

Football Vocabulary

Football is one of the world's most popular games. It is played in nearly every country, by everyone from kids in vacant lots and back streets to professional players in giant stadiums. Professional football is watched by billions of people all over the world, and is probably the world's most popular spectator sport.

History

The earliest known form of the game was developed in China around 500 B.C. It was known as *cuju* ('kick-ball') and was played with a leather ball. The object was to kick the ball into a net stretched between two goal-posts. By 800 A.D. there was a well-organized professional league in China, and similar games were also being played in Korea and Japan.

The earliest form of the game that we know of in Europe was played in England around 1100 A.D. It was played between big teams, sometimes whole villages, on a large field, and the ball could be thrown, kicked, or carried towards the opponent's goal. There were very few rules and games were often wild and rough. The game was repeatedly banned by the authorities because of the violence and injuries it caused.

The modern game first developed in England in the 19th century. The Football Association was set up in 1863 and the 'Laws of the Game' were drawn up in the same year. In 1882 the International Football Association Board (IFAB) was formed, and this organization still oversees the rules of the game. Then FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association) was founded in 1904 to run international competitions. FIFA still runs the [World Cup](#), as well as regional competitions such as the European and Asian Cups.

How the Game Works

The modern game is played by two teams of eleven players on a rectangular field with a goal at each end. Players pass the ball to each other by kicking or heading it, with the aim being to score goals by getting the ball into the opponent's goal. The game lasts for two 45-minute halves, and the team scoring the most goals wins. Draws are common, but if a winner has to be found, a game can go into extra time. If the score is still tied after thirty minutes of extra time, a 'penalty shootout' can decide the winner.

In general play, the goalkeeper is the only player who can touch the ball with the hands or arms. All the other players can kick or head the ball only. Players can tackle an opponent in order to get the ball from them, but must do so without pushing or tripping the player. Pushing and tripping, along with other illegal actions such as 'handball' and 'offside', are fouls that can be penalized with a free kick. If a foul is committed in the penalty area near either goal, the referee can award a penalty kick, meaning a player can have a free shot at goal, with only the goalkeeper being allowed to try to block it. If a player commits a more serious offence, such as dangerous play, the referee can issue a yellow card as a warning, or issue a red card, in which case the player is sent off and cannot be replaced by a substitute. Teams are normally allowed three substitutes, which can be used to replace players because of injury, or for tactical reasons.

Football Vocabulary List

word	example sentence	meaning
assistant referee	Assistant referees used to be called 'linesmen', but the term was changed in 1996.	official who runs one of two touchlines and advises the referee, esp. on offside decisions
corner kick	The referee awarded a corner kick after the goalkeeper tipped the ball over the bar.	a free kick taken from one of the corners of the pitch
defender	Defenders include left backs, right backs and central defenders.	a player whose main role is to prevent the opposition from scoring
dive	Many people see diving as a form of cheating and think players who dive should be sent off.	to deliberately fall over when tackled in order to deceive the referee into awarding a free kick
draw	The game ended in a draw, with each team having scored two goals.	finish a game with an even score; tie
extra time	We won the game by scoring the only goal in extra time.	two periods of 15 minutes each played when a game ends in a draw after normal time
foul	The referee blew his whistle and gave a penalty kick for a foul in the penalty area.	an illegal action punishable by a free kick
goal	Manchester United beat Chelsea by three goals to one.	an instance of kicking or heading the ball into the goal
goalkeeper	The goalkeeper tried to stop the penalty kick by diving to his left, but the penalty taker kicked the ball past him and scored.	player whose role is to stop the ball from entering the goal, and the only player who can handle the ball in general play
goal line	The referee thought a defender was the last player to touch the ball before it went over the goal line, and awarded a corner kick.	the two shorter boundaries, one at each end of the pitch, on which the goals are placed
handball	The ball hit Mark on the arm and the referee awarded a free kick to his opponents for handball.	a foul committed by touching the ball with a hand or an arm
league	The Spanish Football League, known as 'La Liga', includes famous clubs like Real Madrid and Barcelona.	a group of sports clubs that play each other over a period for a championship e.g. English Premiership League

offside	The assistant referee raised his flag to indicate to the referee that one of the forward players was in an offside position.	law requiring at least two defenders to be between an attacker and the goal line when the ball is passed to the attacker
pass	David saw a teammate and passed the ball to him.	to kick or head the ball to another player on one's own team.
penalty	Our defender tackled their striker in the penalty box, but the referee thought it was a foul and gave them a penalty.	a free kick from the penalty spot; <i>see also</i> penalty kick
penalty area	The tackle was just outside the penalty area, but the referee thought it was inside the area and gave them a penalty.	area near each goal in which the goalkeeper may handle the ball, and a foul is punished by a penalty kick (<i>also</i> ; penalty box)
penalty kick	Their best striker took the penalty kick, but our goalkeeper blocked his shot and they didn't score the goal.	a direct free kick taken from the penalty spot, awarded for a foul committed in the penalty area
penalty shootout	Our team won the penalty shootout by four goals to three, and we were the new champions.	a best-of-five penalty kick contest held to find a winner when a game is still tied after extra time
penalty spot	I felt very nervous as I put the ball on the penalty spot and stepped back to take the kick.	a white mark in the penalty area from which penalty kicks are taken
pitch	It had rained all morning, so the pitch was soft and muddy and difficult to run on.	the playing field
professional	David Beckham became a professional player at 17 when he signed a contract with Manchester United.	doing something, like playing sport or music, as a career or occupation
red card	The referee had already given Lee a yellow card, so when he committed another foul he was given a red card and sent off.	the most severe punishment given by a referee, in which the player is sent off the pitch
shoot	Ronaldo took the free kick and scored a great goal by shooting over the wall.	to try to score a goal
striker	We're not scoring enough goals, so our manager wants to get a new striker.	a player whose role is to score goals

substitute	They were losing by a goal with ten minutes to go, so the manager decided to substitute one of his defenders with a forward.	to replace one player with another player; <i>also</i> a player used to replace another
tackle	One of the defenders tackled David and kicked the ball out of play.	to challenge a player for the ball
tactical	They were losing, so the manager made tactical substitutions and replaced two defenders with more attacking players.	relating to a carefully planned strategy to win
throw in	After Joe kicked the ball out, one of the other team's players threw it in with a long throw into the penalty box.	to put the ball back into play after it has crossed the touchline by throwing it, usually to a teammate
touchline	The manager stood on the touchline shouting instructions to his players.	the two long boundaries along each side of the pitch; <i>also</i> sideline
wall	The defenders formed a wall to block the free kick, and the referee pushed them back ten metres.	a line of players forming a barrier to block a free kick taken near the penalty area
yellow card	If Jose gets another yellow card, he'll miss the next match.	a warning issued to a player for a serious foul, two of which result in a red card and sending off