



January 28, 2026

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule 4-41 Act of Shooting

Purpose:

The "airborne shooter" rule is intended to discourage defensive players from illegally contacting an airborne player who has released a ball on a try but has not yet returned to the floor. This rule clarifies that a player is still in the act of shooting while airborne, even after the release of the try, and grants appropriate free throws based on whether or not the try was successful.

Rule Language:

- An airborne shooter is a player who has released the ball on a try or tap for a goal or has tapped the ball and has not returned to the floor.
- The airborne shooter is considered to be in the act of shooting.
- The act of shooting begins simultaneously with the start of the try or tap for field goal and ends when the ball is clearly in flight, and includes the airborne shooter.

Interpretation:

Situation 1:

A1 is high in the air on a jump shot in the free-throw lane. A1 releases the ball on a try and is then fouled by B1 who has also jumped in an unsuccessful attempt to block the shot. A1's try is unsuccessful.

RULING: A1 is an airborne shooter when the ball is released until one foot returns to the floor. An airborne shooter is in the act of shooting. B1 has fouled A1 in the act of shooting. A1 is awarded two free throws for being fouled in the act of shooting. (b). (4-41-1) **COMMENT:** A player is awarded one free throw if fouled while attempting a successful two-point or three-point field goal. If the shot attempt is unsuccessful, the player receives two free throws for a two-point try or three free throws for a three-point try.

Situation 2 (New):

A1 attempts to dunk the ball. The ball contacts the ring and bounces away with no chance of entering the basket. To regain balance and avoid injury, A1 grasps the ring. As A1 releases the ring and returns to the floor, A1 makes contact with B1.

RULING: A1 is not penalized for hanging on the ring, as it was done to prevent injury. Once A1 grasps the ring, A1 is no longer considered an airborne shooter. If the contact by A1 does not restrict B1's freedom

of movement, it is incidental. If the contact is illegal, A1 is charged with a common foul. If the bonus is in effect, B1 is awarded free throws. While the ball remains in the imaginary cylinder or is on or within the basket, the basket interference rules apply. (4-6, 4-19-2, 10-4-2)

COMMENT: This clarifies that when a player hangs on the ring following a dunk attempt, they are no longer considered an airborne shooter, even if they have not yet returned to the floor. If A1 commits illegal contact after releasing the ring, it should not be considered a player-control foul. If the defender B1 committed illegal contact on A1 before A1 returns to the floor, it is not a foul in the act of shooting. In each of these situations, the penalty is determined by the bonus situation.

Situation 3 (New):

A1 dunks the ball into the basket. A1 hangs on the ring to regain balance and avoid injury. As A1 releases the ring and returns to the floor, A1 makes contact with B1. **RULING:** A1 is not penalized for hanging on the ring, as it was done to prevent injury. Once A1 grasps the ring, A1 is no longer considered an airborne shooter. As soon as the ball passes through the net, it becomes dead, and the goal is scored. Contact after the ball has become dead is incidental unless it is ruled intentional or flagrant or is committed by or on an airborne shooter. (4-19-1 Note, 10-4-2) **Conclusion:** The "airborne shooter" rule is designed to protect players in the act of shooting by preventing illegal contact while they are airborne after releasing a shot. It ensures that a player remains in the act of shooting until they return to the floor except when they have attempted to dunk the ball into the basket and hang on the ring.