

# Football

This article is about the overall concept of games called football. For specific versions of the game, the balls themselves and other uses of the term, see [Football \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Football** refers to a number of sports that involve,



*Several codes of football. Images, from top down, left to right: Association football, Australian rules football, International rules football, a rugby union scrum, rugby league, and American football.*

to varying degrees, kicking a ball with the foot to score a goal. Unqualified, the word *football* is understood to refer to whichever form of football is the most popular in the regional context in which the word appears: association football (also known as soccer) in the United Kingdom and most of the non-English speaking world; gridiron football (specifically American football or Canadian football) in the United States and Canada; Australian rules football or rugby league in different areas of Australia; Gaelic football in Ireland; and rugby football (specifically rugby union) in New Zealand.<sup>[1][2]</sup> These different variations of football are known as **football codes**.

Various forms of football can be identified in history, often as popular peasant games. Contemporary codes of football can be traced back to the codification of these games at English public schools in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries.<sup>[3][4]</sup> The influence and power of the **British Empire** allowed these rules of football to spread to areas of British influence outside of the directly controlled Empire,<sup>[5]</sup> though by the end of the nineteenth century, distinct regional codes were already developing: Gaelic Football, for example, deliberately incorporated the rules of local traditional football games in order to maintain their heritage.<sup>[6]</sup> In 1888, **The Football League** was founded in England, becoming the first of many professional football competitions. During the twentieth century, several of the various kinds of football grew to become among the most popular team sports in the world.<sup>[7]</sup>

## 1 Common elements

The various codes of football share certain common elements. Players in American football, Canadian football, rugby union and rugby league take-up positions in a limited area of the field at the start of the game.<sup>[8]</sup> They tend to use throwing and running as the main ways of moving the ball, and only kick on certain limited occasions. **Body tackling** is a major skill, and games typically involve short passages of play of 5–90 seconds.<sup>[8]</sup> Association football, Australian rules football and Gaelic football tend to use kicking to move the ball around the pitch, with handling more limited. Body tackles are less central to the game, and players are freer to move around the field (*offside* laws are typically less strict).<sup>[8]</sup>

Common rules among the sports include:

- Two *teams* of usually between 11 and 18 players; some variations that have fewer players (five or more per team) are also popular.
- A clearly defined area in which to play the game.
- *Scoring goals* or *points*, by moving the ball to an opposing team's end of the field and either into a goal area, or over a line.
- Goals or points resulting from players putting the ball between two *goalposts*.
- The goal or line being *defended* by the opposing team.
- Players being required to move the ball—depending on the code—by kicking, carrying, or hand-passing the ball.

- Players using only their body to move the ball.

In all codes, common skills include **passing**, **tackling**, evasion of tackles, catching and **kicking**.<sup>[8]</sup> In most codes, there are rules restricting the movement of players *offside*, and players scoring a goal must put the ball either under or over a **crossbar** between the goalposts.

## 2 Etymology

Main article: **Football (word)**

There are conflicting explanations of the origin of the word “football”. It is widely assumed that the word “football” (or “foot ball”) references the action of the foot kicking a ball. There is an alternative explanation, which is that football originally referred to a variety of games in **medieval Europe**, which were played *on foot*. There is no conclusive evidence for either explanation.

## 3 Early history

### 3.1 Ancient games

The **Ancient Greeks** and **Romans** are known to have played many ball games, some of which involved the use of the feet. The Roman game *harpastum* is believed to have been adapted from a **Greek** team game known as “ἐπίσκυρος” (*Episkyros*)<sup>[9][10]</sup> or “φαίνινδα” (*phaininda*),<sup>[11]</sup> which is mentioned by a Greek playwright, **Antiphanes** (388–311 BC) and later referred to by the **Christian theologian Clement of Alexandria** (c.150–c.215 AD). These games appear to have resembled **rugby football**.<sup>[12][13][14][15][16]</sup> The Roman politician **Cicero** (106–43 BC) describes the case of a man who was killed whilst having a shave when a ball was kicked into a barber’s shop. Roman ball games already knew the air-filled ball, the *follis*.<sup>[17][18]</sup> The Ancient Greek game of *Episkyros* recognised as an early form of football by FIFA.<sup>[19]</sup>

