

# St Louis Park Boys Traveling Basketball Association (SLPBTBA)

## Playing Time Guidelines

- **Playing Time.** The head coach shall have the freedom to run his team while keeping within the program guidelines. Coaches are expected to develop all of the players on the team. Coaches shall work to give each player fair playing time over the course of a tournament in an attempt to develop each player's full potential and in accordance with the Association's playing time guidelines:

7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade: Minimum of 35%

6th grade: Minimum of 45%

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grades: Minimum of 50%

Note: A player's playing time can be affected by unauthorized absences from practices and/or games, injuries, illness, attitude, effort and unwillingness to do as the coach has instructed (And if there is a persistent problem, please attempt to communicate the situation to both player and parents, and keep your grade level's "board representative" apprised).

NOTE TO PARENTS: Since the beginning of traveling sports, this has been one of the biggest points of contention. All parents must recognize that strict adherence to the minimum playing time guidelines during a game or over the course of a season cannot be guaranteed due to player absences, the player's physical condition, player substitution patterns, player's foul situation, player injuries and other factors that the team, players and coaches encounter. The guidelines shown above and explained in more detail below are not intended to have parents using stopwatches to verify playing time. SLPBTBA, however, has emphasized to the coaches the importance of our playing time guidelines, how these guidelines support our program's mission and goals and our expectation that coaches adhere to the playing time guidelines to the best of their ability.

In an attempt to further clarify SLPBTBA's position, we have decided to provide the following guidelines to both parents and coaches: 1) 4th, 5th and 6th Grade – At these three grades the program has a mandate for almost equal playing time (see slight % difference for 6th grade). This can be accomplished in a couple of ways: (a) Most games consist of two – 14 minute halves. On 10 player teams, many coaches will substitute five new players every 3 1/2 minutes. (b) When there are 8 players on a team, this requires more creativity on the coach's part, but equal playing time is still required over the course of the tournament. 2) 7th and 8th Grade – As the participants become older, the SLPBTBA program allows for "Fair" playing time rather than "Equal" playing time. The guideline given to the coaches is over the course of a tournament, all participants must play a minimum of 35% of the time.

The concept of "Equal" is much easier to define than is the concept of "Fair". In order to give our players the best chance to succeed in game situations, coaches may be required to put certain players on the floor during certain times relative to the opponents' lineup, size matchups, etc. In order for our teams to be competitive, some flexibility about playing time must be left to the coaches' discretion.

This being said, SLPBTBA still mandates that all children be given a fair opportunity to play. Players must start a fair number of games and should not, in most cases, be sitting an entire "quarter." Traditionally, coaches have been given broad flexibility in who is on the floor in the last three minutes of a close game. SLPBTBA believes that fairness dictates, over the course of a season, all players be given an opportunity to be on the floor in the closing minutes of a game.

We understand that by adhering to the spirit of these guidelines we run the risk of our teams being less competitive in some games. Traveling Basketball is a more competitive program than In-house Basketball and we still want our coaches to put their teams in a position to win basketball games. We simply want the coaches to do so while allowing all participants to feel they are contributors to the team (and in the long run, we believe this will make our program more competitive).