

Become a Big-Time Scorer

Improve your jump shot,
become a better 3-pt shooter,
and increase your scoring average.

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INTRO

Scoring 20 points a game isn't easy, but it's also not as difficult as you might think. In this e-book, I'm going to show you the tips and secrets to increasing your scoring average. This information is all based on my experience as a player, coach, and private trainer.

How do I know it works? It worked for me as a player: I averaged over 28 points a game playing professionally overseas, and scored 56 points in one game. And it works for the players that I train as a private coach: I've taken average players and turned them into all-league performers based on the tips and training information I'm going to provide to you in the following pages.

The information in this e-book works, and will help you become a better scorer. It's that simple.

Now, can I guarantee that everyone who reads this e-book will average 20 points a game? No. Only you can make that happen. I can't go out and shoot the ball for you. I can't put in the practice and hard work it will take for you to become a big-time scorer. Only you can do that. Only you can make that happen.

But if you do have the drive and are willing to put in the hard work that it will take to become a great scorer, then let's get started. Using the information in this e-book, and working harder than you've ever worked before, you can push your scoring average into double-digits, and eventually work your way up to scoring 20 points a game.

THE MENTAL PART OF GAME

Can you become a 20-point a game scorer?

The first part step to becoming a big-time scorer is realizing that it is possible. You have to believe you can do it before you can go out and make it happen. Once you wrap your head around that thought, and start to believe you can average double-digits in scoring, you've taken the first step to making it happen.

Take a look at the following snap-shot of a hypothetical series of plays in a hypothetical (but very possible) game:

- The jump ball goes up, your teammate grabs the tip, passes to you streaking to the basket, and you lay the ball in.
- A few minutes later, you get good position on the offensive boards, grab the rebound, and go up strong for a put-back basket.
- A couple minutes later, you catch a pass on the wing, and knock down a jump shot.
- A couple of possessions later, you drive to the basket, get fouled while shooting, and knock down both free throws.

I think you'd agree that the series of plays I listed above could very easily happen in the first eight to 10 minutes of a game. And guess what? If that actually happened in a game, you would have already scored eight points, and be well on your way to a double-digit scoring game.

It's even possible for that series of plays (or one like it) to take place over an even shorter time period. It's very possible to score three or four baskets in a matter of a couple of minutes, rather than eight or 10. I remember one game in college where I scored eight points in just under two minutes (I hit a jump shot, put in an offensive rebound, scored on a fast break, and hit two free throws). Think of the type of game you can have when you score eight points in two minutes. Even if you score just a few baskets over the entire rest of the game, you've still had one heck of a scoring game.

Remember: offense happens one basket or free throw at a time. A 15, 20, or even 30 point game is just a bunch of individual baskets and free throws all added together. There's no magic to it, it's just some jump shots, rebounds and put-backs, and some free throws all added together.

The point is to realize that it's very possible for you to score in the double-digits. You don't have to play the entire game, have the ball in your hands all the time, or take 15 or 20 shots to make it happen. By being aggressive, taking good shots, and making the most of your time on the floor, you can become a solid scorer.

I remember playing in high school, and thinking that scoring 10 or 12 points game was a lot. Then in college, an 18 or 20 point game was big-time. But by the time I was playing professionally overseas, scoring 25 or 30 per game was the norm. My expectations changed. Once I realized that I could be aggressive and score the basketball, it became easier. Once I developed the confidence in my offensive game, I started to take it to the defense, to punish them for their weaknesses and mistakes they made. Once I realized what I was capable of, scoring became easier.

Do you have a scorer's mentality?

Part of being a big-time scorer is to have the "scorer's mentality". What is it? The mindset of a big-time scorer is simple: you can score the basketball at anytime, on anybody. I know that may seem a little arrogant, but it's not. What it really means is that you are confident in your abilities, do not fear your opponent, and welcome the challenge of competition.

If you walk out onto the court unsure of yourself, hesitant and tentative, and scared of your opponent, you've already beaten yourself. You're already defeated. Don't let that happen to you. Take the court with confidence and certainty, eliminate any doubts or negative thinking, and then let the game come to you.

Now don't forget that basketball is a team game. There is no place for anyone to try to take every shot, to take bad shots, or to hog the basketball. The only thing that kind of play is going to get you is a seat on the bench. That's not what having a scorer's mentality is about.

So don't go out and try to be the next Michael Jordan or Kobe Bryant. Don't go out and shoot the ball every time down the court, or force up shots while trying to score 40 points a game. Shooting the basketball should

not be your entire focus. Scoring lots of points should not be your only goal. Your goal should be to help your team win games by being a strong, solid, offensive player. By becoming even more of an offensive threat, you help keep the defense honest, which helps the offense run more smoothly, and opens the game up for your teammates.