According to FIFA the competitive game *cuju* is the earliest form of football for which there is scientific evidence.<sup>[20]</sup> It occurs namely as an exercise in a military manual from the third and second centuries BC.<sup>[20]</sup> Documented evidence of an activity resembling football can be found in the Chinese **military manual** *Zhan Guo Ce* compiled between the 3rd century and 1st century BC.<sup>[21]</sup> It describes a practice known as *cuju* (蹴鞠, literally “kick ball”), which originally involved kicking a leather ball through a small hole in a piece of silk cloth which was fixed on bamboo canes and hung about 9 m above ground. During the **Han Dynasty** (206 BC–220 AD), *cuju* games were standardized and rules were established. Variations of this game later spread to Japan and **Korea**, known as *kemari* and *chuk-guk* respectively. Later, another type of

goal posts emerged, consisting of just one goal post in the middle of the field.

The Japanese version of *cuju* is *kemari* (蹴鞠), and was developed during the **Asuka period**. This is known to have been played within the Japanese imperial court in **Kyoto** from about 600 AD. In *kemari* several people stand in a circle and kick a ball to each other, trying not to let the ball drop to the ground (much like **keepie uppie**). The game appears to have died out sometime before the mid-19th century. It was revived in 1903 and is now played at a number of festivals.

There are a number of references to **traditional, ancient, or prehistoric** ball games, played by **indigenous peoples** in many different parts of the world. For example, in 1586, men from a ship commanded by an English explorer named **John Davis**, went ashore to play a form of football with **Inuit** (Eskimo) people in **Greenland**.<sup>[22]</sup> There are later accounts of an Inuit game played on ice, called *Aqsaqtuk*. Each match began with two teams facing each other in parallel lines, before attempting to kick the ball through each other team’s line and then at a goal. In 1610, **William Strachey**, a colonist at **Jamestown, Virginia** recorded a game played by **Native Americans**, called *Pahsaheman*. On the **Australian continent** several tribes of **indigenous people** played kicking and catching games with stuffed balls which have been generalised by historians as *Marn Grook* (Djab Wurrung for “game ball”). The earliest historical account is an anecdote from the 1878 book by **Robert Brough-Smyth**, *The Aborigines of Victoria*, in which a man called **Richard Thomas** is quoted as saying, in about 1841 in **Victoria, Australia**, that he had witnessed Aboriginal people playing the game: “Mr Thomas describes how the foremost player will drop kick a ball made from the skin of a **possum** and how other players leap into the air in order to catch it.” Some historians have theorised that *Marn Grook* was one of the **origins of Australian rules football**.

The **Māori** in **New Zealand** played a game called **Ki-o-rahi** consisting of teams of seven players play on a circular field divided into zones, and score points by touching the ‘pou’ (boundary markers) and hitting a central ‘tupu’ or target.

**Games played in Mesoamerica** with rubber balls by **indigenous peoples** are also well-documented as existing since before this time, but these had more similarities to **basketball** or **volleyball**, and since their influence on modern football games is minimal, most do not class them as football. **Northeastern American Indians**, especially the **Iroquois Confederation**, played a game which made use of net racquets to throw and catch a small ball; however, although a ball-goal foot game, **lacrosse** (as its modern descendant is called) is likewise not usually classed as a form of “football.”

These games and others may well go far back into antiquity. However, the main sources of modern football codes appear to lie in western Europe, especially **England**.

- Ancient Greek football player balancing the ball. Depiction on an *Attic Lekythos*.
- A *Song Dynasty* painting by Su Hanchen, depicting Chinese children playing *cuju*.
- Paint of a *Mesoamerican ballgame* player of the Tepantitla murals in *Teotihuacan*.
- A revived version of *kemari* being played at the *Tanzan Shrine*, Japan.
- An illustration from the 1850s of *Australian Aboriginal hunter gatherers*. Children in the background are playing a football game, possibly *Woggabaliri*.<sup>[1]</sup>

1. ^ From William Blandowski's *Australien in 142 Photographischen Abbildungen*, 1857, (Haddon Library, Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge)

