

10 & Under (10U) Basketball Rule Book

North Catawba Optimist | 2025-26 Season

The playing rules and standards below are to serve as guidelines and recommendations for those administering and/or officiating basketball competitions at North Catawba Optimist.

GAME LENGTH

- Each game will be a total of 4 quarters at 6 total minutes per quarter. Half time will be the equivalent to a quarter length at 6 minutes.

HEIGHT OF BASKET

- Utilizing a lower basket height allows players to develop proper shooting form and increases the opportunity for shooting success. The height of the basket should be at 9 feet 0 inches.

EQUIPMENT

- NCO will use a game ball of 28.5" for the 10U age group.

SCORING

- All made field goals inside the 3pt arc will be scored 2 points. Any official confirmed shot made behind the 3pt arc will be scored 3 points.

FREE THROWS

- Players are encouraged to take free throws from the white foul line at the top of the lane to develop proper form and increase success. Players in the 10U age group are permitted to shoot free throws from the yellow tape line closest to the regulation line.

START OF GAMEPLAY

- The game will start with a jump ball at half court.

TIMEOUTS

- Managing the way timeouts are called allows for better game flow and decision-making by the coaches. In the 10U age group, only head coaches are allowed to call a timeout.
- Each team will be granted two 60 second timeouts in the first half and the second half of the game. (4 total timeouts) ANY unused timeouts from the first half will NOT carry over to the second half.
- Unused timeouts during regulation play can NOT carry over to any overtime/extra periods. One 60 second timeout will be granted to each team for each overtime/extra period sessions that apply.
- All timeouts at NCO are 60 seconds.

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PLAYING TIME

- To ensure that all players participating in the sport have an opportunity to experience the game, equal playing time is required.
- Each coach must adhere to the three minute substitution rule through all four quarters but it's the coach's discretion how they utilize their lineup during all four quarters.
- The aforementioned mandatory three minute substitution will be called at the first dead ball after or directly before the three minute mark of each quarter.
- If full personnel substitutions have been made by both teams during the quarter, there will be no substitutions at the three minute mark for that respective quarter.
- **The three minute substitution rule is NOT a timeout. Players should be ready at the scorers table to go in at the three minute mark deadball. Coaches are not permitted to huddle teams for a timeout at the three minute mark. If a coach huddles his team during a three minute substitution, they will be charged a timeout. If the coach is out of timeouts, it will be treated as a technical foul on the coach and the opposite team will receive one foul shot and possession.**

DEFENSE

- It is the coaches discretion on the defense style their team plays. North Catawba Optimist recommends a standard player to player (a.k.a. man to man), two-three or three-two zones.
- Double teaming/crowding/trapping is permitted.

PRESSING DEFENSE

- Teams are not allowed to press in the 10U age group.
- Defensive teams are NOT allowed to cross the white volleyball line.

STEALING

- North Catawba Optimist allows all age groups to steal the ball. This encourages players to take defense development seriously and also teaches the offensive team the importance of ball protection.

BACKCOURT TIMELINE

- North Catawba Optimist has a backcourt timeline of 10 seconds for the offense to bring the ball past half court.
- If the offense fails to bring the ball past half court in the allotted 10 seconds, it will result in a turnover of possession.

BACKCOURT VIOLATION

- If the ball travels back court (crossing the half court line) without the defense touching it or deflecting it, it will result in a loss of possession for the offense.

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CLOCK STOPPAGE

- The clock will stop for the following reasons:
 - Timeout is called by the coach, official, or referee.
 - Injury timeout
 - Shooting foul called
 - After any made shot or dead ball under 1 minute in each quarter.

SHOT CLOCK

- North Catawba Optimist does NOT use a shot clock in any of our age groups and therefore cannot enforce any type of timed offensive possessions.

TRAVELING/WALKING

- To ensure the focus on player development and basic understanding of basketball, North Catawba enforces traveling/walking. In order to align with North Carolina Middle School rules, North Catawba Optimist does **NOT** allow a “gather step”. If a player takes a “gather step” resulting in a third step, the player will be called for a travel.

DOUBLE DRIBBLING

- To ensure the focus on player development and basic understanding of basketball, North Catawba enforces double dribbling. Any double dribble called by the official will result in loss of possession for the offense.

