Basketball is one of the most popular sports in the United States and throughout the world, with millions of people participating in the sport at all levels of competition. Basketball is also a leading sport for participant injuries, which caused the National Federation of State High School Associations to develop the following rules for basketball safety.

Sideline and End-Line Clearance
Basketball courts should have a minimum clearance of 3 feet around the perimeter of the playing court, but 10 feet is highly recommended. If there is less than 3 feet of unobstructed space outside any sideline or end line, a narrow, broken, 1-inch line should be marked on the court parallel with and 3 feet inside each sideline and/or end line.

Backboard Padding
The bottom and sides of rectangular backboards should be padded with a poly high-carb, vinyl-type material that meets a resilience test within a range of 20-30. The padding should cover the bottom surface of the board and up the side surfaces 15 inches from the bottom. The front and back surfaces should be covered a minimum of 3/4 inch from the bottom of the backboard. The padding shall extend 1 inch on both the front and back surfaces of the backboard. It is recommended that the padding be mounted on the backboard with an adhesive or other material, such as Velcro®. The padding should be the same single color on both backboards.

Support Systems
Any support behind the backboard and at a height of less than 9 feet above the floor should be padded on the bottom surface, to a distance of 2 feet from the face of the backboard. All portable backstops should have the bases padded to a height of 7 feet on the courtside surface.

For proper clearance, all support systems should be at least 8 feet behind the plane of the backboard face and 7 feet high or more above the floor.

Any support which is not directly behind the backboard should be at least 6 inches behind it, if the support extends above the top, and at least 2 feet behind it, if the support extends beyond the side.

Warning: Manufacturers and administrators should be aware of an “extreme caution” warning relative to the misuse of portable backstops. A high degree of injury potential and a severe liability risk exists when players or spectators are allowed to hang, sit or stand on the basket rim or backboard. Administrators should make sure this practice is eliminated or that the portable units are lowered at the completion of the game or practice. There is a high risk of severe injury—even death—if this practice continues. A warning or inscription is recommended, such as: “Danger – Please Do Not Get on the Rim/Backboard.”

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Wall Padding

Gymnasium wall padding is not required, but is highly recommended. Padding should be provided on walls and facility features which athletes might contact during play. The industry standard is to use 2 inches of firm, 100 Indentation Load Deflection (ILD) polyurethane foam-mounted on plywood or similar board, approximately 3/8” thick. The foam is then covered with a fire-retardant, vinyl material. For added fire protection, some mats are made with 1/2-inch, fire-retardant plywood. The most common size mat is 16 feet wide and 6 feet high and mounted just above the baseboard, or 4 inches maximum above the floor.

The padding should have an interior finish rating of Class A or B. Interior walls in educational occupancies should be Class A or Class B, in compliance with Life Safety Code (NFPA 101®), Section 10.2. Where a complete automatic fire sprinkler system is installed, Class C materials may be used in any location where Class B is required, and Class B materials may be used in any location where Class A is required.

The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) developed a standard for indoor wall/structure padding. The standard covers the construction design and shock absorption (g<sub>max</sub>, HIC and thickness) properties of wall padding used in gymnasiums, wrestling rooms and stadium walls. The April 2011 revision sets minimal requirements for new and reconditioned padding. The maximum values for padding is 200 g<sub>max</sub> and 1000 HIC. The lower the g<sub>max</sub> and HIC values, the better the shock absorption. The thickness of the padding required is to provide sufficient shock-absorption properties.