## 3.2 Medieval and early modern Europe

Further information: *Medieval football*

The *Middle Ages* saw a huge rise in popularity of annual *Shrovetide* football matches throughout Europe, particularly in *England*. An early reference to a ball game played in Britain comes from the 9th century *Historia Brittonum*, which describes “a party of boys ... playing at ball”.<sup>[23]</sup> References to a ball game played in northern France known as *La Soule* or *Choule*, in which the ball was propelled by hands, feet, and sticks,<sup>[24]</sup> date from the 12th century.<sup>[25]</sup>



An illustration of so-called “mob football”

The early forms of football played in England, sometimes referred to as “mob football”, would be played between neighbouring towns and villages, involving an unlimited number of players on opposing teams who would clash *en*

*masse*,<sup>[26]</sup> struggling to move an item, such as inflated animal’s bladder<sup>[27]</sup> to particular geographical points, such as their opponents’ church, with play taking place in the open space between neighbouring parishes.<sup>[28]</sup> The game was played primarily during significant religious festivals, such as *Shrovetide*, *Christmas*, or *Easter*,<sup>[27]</sup> and *Shrovetide* games have survived into the modern era in a number of English towns (see below).

The first detailed description of what was almost certainly football in England was given by *William FitzStephen* in about 1174–1183. He described the activities of London youths during the annual festival of *Shrove Tuesday*:

*After lunch all the youth of the city go out into the fields to take part in a ball game. The students of each school have their own ball; the workers from each city craft are also carrying their balls. Older citizens, fathers, and wealthy citizens come on horseback to watch their juniors competing, and to relive their own youth vicariously: you can see their inner passions aroused as they watch the action and get caught up in the fun being had by the carefree adolescents.*<sup>[29]</sup>

Most of the very early references to the game speak simply of “ball play” or “playing at ball”. This reinforces the idea that the games played at the time did not necessarily involve a ball being kicked.

An early reference to a ball game that was probably football comes from 1280 at *Ulgham, Northumberland*, England: “Henry... while playing at ball.. ran against David”.<sup>[30]</sup> Football was played in Ireland in 1308, with a documented reference to John McCrocan, a spectator at a “football game” at *Newcastle, County Down* being charged with accidentally stabbing a player named William Bernard.<sup>[31]</sup> Another reference to a football game comes in 1321 at *Shouldham, Norfolk*, England: “[d]uring the game at ball as he kicked the ball, a lay friend of his... ran against him and wounded himself”.<sup>[30]</sup>

In 1314, *Nicholas de Farndone*, Lord Mayor of the City of *London* issued a decree banning football in the French used by the English upper classes at the time. A translation reads: “[f]orasmuch as there is great noise in the city caused by hustling over large foot balls [*rageries de grosses pelotes de pee*]<sup>[32]</sup> in the fields of the public from which many evils might arise which God forbid: we command and forbid on behalf of the king, on pain of imprisonment, such game to be used in the city in the future.” This is the earliest reference to football.

In 1363, King *Edward III of England* issued a proclamation banning “...handball, football, or hockey; coursing and cock-fighting, or other such idle games”,<sup>[33]</sup> showing that “football” — whatever its exact form in this case — was being differentiated from games involving other parts of the body, such as handball.



A game known as “football” was played in Scotland as early as the 15th century: it was prohibited by the Football Act 1424 and although the law fell into disuse it was not repealed until 1906. There is evidence for schoolboys playing a “football” ball game in Aberdeen in 1633 (some references cite 1636) which is notable as an early allusion to what some have considered to be passing the ball. The word “pass” in the most recent translation is derived from “huc percute” (strike it here) and later “repercute pilam” (strike the ball again) in the original Latin. It is not certain that the ball was being struck between members of the same team. The original word translated as “goal” is “metum”, literally meaning the “pillar at each end of the circus course” in a Roman chariot race. There is a reference to “get hold of the ball before [another player] does” (Praeripe illi pilam si possis agere) suggesting that handling of the ball was allowed. One sentence states in the original 1930 translation “Throw yourself against him” (Age, objice te illi).