If you're a better, more confident offensive player, you'll get more playing time and help your team win more games. It's that simple. It's a win-win: both you and the team will be more successful.

Visualize yourself becoming a better offensive player, then go out and make it happen

One way world-class athletes improve their performance levels is through visualization. This training technique can be very useful for basketball players, and can play an important part in helping you become a better scorer, and a better all-around player.

What is visualization? Visualization is the process of closing your eyes, relaxing, and picturing yourself playing well. One key is to picture in as much detail as possible situations in which you want to succeed. During your visualization, you should make sure to include as much detail as possible to make them as realistic and lifelike as possible.

For example, if you're picturing yourself knocking down some key free throws at the end of a game, in your mind's eye, put yourself in a crowded gym, with the fans screaming and yelling, with the ref handing you the ball just before you have to take the shot. Then picture, and put yourself physically in the situation, as you take a few dribbles, take a deep breath, bend your knees, and shoot the ball with perfect form and backspin, and watch it swish through the net.

As you visualize yourself succeeding in various high-pressure, game-like situations, you will feel more comfortable and confident when those situations actually take place in real life. In fact, there have been some studies with athletes which indicate that visualization practice can actually greatly enhance actual real-life practice. For example, if you visualize yourself hitting 10 out of 10 free throws or jump shots from various spots on the floor, that can actually help you improve your free throw shooting or jump shooting in real life. Visualization training can be that effective, and have that big of an impact on your game.

Here are some visualization scenarios that you should include in your training program. Free throws: rehearse in your mind stepping up to the line and hitting pressure, big-time free throws. Jump shots: picture and rehearse in your mind hitting jump shots from various spots on the floor against pressure defense. Dribble drives: visualize yourself catching a pass, then dribbling past your defender, to the basket, then going up strong for the lay-in. These are just some examples of game-like situations you can use in your visualization practice.

Techniques for getting in the zone

Great scorers have a tendency to be able to put themselves in the zone, where their game is flowing, they are on fire, and they are knocking down shots left and right. How do they do it? How do they get in the flow, where the game seems to come easy to them and the basket looks like it is five feet wide?

Have you ever had one of those practices or games where you can't miss? You pull up from 20 feet, and knock down a jumper. You know it's good from the moment it leaves your hand. Wow, that felt good. It felt natural and effortless, almost like you barely made any effort, yet the shot was perfect, and splashed through the net like it was sucked in by a giant magnet.

The next time down the floor, you catch a pass, give a pump fake and the defender flies by you. You take a hard dribble to one side, pull up from 18 feet, and swish another one through. The basket seems like it's huge, and the ball feels light, almost like it's an extension of yourself. This is easy. You're in a groove. The action seems like it's in slow motion. You seem to be a step ahead of the action. You seem to be able to anticipate where the ball is going to go, where your teammates are going to be on the floor, what the defense is going to do.

That's being in the zone. Most athletes who've played a sport at a high level have, at some point, been in the zone. It's a place where everything seems to fall into place. It's a space where everything seems to flow. It's a feeling of being in total control, having perspective, and confidence. It's also elusive and fleeting. No one really knows how to get into the zone, or how to stay there.

So let's pinpoint some very specific ways you can help put yourself in the zone so you can increase your scoring average. There are three main areas to touch on: confidence, mental re-sets, and routine.

Confidence

This is one of the key areas to success in basketball, especially for scorers. Confidence goes a long way to making good things happen. If you take the court with a total lack of confidence, unsure of your abilities, scared of the opponent, well guess what? You've pretty much taken yourself out of the game right from the start. You're shaken. You're unsure. You've set yourself up for failure, not success.

Give yourself every advantage you possibly can. Set yourself up to succeed. Give yourself the mental edge by taking the court full of confidence. Walk onto the floor (whether it's in practice or a game) feeling totally sure of yourself. Believe in yourself. Stand tall, feel strong, and go out with all the confidence in the world. Everyone gets a little nervous before a game or gets down after missing a couple of jump shots. That's natural. But don't let that pre-game excitement turn into uncertainty or fear. And don't let a missed shot or two turn you into a hesitant, or scared offensive player.

Mental re-sets

This is a key tactic I teach to my private coaching clients. Here's what it means: being in the zone is all about being on track, following up one successful play or sequence with another, and not letting a bad play snowball into another one. So throughout the game, re-focus yourself, re-focus your thoughts, and set yourself back on track, back on a path to make good plays, back on a path to playing with confidence and good results.

Mental re-sets are simply times throughout practices or games where you re-establish what positive things you plan to do going forward. Most people don't take the time to do this. And all it takes is a few seconds. Stop, focus your thoughts, re-emphasize the positive things you plan to do, then make them happen.

