

# **The Rules of Crateball**

(revised 11/29/06)

## **Equipment Needed**

- Two milk crates (actual milk crates work better than the similar file crates you can get at the store). An actual milk crate will typically be a cube that is 12” in each direction.
- Two 4’ x 4’ squares made of PVC piping and joints, *or* two large hula hoops (36” in diameter). A PVC square is ideal, but hula hoops are easier to find.
- One mini basketball. (You can also play with other balls. For example, using a kickball is a good way to slow the game down because it is larger and heavier, but still fits in the crate.)

## **Optional**

- A whistle is pretty important if someone is going to ref the game; it’s hard to stop a play without one because the game gets fast and loud.
- Orange cones or similar markers are helpful if you’re playing on something other than a basketball court or any area with clear boundaries.
- Some sort of colored practice jerseys are helpful to identify who is on which team. Differentiating teams becomes difficult due to the pace of the game.

## **The Playing Area**

Crateball is ideally played on a regulation basketball court (94’ long by 50’ wide). The out-of-bounds lines are the same as in a basketball game. The game may, however, be played just about anywhere on any type of surface. One crate should be placed in the center of each free throw lane, halfway between the free throw line and the baseline. A hula hoop should be placed around each crate with the crate in the center. Tape may be used to hold the crates and hoops in place.

## **The Teams**

In theory, crateball can be played with any number of players as long as the two teams are divided evenly. On a regulation basketball court, six-on-six is typically the maximum number of players for smooth gameplay. On smaller courts, it’s a good idea to reduce the number of players.

## The Object

Each team's primary goal is to get the ball into the other team's crate. A score is worth one point. The ball may be moved in a number of ways: running it, passing it, rolling it, kicking it. However the player chooses to move it. One a team's player crosses the half court line moving toward the opponent's goal (entering the "attack zone"), the other team can "tag" the player with the ball. If a player with the ball is tagged in the attack zone, he or she must freeze until the ball has been passed, handed off, stolen, or otherwise gone into the possession of another player. Once they get rid of the ball, they are free to move again. One exception: If an opposing player knocks the ball out of the frozen player's hands, the player is free to move with the ball if he or she regains possession. The frozen player may not, however, intentionally bounce the ball off of the opposing player.

## Starting and Stopping Play

- **To start the game:** The ball should be placed in the center of the court and both teams then line up on the baseline behind the goal they are defending. When the signal to start is given (usually a whistle), both teams are free to race toward the ball and try to gain possession.
- **Out of bounds:** If the ball crosses a boundary line (or a player with the ball steps out of bounds), play will be stopped. The team who did not touch the ball last or did not step out of bounds with the ball will take possession at the spot where the ball went out of bounds. From that point, they throw the ball to a teammate who is in play. It is a good idea to treat the boundaries like basketball (i.e. place a time limit on inbounding the ball, penalize the other team if they cross the line defending the inbounding player, etc.).
- **A goal is scored:** There are two ways to handle this, depending on how you prefer to set up the rules for your game -
  1. Start play as soon as the team that was just scored upon pulls the ball out of their own crate. However, this can be tricky because often the ball will bounce out of the crate on a score. In this case, you might require the team that was scored upon to put the ball back in their own crate and start play when they pull it back out.
  2. Treat a score just like a score in basketball. A player from the team that was scored upon takes the ball behind the baseline and throws it in to another player. As soon as they throw it in, play resumes. This solves the problem of a ball bouncing out of the goal, but it gives the team that just scored a few more seconds to "get back on defense" after they score.
- **Runball:** Inevitably, the ball will get tied up when players on opposing teams both grab it at the same time and neither can get control. In basketball, the referee would whistle for a jumpball. In crateball, the ref whistles for a "runball." As

soon as the whistle sounds, the two players fighting over the ball drop it and race to the half court line and back to the ball. Whoever reaches the ball first has possession and play resumes immediately.

### **Substitutions**

Because crateball is such a fast-paced game, it's a good idea to have subs. For example: If there are twelve players available for a game, it may be a good idea to play 5-on-5 with each team having one substitution. There are a couple of options for subbing during gameplay:

1. Follow the "line change" style used in hockey. When a player is tired and wants a sub, he or she simply runs to the sideline and the new player joins the game. Play never stops. A good way to regulate this is to require that all substitutions take place at the half court line, and require the two players to high five as they swap.
2. Follow the style used in basketball. A player preparing to enter the game goes to the half court line and waits for a stoppage in play (out of bounds or a penalty, because a score is technically not a stoppage in play). Once play stops, the ref signals for the sub to come in and the other player leaves the game.