France circa 1750

King Henry IV of England also presented one of the earliest documented uses of the English word “football”, in 1409, when he issued a proclamation forbidding the levying of money for “foteball”.<sup>[30][34]</sup>

There is also an account in Latin from the end of the 15th century of football being played at Cawston, Nottinghamshire. This is the first description of a “kicking game” and the first description of dribbling: “[t]he game at which they had met for common recreation is called by some the foot-ball game. It is one in which young men, in country sport, propel a huge ball not by throwing it into the air but by striking it and rolling it along the ground, and that not with their hands but with their feet... kicking in opposite directions” The chronicler gives the earliest reference to a football pitch, stating that: “[t]he boundaries have been marked and the game had started.”<sup>[30]</sup>

Other firsts in the mediæval and early modern eras:

- “a football”, in the sense of a ball rather than a game, was first mentioned in 1486.<sup>[34]</sup> This reference is in

Dame Juliana Berners' *Book of St Albans*. It states: “a certain rounde instrument to play with ...it is an instrument for the foote and then it is calde in Latyn 'pila pedalis', a fotebal.”<sup>[30]</sup>

- a pair of football boots was ordered by King Henry VIII of England in 1526.<sup>[35]</sup>
- women playing a form of football was first described in 1580 by Sir Philip Sidney in one of his poems: “[a] tyme there is for all, my mother often sayes, When she, with skirts tuckt very hy, with girles at football playes.”<sup>[36]</sup>
- the first references to *goals* are in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. In 1584 and 1602 respectively, John Norden and Richard Carew referred to “goals” in Cornish hurling. Carew described how goals were made: “they pitch two bushes in the ground, some eight or ten foote asunder; and directly against them, ten or twelue [twelve] score off, other twayne in like distance, which they terme their Goales”.<sup>[37]</sup> He is also the first to describe goalkeepers and passing of the ball between players.
- the first direct reference to *scoring a goal* is in John Day's play *The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green* (performed circa 1600; published 1659): “I'll play a gole at camp-ball” (an extremely violent variety of football, which was popular in East Anglia). Similarly in a poem in 1613, Michael Drayton refers to “when the Ball to throw, And drive it to the Gole, in squadrons forth they goe”.

### 3.3 Calcio Fiorentino



An illustration of the Calcio Fiorentino field and starting positions, from a 1688 book by Pietro di Lorenzo Bini.

Main article: [Calcio Fiorentino](#)

In the 16th century, the city of Florence celebrated the period between Epiphany and Lent by playing a game which today is known as “calcio storico” (“historic kick-ball”) in the Piazza Santa Croce. The young aristocrats of

the city would dress up in fine silk costumes and embroil themselves in a violent form of football. For example, *calcio* players could punch, shoulder charge, and kick opponents. Blows below the belt were allowed. The game is said to have originated as a military training exercise. In 1580, Count Giovanni de' Bardi di Vernio wrote *Discorso sopra 'l giuoco del Calcio Fiorentino*. This is sometimes said to be the earliest code of rules for any football game. The game was not played after January 1739 (until it was revived in May 1930).

### 3.4 Official disapproval and attempts to ban football

Main article: Attempts to ban football games

There have been many attempts to ban football, from the *middle ages* through to the modern day. The first such law was passed in *England* in 1314; it was followed by more than 30 in England alone between 1314 and 1667.<sup>[38]:6</sup> Football faced armed opposition in the 18th Century when used as a cover for violent protest against the *enclosure act*. Women were banned from playing at English and Scottish Football League grounds in 1921, a ban that was only lifted in the 1970s. Female footballers still face similar problems in some parts of the world.

## 4 Establishment of modern codes

### 4.1 English public schools

Main article: English public school football games

While football continued to be played in various forms throughout Britain, its *public schools* (known as private schools in other countries) are widely credited with four key achievements in the creation of modern football codes. First of all, the evidence suggests that they were important in taking football away from its “mob” form and turning it into an organised team sport. Second, many early descriptions of football and references to it were recorded by people who had studied at these schools. Third, it was teachers, students and former students from these schools who first codified football games, to enable matches to be played between schools. Finally, it was at English public schools that the division between “kicking” and “running” (or “carrying”) games first became clear.