The best times to do this are during stoppages in play, whether it's a time out, the end of a quarter or at halftime, or after a foul (when people are setting up in free throw situations). Stop, focus your thoughts, and give yourself another positive boost of confidence. Erase thoughts of any bad plays you may have made. Focus on any of the good plays you've made, and re-emphasize to yourself the good things you intend to do going forward: whether it's playing extra tough on defense, being extra aggressive on the boards, or knocking down a three-pointer. Constantly re-set yourself so you feel confident in your abilities as a scorer, and this will go a long way to helping you make it happen on the floor.

Routine

This is another key element of getting in the zone. A routine is simply a series of actions you take to get yourself ready to succeed. It may be the routine you do before shooting a free throw. Or it may be the routine you use before a game, during warm-ups, to get mentally and physically ready to play at your best. Whatever routines you have developed over time, and with practice, make sure to use those to your advantage.

One of the most important routines, in my opinion, is what you do to get ready before a game. Lots of players get to the gym, put on their uniform, and take a few jump shots during warm-ups. That's it...they're "ready" to hit the floor. That is amazing to me. If I'm going to play ball, I want to be totally warmed up and ready to go (having stretched and worked up a sweat), but I also want my jump shot ready to go to. Personally, I need to shoot at least 30 or 40 jumpers before I'm ready to play (usually more). That includes face-up jumpers, one dribble moves, turnaround jumpers in the post, drives to the hoop with pull-up jumpers, etc. That is my routine. That is how I get ready to play.

Now, you have to find the routine that works for you. And when you find that routine, keep using it. Find what works best for you and keep doing it. Always look for ways to make that routine better, of course, but don't find a routine that works, and then change it midway through a season, or a game for no reason.

Most players, for example, have developed a routine for shooting free throws. It's something that feels good and natural, and seems to work for them. Well, if you practice shooting free throws with that routine, and it seems to work for you, then use it in a game. I'm always amazed when I see players use a different routine each time they step up to the free throw line.

These three areas (confidence, mental re-sets, and routine) are three key components of getting into the zone. By doing these things, you should be able to improve your focus and performance, and become a better scorer.

Watch great scorers and learn from them

One of the best ways to become a better scorer is to watch great players play the game, and then do the things that they do well. Pay attention to what great college and NBA players do on the offensive end of the court, and then try to do those same things when you play.

For example, watch how good players move without the basketball. Watch how they set up and use screens from their teammates. Watch the decisions they make in terms of shot selection and the actual types of shots they take (do they tend to shoot from certain spots on the floor, do they use only bank shots from certain spots or in certain situations?).

Don't underestimate how much you can learn from watching great players. Study their moves on the court and parts of their game that make them great, and you'll improve your game.

Watch tape of yourself in games and at practice

If you are able to, have someone film practice(s) and games. Then watch yourself on the court, and study the things you did right and the things you did wrong. Professional athletes and teams have watched game and practice films for decades because it's such an effective tool for improving performance.

When you're out on the court, it's not always easy to pinpoint the things you are doing right or wrong. But watching yourself on tape, it's much easier to see your strengths (the things you're doing well), and areas in need of improvement. For example, by watching tape of yourself, you'll be able to judge where you positioned yourself on the floor, critique the moves you made to get open, and really see the effectiveness of moves you made with the ball. Were you aggressive enough? Were your pump fakes and dribble moves quick and decisive? Did you shy away from contact or drive to the basket with strength and power?

Watching tape of yourself can be an amazingly effective tool for improving your game. Break down your performance into the things you did well (and build on those things), and the things that need work (and focus on eliminating those weaknesses).

TRAINING & WORKOUTS

How to perfect your shot form and increase your shooting percentage

I'll start off this training section by addressing the most important drill for improving your shot: close-in, form shooting drills. These drills will help you perfect your shot mechanics and groove your shot. I truly believe these drills are a key to helping make you a solid shooter, thus helping you improve your shot and scoring percentage.

A good shot is typically the result of good form, and consistency. Form: while everyone has their own, unique mechanics, some of the basics are usually always present: guide hand resting on the side of the ball, full extension of the shooting arm, good follow-through, etc.

Consistency: regardless of what your shot looks like, you practice it over and over so it becomes a habit. You don't have to think about it. You've found a method that works for you, and you shoot it the same way each and every time.