FIVE SECONDS CLOSELY GUARDED

- North Catawba Optimist does not recognize this common rule or enforce a 5 seconds closely guarded rule in any age group.

LANE VIOLATIONS

- North Catawba Optimist does enforce an offensive 5 second lane violation for our 10U age group.
- There is NO 5 second lane violation for the defense.

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FOULS

- North Catawba Optimist acknowledges that in the 10U age group that kids may unintentionally and unknowingly foul. Minor fouls may not be called and it's the officials discretion to determine and differentiate the difference between what might be perceived as a minor foul or mid-major foul.
- **North Catawba Optimist does NOT instruct their officials to call an “over the back” foul. At no level is there an actual “over the back” foul call if a player reaches or jumps above another player to gain a spacing leverage to receive a rebound.** If contact is made by the player gaining leverage with the player under them, it's the officials discretion to call this contact a foul.
- **North Catawba Optimist allows their officials to have full discretion and how the call or lack of a call is handled.**

FLAGRANT FOUL

- When a foul could seriously injure an opponent. This will result in the opposing team receiving TWO free throws and possession of the ball. If a player receives two flagrant fouls within the same game, the player will be disqualified from the game. Any player that receives two or more flagrant fouls will be reviewed by the NCO board to determine if the player will serve future suspensions.

TECHNICAL FOUL

- A technical foul is given for unsportsmanlike conduct or other infractions. This can range from, but not limited to: fighting or arguing with an official. Both coaches and players can get technical fouls. In the event of a called technical foul, the opposing team will receive TWO free throws and possession of the ball. Any coach or player with 2 technical fouls will be disqualified for the remainder of the game and will be subject to NCO board review to determine if they will serve future suspensions.

FOULING OUT

- North Catawba Optimist's main goal is to make sure that every kid has a chance to play the sport/game that they love. However, if a player collects five fouls, they will be disqualified from competition and will “foul out”.
- If a team fouls out one or more kids resulting in that team having less than five players, the game will continue with any remaining players left. However, that team will play at a disadvantage as the opposing team will still be allowed to participate with five players.

TEAM FOULS & BONUS

- North Catawba Optimist scores the total amount of team fouls per half (not quarter). Once a team reaches 7 team fouls for the half, their opponent will receive 2 free throws for each foul thereafter for the half. If a team enters the bonus in the 2nd half and the game goes to OT, the bonus will remain in effect during the OT.

10 & Under (10U) Basketball Rule Book

North Catawba Optimist | 2025-26 Season

LANE VIOLATIONS

- **The players can begin moving/boxing out in the lane after the ball leaves the foul shooter's hands. The shooter must wait until the ball hits the backboard/rim before moving into the lane.**
- If a player jumps into the lane prior to the ball leaving the shooter's hands, it will be called a lane violation.
 - If the violation is on the offensive team, **the shot will be waived off and the point will not count if the shot is made.** The offense will not get another opportunity for that free throw.
 - If the violation is on the defensive team, **the shot will be waived off if the shot is missed. If the shot is made, the point will count. If the shot is missed, the foul shooter will get another foul shot attempt.**

OUT OF BOUNDS

- The ball is considered out of bounds when it touches the ground outside the baseline or sidelines. The baseline and sidelines themselves are also considered out of bounds. A turnover will ensue if the ball touches a player who has any part of their body touching an area out of bounds.

MERCY RULE

- If the score has a deficit of 25 or more points, the clock will NOT stop for anything other than an injury timeout or a timeout called by an official or coach.
 - **EXAMPLE: The score is 25 points difference and a team is shooting free throws, the clock will NOT stop while foul shots are being attempted.**
- If a team is up 15 or more points, the winning team must stay inside the lane/grey area on the court.

North Catawba Optimist has a zero tolerance stance on grandstand interference with our games, including but not limited to: obscenities, language or aggression. The official (referees) or any member of the North Catawba Optimist Club can ask any spectator to exit the building if they are arguing with officials, coaches or players. If the problem persists, law enforcement will be contacted to take care of the situation.

Repeat offenders of the zero tolerance stance on grandstand interference will receive a ban reflecting their level of interference.

North Catawba Optimist will regularly revisit our Basketball rules and hold the right to revise any rule at any time, for any reason to improve the development of our Basketball program. Any revisions of these rules will be posted online at NCOptimist.com.