The earliest evidence that games resembling football were being played at English public schools — mainly attended by boys from the upper, upper-middle and professional classes — comes from the *Vulgaria* by William Herman in 1519. Herman had been headmaster at *Eton* and *Winchester* colleges and his *Latin* textbook includes a

translation exercise with the phrase “We wyll playe with a ball full of wynde”.<sup>[39]</sup>

*Richard Mulcaster*, a student at *Eton College* in the early 16th century and later headmaster at other English schools, has been described as “the greatest sixteenth Century advocate of football”.<sup>[40]</sup> Among his contributions are the earliest evidence of organised team football. Mulcaster’s writings refer to teams (“sides” and “parties”), positions (“standings”), a referee (“judge over the parties”) and a coach (“trayning maister”). Mulcaster’s “football” had evolved from the disordered and violent forms of traditional football:

[s]ome smaller number with such over-looking, sorted into sides and standings, not meeting with their bodies so boisterously to trie their strength: nor shouldring or shuffing one an other so barbarously ... may use footeball for as much good to the body, by the chiefe use of the legges.<sup>[41]</sup>

In 1633, *David Wedderburn*, a teacher from *Aberdeen*, mentioned elements of modern football games in a short *Latin* textbook called *Vocabula*. Wedderburn refers to what has been translated into modern English as “keeping goal” and makes an allusion to passing the ball (“strike it here”). There is a reference to “get hold of the ball”, suggesting that some handling was allowed. It is clear that the tackles allowed included the charging and holding of opposing players (“drive that man back”).

A more detailed description of football is given in *Francis Willughby's Book of Games*, written in about 1660.<sup>[42]</sup> Willughby, who had studied at *Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, Sutton Coldfield*, is the first to describe goals and a distinct playing field: “a close that has a gate at either end. The gates are called Goals.” His book includes a diagram illustrating a football field. He also mentions tactics (“leaving some of their best players to guard the goal”); scoring (“they that can strike the ball through their opponents’ goal first win”) and the way teams were selected (“the players being equally divided according to their strength and nimbleness”). He is the first to describe a “law” of football: “they must not strike [an opponent’s leg] higher than the ball”.

English public schools were the first to codify football games. In particular, they devised the first *offside* rules, during the late 18th century.<sup>[43]</sup> In the earliest manifestations of these rules, players were “off their side” if they simply stood between the ball and the goal which was their objective. Players were not allowed to pass the ball forward, either by foot or by hand. They could only dribble with their feet, or advance the ball in a *scrum* or similar *formation*. However, offside laws began to diverge and develop differently at each school, as is shown by the rules of football from *Winchester*, *Rugby*, *Harrow* and *Cheltenham*, during between 1810 and 1850.<sup>[43]</sup> The first known codes — in the sense of a set of rules — were those

of Eton in 1815<sup>[44]</sup> and Aldenham in 1825.<sup>[44]</sup>)

During the early 19th century, most **working class** people in Britain had to work six days a week, often for over twelve hours a day. They had neither the time nor the inclination to engage in sport for recreation and, at the time, many **children were part of the labour force**. **Feast day** football played on the streets was in decline. Public school boys, who enjoyed some freedom from work, became the inventors of organised football games with formal codes of rules.

Football was adopted by a number of public schools as a way of encouraging competitiveness and keeping youths fit. Each school drafted its own rules, which varied widely between different schools and were changed over time with each new intake of pupils. Two schools of thought developed regarding rules. Some schools favoured a game in which the ball could be carried (as at Rugby, **Marlborough** and **Cheltenham**), while others preferred a game where kicking and dribbling the ball was promoted (as at Eton, Harrow, **Westminster** and **Charterhouse**). The division into these two camps was partly the result of circumstances in which the games were played. For example, Charterhouse and Westminster at the time had restricted playing areas; the boys were confined to playing their ball game within the school **cloisters**, making it difficult for them to adopt rough and tumble running games.



*Rugby School*

William Webb Ellis, a pupil at Rugby School, is said to have “with a fine disregard for the rules of football, *as played in his time* [emphasis added], first took the ball in his arms and ran with it, thus creating the distinctive feature of the rugby game.” in 1823. This act is usually said to be the beginning of Rugby football, but there is little evidence that it occurred, and most sports historians believe the story to be apocryphal. The act of ‘taking the ball in his arms’ is often misinterpreted as ‘picking the ball up’ as it is widely believed that Webb Ellis’ ‘crime’ was handling the ball, as in modern soccer, however handling the ball at the time was often permitted and in some cases compulsory,<sup>[45]</sup> the rule for which Webb Ellis showed disregard was *running forward with it* as the rules of his time only allowed a player to retreat backwards or kick forwards.