So it makes sense that once you've developed a technique that works well, you then need to practice it over and over again. Here's a good method of nailing down your form so that your shot becomes even more consistent. To really groove your shot so that it's automatic, start off your individual shooting practice a few feet out from the backboard, on the right side of the basket. Using your right hand only, shoot a bank shot high off the backboard, using perfect form. Retrieve the ball as it comes through the net, and shoot again. Shoot 20 shots from the right side, then switch to the left side of the basket and shoot 20 shots with your left hand. Really concentrate on using perfect form.

Now, move back 2 or 3 feet and repeat the process (shoot 20 bank shots from each side of the basket, using your right hand from the right side, and your left hand from the left side of the basket). After completing this second round of the drill, step back another 1 to 2 feet and do the drill one last time. Finally, step back to the free throw line. Shoot 15 fouls shots using perfect form. It should be fairly easy at this point, since you've just spend five or 10 minutes working on, and grooving, your shot.

After you've gone through three rounds of the close-in shooting, followed by free throws, you will be ready to continue your shooting practice. This routine should give you the feeling that your shot is totally in the groove, and like the shooting motion is automatic. You won't even have to think about extending your shooting arm up and out, pushing the ball off your fingertips, and following through with your wrist. This set of drills helps develop your muscle memory, helps you fine-tune your shot mechanics, and helps you groove your shot.

Do the close-in, form shooting drill routine every day. After a month or two, you'll have 30 to 60 of these practices under your belt and you won't believe how much better your form and shot will be. When you pull up on the break and knock down a 20-foot jump shot with perfect form, you can think back to the form shooting drills you did every day to make it happen.

If you want to perform well in games, practice at game speeds

Game speed training is essential to becoming a great scorer. Game speed training is a simple concept, but an incredibly important one: simulate game-speed action to get the most out of your workouts.

Many people get in the bad habit of practicing at half-speed (or less). But game action isn't slow. It's never at half-speed. Game action is fast, intense, and explosive. So to really train for competition, you need to train at game-like speeds. This is an important concept, because when you're practicing on your own (or even with your team), it's easy to get in the habit of going through drills lackadaisically, or at half speed. Of course, certain drills (like form shooting drills) might take place at a reduced pace. That is normal. But when you go out and work on your jump shot, or on dribble moves, or pump fakes and drives to the basket, those have to be at game-like speeds.

Here are some examples.

Jump shots

Shoot jumpers as if you were really in a game, with a defender in your face. Practice as if you're shooting against a good defender who is playing you tough. Make a good move, get good height on your jump, get the shot off quickly and at the top of your jump, and follow your shot in case you miss the shot.

One or two dribble moves

Just like the jump shot drill, but this time you're adding a one or two dribble move. Again, fight the tendency and habit of going through the motions at half-speed. Make a quick dribble move to either side, and then go up quickly for the shot. Make your move an aggressive one, and really take a hard step or two towards the basket before pulling up for the shot. This is a move you'll use in games, so make it at the speed you'll have to use in games. If you do it half-heartedly and at half-speed, it's almost not worth doing.

Full-speed game dribbling

To be a great scorer, you'll need to have solid dribbling skills. To develop good ball handling abilities, you'll need to practice these types of drills with high intensity, and at game speeds. Here are some examples: dribble full speed from baseline to baseline, staying under control, but moving the ball up the court fast. There will be game situations where you have to push the ball up the court at high speeds, so it makes sense to practice it. Next, add a jump stop and jumper from the free throw lines. Dribble from one baseline at full speed towards the other, and pull up at the free throw line (with a solid, on-balance jump stop), and go up for a strong, solid jumper. The first time you try these drills, you'll probably feel out of control, and that's the point. The more you practice them, the better you'll get, and the better you'll be when it comes to actual game play.

Post moves

Regardless of the position you play (guard, forward, or center), it's important to learn and practice your back to the basket moves. You never know when you may be down in the low post with a good scoring opportunity.

Lots of inside players get in the habit of going through their post moves at slow speed. That's OK to do when you're initially working on your footwork. But once you've nailed the basic footwork, you have to pick up the pace and practice your back to the basket moves at high intensity and with high speeds. Make your moves explosive and quick. Imagine a defender is guarding you, and you have to out-quick and over-power them with your post moves.

I'm a firm believer that the most effective use of your time is to practice hard and practice with intensity. I'm sure you've heard the term "quality or quantity", and that's the rule that applies here. Good quality, game-like practice is much more effective than lazy, half-speed practice.

How to increase your shooting range

No matter how good a shooter you are, increasing your shooting range will make you a more effective offensive player and a better scorer. To increase the range on your jumper, you'll have to work on specific, distance shooting drills. Don't use these distance shooting drills as a replacement for practicing your regular shooting practice, but add them to the end of your workout. Adding a simple distance shooting drill should, in time, increase your range dramatically.

