positions

Words to know

rim: metal hoop ring
foul: rule break
draft: choosing new players
playoffs: championship rounds
dribbling: bouncing the ball

Answer key: Ten Feet High

1. B. Ten feet
2. C. Two peach baskets
3. A. The clock stops whenever a whistle blows
4. C. Waste time
5. B. They came back from three games to one
6. A. Leave the game