### **Fouls and Penalties**

In general, fouls should be called as they would be in a typical basketball game: holding, hacking, tripping, blocking, charging, etc. Like basketball, the tone of the game will depend upon how strict or lenient the referee is. One ref may allow a lot of contact between players, another may allow virtually no contact. Either way is fine, as long as the referee is consistent. The ways that a ref can penalize an infraction are as follows:

1. Change of possession: The opposing team either takes the ball out of bounds or takes over from the spot of the foul. Similar to the way "traveling" or a "double dribble" is enforced in basketball, this is usually assessed when a player moves with the ball after being frozen
2. Penalty Box: The referee can assess a penalty similar to hockey. The offending player has to sit out for a specified amount of time (30 seconds, 2 minutes, whatever the ref chooses) in a designated area on the opposite side of the court from their team's "bench." The penalized team must play shorthanded until the player has finished serving the penalty. If the penalized team is scored upon, their player returns to the game. If they score while shorthanded, the player remains in the box.
3. Free throw: A free shot at the crate from a specified location. If a team misses the shot, they take possession of the ball out of bounds. If they make it, the

penalized team regains possession behind their baseline as they would after any other score. (If the game is played on a basketball court with standard basketball goals, you might even incorporate the basketball hoop for a free throw.)

4. Penalty shot: A player is given a “one-on-one” opportunity against a player from the penalized team. The player awarded the shot takes the ball at half court, and has a set amount of time (say, ten seconds) to score. The defending player may tag and freeze the player with the ball, steal the ball, or deflect it out of bounds. If the ball goes out of bounds (on either player), is stolen by the defender, or time runs out, the penalty shot is over and the team that was awarded the shot takes possession. If the player scores, the penalized team takes possession behind their own baseline (like a typical score).

### **Technical Fouls**

This is at the discretion of the referee. A technical foul might be assessed for bad sportsmanship, trash-talking that “crosses the line,” throwing the ball in anger, an especially malicious or dangerous foul, or even badmouthing a teammate for messing up. The ref may put the player in the penalty box, award a free throw, eject the player for the game or the match, or some combination of these.

### **The Crease**

The PVC square or hula hoop around the goal is called the “crease,” a concept similar to the crease in front of a hockey goal. No player may ever set foot inside the crease or step on top of the hoop. (If their foot pushes against the hoop, but does not step on it, that’s fine.) The crease also creates an “invisible” off-limits space *above* the hoop. No player may reach into the area above the crease *unless* the ball is inside that area. For example, a player on offense may not hold his or her hands directly above the crate waiting for a pass. Likewise, a defending player may not hold his or her hands or arms above the crate (or straddle the crate) to block it *unless* the ball is already inside the crease. The penalty for a crease violation is up to the referee. If the violation did not prevent a score, the offending player may leave the game for a set amount of time. If the violation prevented a score, the ref may award a penalty shot or a free throw.

### **Game Length and Timing**

There are a number of ways to set the length of the game:

Number of goals: The most common and easiest is to set a certain number of goals (first to 10 goals, first to 5, etc.) and end the game when one team reaches that number. You may also play multiple single games within one match (i.e. first team to win two games wins the match, a “best 2-out-of-3” concept).

Time limit: This is much more difficult to manage, because it is hard to keep track of stoppages in play unless there is a designated timekeeper for the game. When playing a

timed game, you might choose to play two halves, four quarters, etc. You might also play to a number of games within a set (i.e. best 2-out-of-3 with 10 minute games). The main advantage of a timed game is that it keeps games from going on forever or ending too quickly.

### **Strategies and Rule Clarifications**

Based upon the rules of the game, there are technically no official positions for players in crateball. That is to say, every player on a team is subject to the same rules as every other player. (By contrast, a soccer team designates one player as the goalkeeper and that player may use his or her hands. Or a hockey team's designated goaltender may be inside the crease at any time and is protected from most physical contact.) However, a team will typically want to assign roles for the players. Though there is no official goalie, the team might assign a player the responsibility of making sure that the goal is never left unprotected. Likewise, they may assign another player to stay in the attack zone at all times (never cross the half court line) so that they are always available for a pass on the other end of the floor.

There are also a number of ways to use the rules of the game to your advantage. For example, if a player wants to avoid a tag, he or she may throw the ball up in the air (or ahead of them on the court) and then get it back. If the player is tagged after letting go of the ball and before catching it, then he or she is not frozen because the player technically did not have the ball when tagged.

Jumping is also a good way to make the most of a situation when a player would otherwise be tagged. If a player leaves his or her feet and is tagged while in the air, then the player is frozen at the spot where he or she lands (not at the point they were tagged in mid-air).

The referee needs to be watchful when a player carrying the ball is tagged while moving quickly because they may have a hard time stopping where tagged. In some cases, the ref might allow a couple of steps beyond the tag for the player to stop. This is especially helpful if the tag is away from the crate anyway and keeps the game moving. However, they should not allow players to take advantage by bounding long distances after a tag or taking steps after they are tagged standing still.