Once you've completed your regular shot practice routine, move onto the following distance shooting drill. Step a foot or two back from your normal shooting range (for example, if you are a good shooter from about 14 feet out, step back to 15 or 16 feet from the basket). Focus on using your normal shooting form, concentrating on getting a little more power into the shot, getting the extra energy from your lower body (your hips and legs). Really explode into the shot using your lower body, fully extending the shooting arm, and getting good follow-through with a flick of the wrist. Shoot 10 to 15 jumpers from this range.

When you start to feel more comfortable at this distance, step back another foot or two. Go through the same routine, shooting 10 to 15 jump shots from this distance. Really concentrate on keeping good, solid form, and exploding into the shot, getting the extra power from your lower body and full extension of your shooting arm. Continue each cycle of this drill, shooting 10 to 15 jump shots from each distance, then moving back a foot or two and repeating the set.

Stop the drill when your form starts to suffer. If you find yourself out too far, having to heave the shot up to the basket with poor form, the drill is no longer effective. You don't want to practice shooting the basketball with bad form.

Use this distance shooting drill three or four times a week. Over time, you will start to feel more comfortable shooting further out from the basket. In other words, by doing this drill, you will increase your shooting range. And as you increase your shooting range, you'll make yourself a more potent offensive threat and increase your scoring average.

One trick for fixing a broken jump shot

If you've got good shooting form, but for some reason your shot isn't falling like it normally does, try this trick: practice shooting with more arch until your shot corrects itself. This is especially true when you start to struggle at the free throw line. As you practice shooting free throws, put extra arch on the shot (even if it feels like it's too much arch), and this will normally re-set your mechanics and get your shot back on track.

Why does putting extra arch on the shot help fix your shot? To get the extra arch, you have to shoot the ball up and out towards the basket, which is a key element of solid shooting form (as opposed to shooting out and up towards the basket, which results in a flatter shot). Occasionally, and for a variety of reasons, players often start to shoot a flatter shot with less and less arch.

So if you find yourself missing more shots than you normally do, go out and practice shooting the ball with extra arch. You'll notice the difference right away as this forces you to fully extend your shooting arm up towards the basket. It usually takes only a short amount of practice time to get your shot mechanics back in shape, and to get your shot falling again.

Add this shot to your game and increase your scoring average

No matter how good an offensive player you are, you'll be even more effective if you develop a good jump hook. It's such an effective move for so many reasons, it's a wonder more players don't use it as a big part of their game down low. And don't think the jump hook is just a move for inside players. Regardless of the position you play, having the ability to score around the basket is important. You never know when you'll grab a rebound or loose ball in the lane, or catch a pass on an in-bounds play and need to take a quick shot in the lane.

If you add a jump hook to your offensive game, you'll be way ahead of most of your competition. Even in the NBA, surprisingly few players use a jump hook. A few players that do use it that quickly come to mind are Tim Duncan (no surprise, he's got the whole package), and Kevin Willis (who is nearing the end of his career, but has used a jump hook as a big part of his game for quite some time).

Why don't more players practice and use the jump hook? My theory is that it isn't taught much at the high school or college level, and it also isn't all that glamorous of a shot. But having a pretty shot isn't really what the game is about. Being effective and helping your team win is all that really matters.

The jump hook works for a variety of reasons. It's usually shot from within a few feet from the basket, and just being that close to the basket gives you a better chance of making the shot. Also, the jump hook is typically shot off of a two-foot plant, so you're usually in a very strong, on-balance position as you shoot, which helps make it a higher percentage shot. And the shot motion itself (keeping the ball on one side of your body, away from the defender) helps create space for you to shoot the ball, making it an effective offensive tool against even good defenders.

You don't even have to have great form to have an effective jump hook. Just practice it over and over again. Work on getting good lift on the shot, keeping the ball away from the defender, and fully extending the shooting arm as you release the ball. The jump hook is a great shot to use when you catch the ball close to the basket, or in the middle of the lane. It's also a great way to follow-up your own missed shot or to put back an offensive rebound. Remember to get a good angle and use the glass whenever possible.

Make the jump hook a bigger part of your inside game and you'll be a more effective scorer close to the basket.

Add a bank-shot to your game immediately to become a better scorer

Work on using the backboard more. It sounds simple, but how many players do you know that really practice shooting bank shots? I don't know too many. You can set yourself apart from a lot of players if you become expert at using the backboard. It's especially useful for post moves from the block (this one is fairly obvious), mid-range jumpers from the wing, and those slightly off-balance, slashing shots through the lane. The bottom line is that most great scorers are good at using the backboard.

