

English



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Football and Soccer Page1 The free-flowing game of soccer, which requires few rules and little equipment, is the world's most popular sport. All that is needed for a bunch of soccer lovers to play together is an area of open space and a ball. You can find people playing soccer in more than 200 countries of the world, literally making it a sport that reaches every corner of the earth. With trillions of fans worldwide of the official game, soccer's real strength comes from the sport that people love to play in informal fashion, without field markings or real goals.

Soccer is actually a term used by Americans and Canadians to refer to a game known elsewhere as football. The official name of this sport is association football. Americans developed a distinct type of football in the 19th century which has subsequently come to be known as American football. This game has basically grown out of two sports, soccer, or association football, and rugby football. Both these games remain as separate sports with each having its own specific set of rules.

The international body governing soccer is FIFA, or Federation Internationale de Football Association. The immensely popular World Cup, held at four-year intervals is organized by FIFA, and it also governs all levels of soccer, including professional games on the international level, Olympic competitions and youth leagues. The FIFA World Cup is undoubtedly the sport's premier event, pitting national teams from 32 countries against one another.

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American football's National Football League or NFL is the most popular and major professional league in the world. However, over the years, several

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other leagues have been formed in North America and Europe. The comparable soccer league known as MLS or Major League Soccer has many teams which have fans worldwide and some of the most famous teams are A. C. Milan of Italy, Ajax Amsterdam of The Netherlands, Manchester United of England, Real Madrid of Spain, Boca Juniors of Argentina, São Paulo of Brazil, and Colo Colo of Chile, among others.

Both forms of the game, soccer or association football, and American football have some things in common, namely both are played between two teams, in which players try to score a goal by hitting the ball into the opponents' goal, by using any part of their body except the hands. Players thus have to use remarkable skills of using feet and heads as they kick, dribble, or pass the ball toward the goal or to another player.

Although this much remains common to both games, there are some important contrasts and differences. For instance, the first difference is the area on which both games are played. For soccer, the playing field is 90 and 120 m (100 and 130 yd) long and between 45 and 90 m (50 and 100 yd) wide. American football is played on a pitch that is 120 yd (110 m) long and 53 yd 1 ft (48. 8 m) wide. Both sports are played between two teams consisting of 11 players each. But while soccer has different positions and roles for all the 11 players, such as goalkeeper, defender, midfielder, and attacker, American football does not have such clear definitions, and players have to fulfill many roles in play.

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A single referee in soccer makes all the decisions, assisted by two linesmen who indicate when a player is “ offside” or when a ball has crossed the boundary line. In contrast, there are seven officials in American football: a

referee, an umpire, a linesman, a field judge, a back judge, a line judge, and a side judge to make decisions. Even the ball with which both games are played are different and unique to each sport. Soccer is played with a round leather ball. It is between 68 and 71 cm (27 and 28 in) in circumference and weighs between 396 to 453 g (14 and 16 oz). American football is played with an extended spheroid with a circumference of 28.5 in (72.4 cm) around the long axis and 21.25 in (54 cm) around the short axis. It weighs from 14 to 15 oz (397 to 425 g)

The colors, or uniforms that team members wear are most important in soccer. These uniforms consist of jerseys, shorts, socks, and shoes with cleats, or short knobs on the bottom of the shoe. The goalkeeper wears a different color jersey from the rest of his teammates. In football, each football player wears a uniform that includes a numbered jersey. The pants worn below the jersey are longer than those worn in soccer and a set of gear collectively known as pads are worn beneath the uniform for bodily protection. The colors of their favorite club or country begin to rule the imagination of soccer fans, and make soccer stadiums erupt in color, like yellow and green for Brazil, or bright orange for the Netherlands. Because soccer players are more visible to the audience, unlike footballers who are hidden under their protective armor, they enjoy a more direct contact with their fans.

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Matches last 90 minutes in soccer and are divided into two 45-minute halves. Official youth games can be shorter versions of this. There is a 15-minute break between the halves, called halftime. Extensions of the game occur

when there is a tie. In comparison, a regulation football game is divided into four quarters, each consisting of 15 minutes of playing time. In terms of skill, soccer players use five basic skills: kicking, dribbling, passing, heading, and trapping. Only the goal keeper can touch the ball. Football players use comparatively fewer skills with feet and legs.

Both soccer and football are fast-paced contact sports which are exciting to watch as well as play. Both games have their legions of diehard enthusiasts for whom every move on the field provides the daily drama of their lives.

Where soccer scores above football is in the sheer size and scale on which it is played and appreciated around the world. In the lanes and alleys of Cameroon and Brazil, on the famed club grounds of U. K or the Netherlands, soccer brings joy to trillions of fans. For football to find a comparable place in people's hearts is one tough task.

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