

Five kinds of football

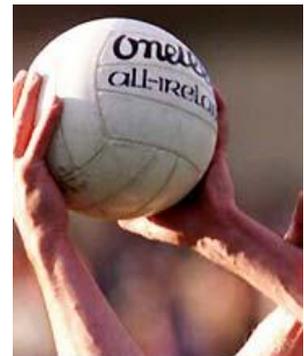
Tell a German that you watched a football match yesterday, and he or she will think of a round ball and eleven players on each team. If you tell an Australian, however, they might think of an oval ball and 18 players on a team. In this text you will get to know five different ball games which are all called “football”.



What people in Germany and England usually refer to as “football” is also known as **soccer** or Association football. It’s probably the most popular sport in the world. There are eleven players on a team; the goalkeeper is the only player who is allowed to touch the ball with his hands. A game lasts 90 minutes. The most important soccer competition is the FIFA World Cup, which is held every four years.

In Ireland, the word “football” can mean soccer, rugby union or Gaelic football.

Gaelic football is one of the oldest games in the world; it goes back to traditional Irish ball games. There are 15 players on a team and a game lasts 60 minutes. The ball is round but heavier than a soccer ball, and it looks rather like a volley ball. It can be kicked or passed by hand. However, you mustn’t pick the ball directly off the ground; you must scoop it up with your foot.



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Rugby union is played with 15 players and an oval ball. The ball can be carried, passed and kicked by the players. You may tackle the player who is carrying the ball.

Rugby union is also known as “rugby” or “rugger”. Many people think that the game started when a school boy, William Webb-Ellis, picked up a football in 1823 and ran with it.

Australian rules football – also called “Aussie rules” or “AFL” for short – is the most popular sport in Australia today. There are 18 players on each team; both the ball and the pitch are oval. The ball is red and a little smaller than a rugby ball. The players can kick it, push it with their fists or run with it. However, they aren’t allowed to throw the ball. When a player



runs with the ball, he must bounce it at least once every 15 meters.



American Football is played with 11 players on each team. The ball is oval; it can be carried, kicked or thrown. The players have to wear a lot of protective equipment, including helmets and shoulder pads. A game lasts 60 minutes. The game developed from rugby in the 19th century. Today it is the most popular sport in the United States. The 2012 Super Bowl (that's the championship game of the National Football League) was watched by more than 110 million Americans.

EXERCISE 1 Match the sports on the left and the words on the right!

soccer		Super Bowl
Gaelic football		William Webb-Ellis
Rugby union		FIFA World Cup
Australian rules football		scoop the ball up with your foot
American football		oval pitch

EXERCISE 2 Only two of these statements are true. Find them and correct the wrong sentences.

- a) American Football is the most popular sport in the world.
- b) A soccer ball is lighter than a Gaelic football ball.
- c) Gaelic football players mustn't pick up the ball.
- d) Rugby players wear helmets.
- e) An Aussie rules football pitch is oval.
- f) The Super Bowl is the most important soccer competition.
- g) Rugby was "invented" in 1820.

EXERCISE 3 Invent your own ball game and describe it. Consider:

- How many teams are there?
- How many players are on a team?
- What does the ball look like (round, oval, smaller/heavier than a soccer ball, color ...)?
- What does the pitch look like (oval, rectangular, round ...)?
- What can you do with the ball – carry it, kick it, throw it, pass it to other players?
- Are players allowed to tackle others?

EXERCISE 1 soccer – FIFA World Cup; Gaelic football – scoop the ball up with your foot; Rugby union – William Webb-Ellis; Australian rules football – oval pitch; American football – Super Bowl

EXERCISE 2 a) Soccer is the most popular sport in the world. b) right c) They may pick it up, but they mustn't pick it directly off the ground. d) American football players wear helmets. f) It's an American Football competition. g) It was invented in 1823.