The boom in rail transport in Britain during the 1840s

meant that people were able to travel further and with less inconvenience than they ever had before. Inter-school sporting competitions became possible. However, it was difficult for schools to play each other at football, as each school played by its own rules. The solution to this problem was usually that the match be divided into two halves, one half played by the rules of the host “home” school, and the other half by the visiting “away” school.

The *modern* rules of many football codes were formulated during the mid- or late- 19th century. This also applies to other sports such as lawn bowls, lawn tennis, etc. The major impetus for this was the patenting of the world’s first **lawnmower** in 1830. This allowed for the preparation of modern ovals, playing fields, pitches, grass courts, etc.<sup>[46]</sup>

Apart from Rugby football, the public school codes have barely been played beyond the confines of each school’s playing fields. However, many of them are still played at the schools which created them (see **Surviving UK school games** below).

Public schools’ dominance of sports in the UK began to wane after the *Factory Act of 1850*, which significantly increased the recreation time available to working class children. Before 1850, many British children had to work six days a week, for more than twelve hours a day. From 1850, they could not work before 6 a.m. (7 a.m. in winter) or after 6 p.m. on weekdays (7 p.m. in winter); on Saturdays they had to cease work at 2 p.m. These changes mean that working class children had more time for games, including various forms of football.

## 4.2 Firsts

### 4.2.1 Clubs

Main article: **Oldest football clubs**

Sports clubs dedicated to playing football began in the 18th century, for example **London’s Gymnastic Society** which was founded in the mid-18th century and ceased playing matches in 1796.<sup>[47][48]</sup>

The first documented club to bear in the title a reference to being a ‘football club’ were called “The Foot-Ball Club” who were located in **Edinburgh, Scotland**, during the period 1824–41.<sup>[49][50]</sup> The club forbade tripping but allowed pushing and holding and the picking up of the ball.<sup>[50]</sup>

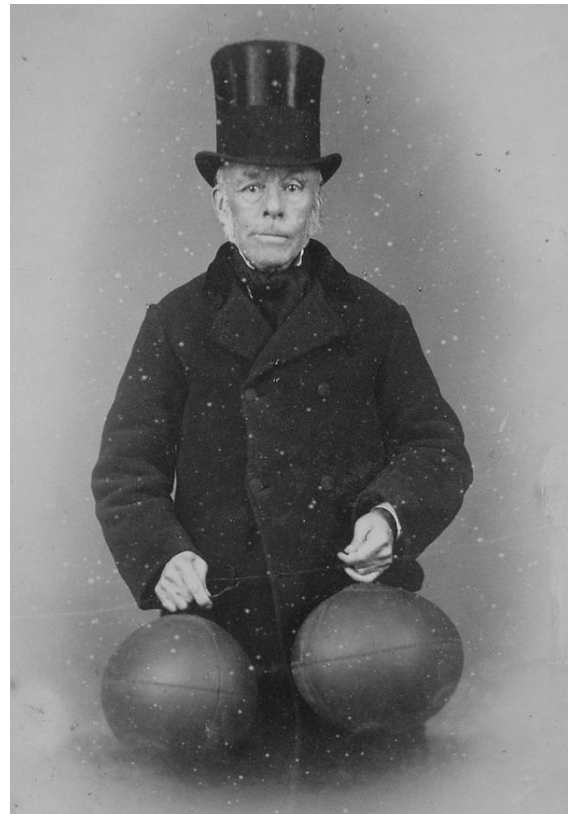
In 1845, three boys at Rugby school were tasked with codifying the rules then being used at the school. These were the first set of written rules (or code) for any form of football.<sup>[51]</sup> This further assisted the spread of the Rugby game.