The number one advantage is that a bank shot forces you to concentrate more because you really have to pick a spot on the backboard that you'll shoot at as a target. This allows you to more easily block out other distractions (like a defensive player lunging out at you), and focus on the task at hand, which is putting the ball into the basket. Watch Tim Duncan play over the course of a few games and you'll be amazed at how many

shots he shoots off the backboard. He does it for a reason: it can be a highly accurate and effective offensive tool.

How do you get better at using the backboard? The same way you'll get better at every other aspect of your game: practice. Not slow, lackadaisical practice, but focused, game-speed practice. Work on it until pulling up from the wing at 15-feet and kissing a shot off the backboard is as simple for you as a lay-up. Shoot jump shots from each side of the basket from 10 to 12 feet out. Shoot close to the basket shots from various spots in the lane, using the backboard. And work on slashing moves to the basket, and banking the shot in off the glass.

In time, and with enough practice, you'll get more and more comfortable using the backboard while you shoot. And the better and more confident you get at shooting bank shots, the higher your shooting percentage and scoring average will be.

To improve on offense, play against good competition

If you want to become a better scorer and all-around player, play against competition that is better than you. This is one of the best ways to improve your game. It forces you to bring your "A" game. It forces you to raise your game to another level, and raising your level of play to meet a challenge is the best way to improve as a player.

If you play a lot of pick-up ball during the off-season, you should always try finding the toughest game around. And when you get into that game, try to match up against the best player on the other team. It will make the game tougher for you, and you won't be able to cruise or relax, but if you want to become a big-time player, you have to play against better competition which will force you to play at your best.

Playing against lesser competition is OK every once in awhile. It may be the only game available, and can give you a chance to work on staying in shape, building your confidence level. But it won't make drastic improvements in your skill level. In fact, playing against people that aren't very good can cause you to play sloppy basketball, and develop bad habits.

It takes a big person to play in a game you know will be difficult. Knowing that you are playing against good competition that can make you look bad isn't a situation most people want to put themselves in. It's human nature to avoid situations where you might fail. But that is precisely how you'll make yourself a better player. That is how you'll make yourself a better scorer. If you score 30 points in a pick-up game against a guy that is a lot shorter than you, a lot slower than you, and who hasn't played the game much, are you really getting better as a player by playing against that person? The answer is no.

But if you play against a good defender, who is quick, aggressive, and gives you a difficult time, it'll force you to play better. Playing against that person will force you to play at a high level, and that will help you improve as a player. You know that you might struggle for a day, or a week, but in time your game will improve. Pretty soon it won't seem so tough. Pretty soon you'll bring your game up to that level. Then you'll have to find another game, a better game to play in.

Improve your quickness and become a better scorer

Being a big-time scorer requires a great deal of athletic ability. Good offensive players are usually in constant motion around the court (which requires a great deal of stamina), and have the ability to explode past defenders (which requires quickness and agility). Scorers also typically have good jumping ability and overall body strength. So increasing your scoring average not only requires you to improve your shooting ability and offensive moves, but it also means you'll have to work on becoming a better athlete (improving your quickness, agility, and body strength).

Professional athletes spend lots of money on private coaches and trainers to help them get faster and stronger. Here are some straightforward, fairly inexpensive ways for you to improve your quickness and foot speed.

Running: don't underestimate what overall fitness and stamina can do to improve your game. The better shape you're in, the better you'll play. There's not much mystery there. Mix up some longer-distance running (a mile or two at most), with shorter interval training with sprint work (sprint half a lap, walk half a lap, repeat). I'm not a huge fan of running long distances, since it can be hard on your knees. But I do think you have to get out on the track (or another surface that's fairly soft on the knees such as a football field), and put time and effort into various running drills.

Stairs: you see lots of athletes running stadium stairs. That's because it's a great workout. It builds stamina and leg strength. Make it a tougher and more effective workout by taking two steps at a time, or raising your knees up high on each step. Running stadium stairs can be a great off-season workout.

Jumping rope: it seems old-fashioned, but it's a great workout. There are lots of benefits to doing jump rope exercises: they build stamina, leg strength, quickness, agility, and increase your vertical leap.

Defensive slides: no one likes to do them, but they help increase your foot speed and build leg strength. Do them in your backyard, on a track, or in a gym. It doesn't matter. The key in doing defensive slide drills is to really push yourself. Get down low, keep your feet spread, and slide as quickly as you can. Work at it. Over time you'll see a difference in your foot speed both on the defensive end of the floor, and in your offensive quickness.

And of course, playing basketball is a great way to improve your stamina and foot speed. I don't mean a lazy game on a Sunday afternoon, but rather a tough, high intensity game against good competition. Play with and against good players that force you to raise your game to a high level.

Implement any (or all) of these training methods, really work at them, and there's no way you won't see results. Becoming faster, stronger, and increasing your overall athletic abilities will translate directly into your improvement as an offensive player.

