

How to Play HORSE

Get a rein on the rules of this popular basketball driveway game and show off your shooting prowess with each shot.

A longtime staple of gym class and driveways, HORSE offers a fun and competitive reprieve from conventional basketball practice routines. Players get to invent new shot challenges and match those designed by opponents. While this game may be a classic, there are plenty of opportunities to get creative with your shots. Prove yourself to be the *GOAT* with the help of this HORSE guide.

HORSE EQUIPMENT

One of the great things about HORSE is that you don't need a full court to play. Here is what you do need to saddle up:

- **Basketball Hoop:** Unlike a traditional game of basketball, only one hoop is needed to play HORSE. This makes it easy to play in your driveway at home or on neighborhood courts. If the game is being used as an alternative practice technique, using only one hoop frees up the rest of the court for running other drills.
- **Basketball:** While some classic games like knockout require two basketballs, you only need one to play HORSE. However, it is important to keep in mind the surface area that you are playing on. If you are playing outside, be sure that you have a rubber or synthetic ball. Leather balls can be damaged by gravel and concrete and are best used indoors.
- **Two or More Players:** Trick shots can be practiced on your own, but in order to play HORSE, you need at least two participants. The more players you have, the longer the game will last.

RULES OF HORSE

1. **Jockey for Position:** Before the game begins, players must decide on the order in which they are going to shoot. This can be decided among the group in many ways, from a brief free-throw competition to rock, paper, scissors.
2. **Fire Away:** Whichever player was chosen to go first will choose a shot challenge. It can be as simple as a layup or as complex as spinning three times and shooting a behind-the-back shot from the foul line. As the player demonstrates their shot, they must say exactly what they are doing so the other players can accurately imitate their steps.
3. **Replicate or Create:** The next step is determined by player one's success. If their shot makes it in the net, all the remaining participants must attempt the exact same shot. If any of the players fail to score or follow all of the rules laid out by the shooting player, they will receive a letter of the word "horse," starting with "H." However, if the first player misses, the next shooter gets a chance to create a new challenge and the cycle repeats.
4. **Spell It Out:** When a player misses five shots and acquires each letter of HORSE, they are eliminated. The winner is determined when there is only one player left standing.

MORE HORSE VARIATIONS

The game of HORSE is easily customizable for whatever your needs may be, and there are a few ways to extend or shorten the game.

- **Race to the Finish:** If you are playing with a larger group and want to speed the game up, one variation allows for players to earn a letter when they *make* a shot rather than when they miss one. In this gameplay, the player who spells out HORSE the quickest is the winner.
- **Think Outside the Stable:** Another common way to extend or shorten the game is to use different words. One of the more popular variations to shorten gameplay is to use the word "P-I-G," but longer versions like "G-I-R-A-F-F-E" can also work if you are playing with a smaller group and want to increase playing time.

DON'T BE A ONE-TRICK PONY

Part of the fun of HORSE is inventing and trying new shots that would be impossible (or impractical) in a normal basketball game. You may have a go-to move that beats the competition, but in case you want to mix it up, here are some HORSE shot ideas:

- **Take a Seat:** Test your aim and your strength by attempting a shot from a seated position. (This can also double as a way to build in a bit of rest.)
- **Bounce Around:** Put your dribbling skills to the test and throw in some between-the-legs moves before taking a shot.
- **One-Handed:** If your grip strength is an asset, attempting a one-handed toss may give you an advantage over the competition. It may also help you get more velocity on long-distance shots.
- **No-Look:** Have you ever thought to yourself, "I can do that with my eyes closed!" Well, now is your chance to prove it. Close your eyes or face backward while attempting a no-look shot.