### 4.2.2 Competitions

Main article: [Oldest football competitions](#)

One of the longest running football fixture is the [Cordner-Eggleston Cup](#), contested between [Melbourne Grammar School](#) and [Scotch College, Melbourne](#) every year since 1858. It is believed by many to also be the first match of [Australian rules football](#), although it was played under experimental rules in its first year. The first football trophy tournament was the [Caledonian Challenge Cup](#), donated by the Royal [Caledonian Society](#) of Melbourne, played in 1861 under the [Melbourne Rules](#).<sup>[52]</sup> The oldest football league is a rugby football competition, the [United Hospitals Challenge Cup](#) (1874), while the oldest rugby trophy is the [Yorkshire Cup](#), contested since 1878. The [South Australian Football Association](#) (30 April 1877) is the oldest surviving Australian rules football competition. The oldest surviving soccer trophy is the [Youdan Cup](#) (1867) and the oldest national soccer competition is the [English FA Cup](#) (1871). The [Football League](#) (1888) is recognised as the longest running Association Football league. The first *ever* international football match took place between sides representing England and Scotland on March 5, 1870 at the [Oval](#) under the authority of the FA. The first Rugby international took place in 1871.



*Richard Lindon (seen in 1880) is believed to have invented the first footballs with rubber bladders.*

### 4.2.3 Modern balls

Main article: [Football \(ball\)](#)

In Europe, early footballs were made out of animal bladders, more specifically [pig's bladders](#), which were inflated. Later [leather](#) coverings were introduced to allow the balls to keep their shape.<sup>[53]</sup> However, in 1851, [Richard Lindon](#) and [William Gilbert](#), both shoemakers from the town of [Rugby](#) (near the school), exhibited both round and oval-shaped balls at the [Great Exhibition](#) in London. Richard Lindon's wife is said to have died of lung disease caused by blowing up pig's bladders.<sup>[54]</sup> Lindon also won medals for the invention of the "Rubber inflatable Bladder" and the "Brass Hand Pump".

In 1855, the U.S. inventor [Charles Goodyear](#) — who had patented [vulcanized rubber](#) — exhibited a spherical football, with an exterior of vulcanized rubber panels, at the [Paris Exhibition Universelle](#). The ball was to prove popular in early forms of football in the U.S.A.<sup>[55]</sup>

The iconic ball with a regular pattern of hexagons and pentagons (see [truncated icosahedron](#)) did not become popular until the 1960s, and was first used in the [World Cup](#) in 1970.

### 4.2.4 Modern ball passing tactics

Main article: [Passing \(association football\)](#)

The earliest reference to a game of football involving players passing the ball and attempting to score past a goalkeeper was written in 1633 by David Wedderburn, a poet and teacher in [Aberdeen, Scotland](#).<sup>[56]</sup> Nevertheless, the original text does not state whether the allusion to passing as 'kick the ball back' ('Repercute pilam') was in a forward or backward direction or between members of the same opposing teams (as was usual at this time)<sup>[57]</sup>

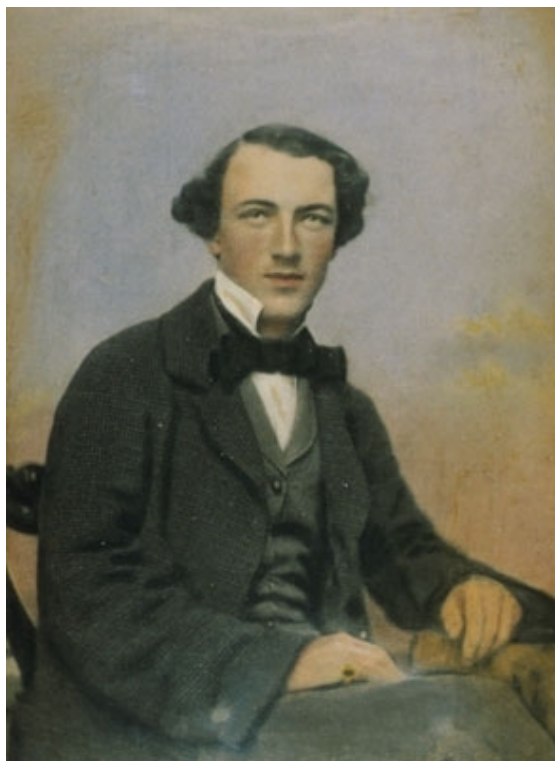
"Scientific" football is first recorded in 1839 from [Lancashire](#)<sup>[58]</sup> and in the modern game in Rugby football from 1862<sup>[59]</sup> and from [Sheffield FC](#) as early as 1865.<sup>[60][61]</sup> The first side to play a passing combination game was the [Royal Engineers AFC](#) in 1869/70<sup>[62][63]</sup> By 1869 they were "work[ing] well together", "backing up" and benefiting from "cooperation".<sup>[64]</sup> By 1870 the Engineers were passing the ball: "Lieut. Creswell, who having brought the ball up the side then kicked it into the middle to another of his side, who kicked it through the posts the minute before time was called"<sup>[65]</sup> Passing was a regular feature of their style<sup>[66]</sup> By early 1872 the Engineers were the first football team renowned for "play[ing] beautifully together"<sup>[67]</sup> A double pass is first reported from [Derby school](#) against [Nottingham Forest](#) in March 1872, the first of which is irrefutably a *short* pass: "Mr Absey dribbling the ball half the length of the field delivered it to Wallis, who kicking it cleverly in front of the goal, sent it to the captain who drove it at once between the Nottingham posts"<sup>[68]</sup> The first side to have perfected the modern

