

BROOKLINE TRAVEL BASKETBALL

2026–27 Tryout & Team Selection Procedures

Travel basketball tryouts are stressful for players and families, and we get a lot of questions every year about how teams actually get created. This document lays out, clearly and in advance, the process the Brookline Basketball Association (BBA) uses to run tryouts and assemble Travel rosters.

We want to be upfront about something: there is no tryout process that is perfect or immune to criticism. A process built entirely around one or two days of on-court evaluation risks missing players who don't perform well in high-pressure, unfamiliar settings but excel in actual games. A process built entirely around returning coaches' opinions risks entrenching bias and rewarding familiarity over performance. Every approach involves tradeoffs.

In thinking through how to improve our own process, the Travel Coordinators spoke with counterparts in several other towns about what they've tried, what has worked, and what hasn't. What follows reflects that research, combined with our own experience running the program in our community, and we believe it's a meaningful improvement over how we've run tryouts in the past.

1. Tryout Structure

Tryouts will be held over **two separate weekends** for each age/gender group. Running tryouts across two weekends, rather than compressing everything into a single session, gives players who have an off day a real chance to show their ability on a different day. We strongly recommend attending both tryouts to ensure proper placement. Extraordinary circumstances in which a player is unable to attend any tryout at all (for example, observance of religious holidays) will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

- Weekend 1 will be focused primarily on skills and drills, with some scrimmaging included.
- Weekend 2 will include drills but will be weighted more heavily toward scrimmaging, so evaluators can see how players perform in game-like situations.

Unit One, an outside basketball training organization, will help organize and run the on-court logistics of tryouts, including grouping players, managing stations, and keeping sessions on schedule. Unit One staff will **not** serve as evaluators and will have no role in player scoring or team placement. Evaluation remains the responsibility of our volunteer evaluators, as described below.

2. Independent Evaluation

Each age/gender group will have multiple evaluators assigned across both tryout weekends. As in past years, evaluators will score players using a consistent 1–5 scale and consider athleticism, basketball skills, and team attributes (effort, attitude, coachability).

New this year: no evaluator may score players in an age/gender group in which they have a child participating. This has not been the case in the past and we're changing that, based on both feedback from our own community and the experiences of other programs with this approach. We believe it's an important step toward making the process, and the perception of the process, fair.

At the end of the tryout weekends, evaluators will produce a placement recommendation for each player. This recommendation is a significant input into final rosters, but it is not the only input.

3. Prior Coach Input

At the end of each season, Head Coaches are asked to provide feedback on the players on their roster, including the opportunity to add commentary on any player's strengths, weaknesses, or other notes that would be useful context for future tryouts and team selection.

The Travel Coordinators layer this prior-season coach feedback on top of the independent evaluators' tryout recommendations. We're not going to prescribe a fixed formula for how these two inputs get weighed against each other; tryout performance and prior in-game performance both matter, and reasonable judgment is required to weigh them appropriately in individual cases. One exception: for a player who is injured or otherwise unable to fully participate in tryouts, prior coach evaluations carry correspondingly more weight, since tryout data for that player is necessarily incomplete.

4. Team Balance

Once evaluator recommendations and prior coach input have been considered, the Travel Coordinators and newly selected Head Coaches review rosters to ensure each team has a reasonable positional balance, meaning enough ball handlers, enough size, a mix of players who can defend, rebound, and distribute, etc. This is a real but small factor in final decisions: it may move a player who is genuinely on the roster bubble up or down a team, but it will not override clear evaluation and performance results.

5. Head Coach Selection

Parents interested in being considered for a Head Coach position should identify themselves during registration. If you didn't do that and want to be considered, contact the Travel Coordinators as soon as possible.

All parents who express interest will receive a phone interview with the Travel Coordinators. In most cases, Head Coaches are named after tryouts conclude but before final rosters are set. Each Head Coach typically selects one or two Assistant Coaches.

A Final Note

As a reminder, Brookline Travel Basketball is a community program, not a club or AAU operation, and it is run almost entirely by volunteers, including coaches, evaluators, and the Travel Coordinators, with some additional support from the Brookline Recreation Department.

Dave Cohen and Coleman Mark, who serve as Travel Coordinators and oversee this process, each bring more than ten years of experience coaching basketball in our program and beyond. Both had their own children come through the Brookline program years ago and have continued coaching and supporting this program long after. This experience informs the judgment calls this process requires, without any conflict of interest in who is being evaluated.

No tryout process is perfect, and we don't claim this one is either. But we believe that combining structured, independent evaluation with real in-game coaching knowledge, while explicitly removing conflicts of interest from the evaluation process, gives us a fair, transparent, and well-informed way to build Travel rosters.

Dave Cohen and Coleman Mark, Travel Coordinators