Work on developing your off-hand and you'll dramatically increase your effectiveness as an offensive player

Lots of players are only 50-70% as effective as they can be on offense for one simple reason: they're one handed players. They have a pretty good strong hand, but have a very weak or non-existent off-hand. Think about your own game: if I told you that you could only play the next game (or practice) with your off-hand, how would you do? Would it be a complete disaster, or would you still be pretty effective? My gut tells me it might not be very pretty.

Now, even a player with a great off-hand isn't going to be shooting 15 or 20-foot jumpers with their weak hand. That's not the point. The point is that a player can become dramatically more effective on offense by

developing their weak hand. Having a solid off-hand can help you drive by a defender in either direction (to the right or left), give you the ability to make power moves (or shoot jump hooks) inside the paint with either hand, and help you to tip in a shot or pass the ball with either hand.

It really is just common sense: if you have a weak off-hand, you limit your effectiveness. Let's put it this way, if you are a right-handed player, and can only dribble, drive, shoot inside, or pass with your right hand, all a defender has to do is take away your drive, shot, or passing to the right side. Once they've done that, they've basically shut you down, or at least severely limited your effectiveness.

In fact, if you only have one good hand, I'd argue that you're not 50% effective. I'd argue that you're less effective than that. And here's why: if you are able to use both hands nearly equally well, then you keep the defense guessing which way you might go. In effect, you not only have the ability to dribble, drive, shoot, and pass in either direction, but you've also added uncertainty in the defensive player's mind. He won't know which way you might go, so you keep the defense off-balance and guessing. If you only have one good hand, you have less than 50% effectiveness because the defense can pretty easily take that weapon away from you.

So, here's an important question: how effective are you with a strong off-hand? Can you dribble the length of the floor at full speed with either hand? Can you drive by a defender to the left and right almost equally well? Can you score inside (with a power move or jump hook) with either hand? Only you can answer this question.

But regardless of what your answer is, this is a problem with a pretty simple solution: practice and work at it. Don't you think that if you dedicated 30 minutes a week to practicing with nothing but your off-hand that you'd improve quite a bit? I do. Or how about really making the decision to improve as an offensive player and working for a minimum of 10 minutes a day at improving your off-hand? Now that would be dedication. In just a week or two you'd notice amazing changes.

It's all a matter of how much time and effort you are willing to put into getting your off-hand up to speed. It's all a matter of how good a player you want to be. The more you increase your skill-level with your off-hand, the more effective you'll be as an offensive player. You'll be tougher to guard. You'll be more confident in yourself. So why doesn't everyone work on their off hand? Simple: it takes hard work, and most people aren't willing to put in the time and effort to make it happen.

So, the decision is yours: are you going to be one of those people who doesn't want to put in the time and effort and is therefore about 50%, or 60%, or 75% effective on the offensive end of the floor? Or are you going to be the type of player who works at it, day in and day out, and gets that figure up to 90%, or 95%? This is a no-brainer. Just go out and do it. Get it done. There is no excuse for not being strong with both hands.

Professional-level Tips for Becoming a Better Scorer

Finishing plays is a key to being a big-time scorer

Great players always seem to be able to finish plays. They make a great fake, drive by their man, get fouled, and make the basket. From start to finish, it's a great play. Take that same play, but end it with a missed shot, and you've lost most of the value. A great move followed by a missed shot or turnover is nearly worthless because it doesn't show up on the scoreboard.

Other examples of not finishing plays:

- You catch a pass, fake a defender off of his feet, drive around him, and pull up for the shot and clank it off the backboard. Great move. No finish.
- You lunge out into the passing lane, tip a pass down court, catch up to it, dribble for the basket, and blow the lay-up. Good effort. No finish.
- You crash the offensive boards, muscle in and grab a tough rebound with a few seconds left in the game. You head-fake your man off of his feet and go up strong, but you lose your concentration, shoot a little too hard, and the ball dribbles off the other side of the rim. Great effort. No finish.

Part of making a great move, putting in the hustle, and making things happen is finishing and finalizing plays. To be a great scorer you have to score the basketball, not just make great moves.

One thing you'll notice about NBA games is the amazing amount of contact and chaos that goes on during a play. Guys are getting bumped, they're flying through the air, they're off-balance, and they usually have to shoot over outstretched arms. But the great players have amazing focus, especially the last moments of a play, when they release the shot to finish the play (by nailing the shot). Big time players finish plays. Period.

As you progress through your career, you'll get better at finishing plays. It takes tremendous effort and concentration to make a great move, play through contact and put the ball in the basket. You really have to practice at it, over and over again, and eventually you'll develop the skills to make big plays happen. Next time you drive around your man into the lane, pick up your dribble, glide to the basket, and put the shot up over the help-side defender, focus on finishing the play. It's not enough to just throw the ball up to the basket. Make the extra effort to focus, zone in, and make the shot. Don't rush it, or get flustered, or panic. Relax, focus, and finish the play.

Good players make good moves and get to the basket. Great players finish plays.

Becoming a great scorer requires improving many areas of your game (not just shooting)

To be a great offensive player, you need to be able to dribble the basketball. You may be a great shooter coming off of screens, but if you can't put the ball on the floor, you're going to have a very limited offensive game.

The best way to become a better ball handler is to practice a lot on your own, but also to work on your dribbling skills in game situations (pick-up games during the off-season and during team practices). There's a big difference between dribbling around in your backyard by yourself vs. a game or practice situation where you're dribbling against defensive pressure. So don't shy away from handling the ball during practices or pick-up games, because these are the times when you can really get game-type experience and improve your skills.

Some keys to becoming a better ball handler:

- Practice by not looking at the ball. You should never look at the ball when you practice ball handling. While you dribble the basketball, your eyes should be scanning the court, watching your teammates and the opposition.
- Dribble with your finger-tips. Control of the basketball comes from your fingers and finger-tips. The ball should never touch the palms of your hands.
- Practice both hands. You need to be able to dribble with both hands. Work on developing your off-hand dribbling abilities so you can dribble equally well with either hand.

-Learn and practice the cross-over. The ability to execute a quick and aggressive cross-over dribble is very important, since you'll use it often in changing directions against a defender. When you make that cross-over dribble, keep the ball low, especially if you've passed the defender and he is behind you. You don't want them to be able to reach around you and tip the ball away.

Improving your ball handling skills will have a direct impact on how effective you are as an offensive player.

A trick for getting an extra step on your opponent in the transition game and scoring some easy transition baskets

Good scorers tend to score lots of points in the transition game. Whether it's a lay-up on the initial break, or a jump shot out of the secondary break, the transition game makes for great scoring opportunities. Take advantage of fast breaks to pick up a few quick and easy baskets.

To get an extra step or two in transition (which can put you in a great position to score an easy basket) use anticipation, and a quick run-out up the floor. Here's how to do it. When a shot goes up on the defensive end of the floor, block out your man and anticipate where a rebound is going to go. You can't tell with 100% certainty every single time who is going to gain possession of a rebound, but most of the time you have a good idea what team will gain possession of the ball. Once it becomes clear that your team will gain possession (and even a split second before it actually happens) turn and get yourself up the floor.

The turn and first few steps up the floor are the key. Once you've made the determination that your team will gain possession, turn your body and make the first few steps up the floor as hard and fast as you can make them. If you do this as quickly as possible, this will often give you a step or two advantage over your opponent, which could be enough to get you into position for an easy basket.

While most of the other guys on the floor will make the transition up the court very slowly (in an almost lackadaisical way), you will have already anticipated the change of possession, turned your body, and begun your aggressive, full-speed run up the floor. I guarantee this will give you an edge, even if you are slower than most of the guys on the floor.

By getting up the floor quickly, you also put pressure on your defense. It causes him to have to work harder to get back up the floor because you're sprinting up the floor. This will also have a cumulative effect: if you keep up the pressure and really hustle up and down the floor, you'll likely cause your opponent to tire out over the course of the game. A tired opponent is to your advantage down the stretch when a key basket or lazy mistake can make the difference between a win or a loss.

In addition to the great info you just read, our full-length e-book available for purchase has additional information and topics such as:

- **Tips for getting your teammates to pass you the ball (and remember, you can't score if you don't have the ball)**
- **Finding opportunities for extra points that most people don't even know exist**
- **Being tough can translate into scoring more points: how to make this work for you**
- **One key to having a big scoring game is to establish your dominance right from the start of the game, and we'll show you how to make it happen**
- **How to become a great free throw shooter (which can and add at least a few points a game to your scoring average)**
- **Free throws part two: other ways to improve at the free throw line and increase your scoring average**
- **Don't forget the advantage you have as an offensive player, and use it to your advantage. Here's how.**
- **A key to being a good offensive player and increasing your scoring average: never be predictable**
- **Use this NBA-level tip to score more points**
- **How to develop multiple scoring weapons: a MUST for becoming a big-time scorer**
- **Moving without the ball: one of the most important parts of being a scoring threat. Here's how the pros do it, and here's how to make it work for you to increase your scoring.**
- **How to create space like an NBA player to give you more scoring opportunities**
- **The one-on-one game: how to break a defender down off the dribble**
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