formation was [Cambridge University AFC](#)<sup>[69][70][71]</sup> and introduced the 2–3–5 “pyramid” formation.<sup>[72][73]</sup>

### 4.3 Cambridge rules

Main article: [Cambridge rules](#)

In 1848, at Cambridge University, Mr. H. de Winton and Mr. J.C. Thring, who were both formerly at Shrewsbury School, called a meeting at Trinity College, Cambridge with 12 other representatives from Eton, Harrow, Rugby, [Winchester](#) and Shrewsbury. An eight-hour meeting produced what amounted to the first set of modern rules, known as the *Cambridge rules*. No copy of these rules now exists, but a revised version from circa 1856 is held in the library of Shrewsbury School.<sup>[74]</sup> The rules clearly favour the kicking game. Handling was only allowed *when a player catches the ball directly from the foot* entitling them to a free kick and there was a primitive off-side rule, disallowing players from “loitering” around the opponents’ goal. The Cambridge rules were not widely adopted outside English public schools and universities (but it was arguably the most significant influence on the [Football Association](#) committee members responsible for formulating the rules of [Association football](#)).



*Tom Wills, widely regarded as the father of Australian football*

### 4.4 Sheffield rules

Main article: [Sheffield rules](#)

By the late 1850s, many football clubs had been formed throughout the English-speaking world, to play various codes of football. [Sheffield Football Club](#), founded in 1857 in the English city of Sheffield by Nathaniel Creswick and William Prest, was later recognised as the world’s oldest club playing association football.<sup>[75]</sup> However, the club initially played its own code of football: the *Sheffield rules*. The code was largely independent of the public school rules, the most significant difference being the lack of an *offside* rule.

The code was responsible for many innovations that later spread to association football. These included [free kicks](#), [corner kicks](#), handball, [throw-ins](#) and the crossbar.<sup>[76]</sup> By the 1870s they became the dominant code in the north and midlands of England. At this time a series of rule changes by both the [London](#) and [Sheffield](#) FAs gradually eroded the differences between the two games until the adoption of a common code in 1877.

### 4.5 Australian rules

Main article: [Australian rules football](#)

See also: [Origins of Australian rules football](#)

There is archival evidence of “foot-ball” games being played in various parts of Australia throughout the first

half of the 19th century. The origins of an organised game of football known today as Australian rules football can be traced back to 1858 in [Melbourne](#), the capital city of [Victoria](#).

In July 1858, Tom Wills, an Australian-born cricketer educated at [Rugby School](#) in England, wrote a letter to *Bell’s Life in Victoria & Sporting Chronicle*, calling for a “foot-ball club” with a “code of laws” to keep cricketers fit during winter.<sup>[77]</sup> This is considered by historians to be a defining moment in the creation of Australian rules football. Through publicity and personal contacts Wills was able to co-ordinate football matches in Melbourne that experimented with various rules,<sup>[78]</sup> the first of which was played on July 31, 1858. One week later, Wills umpired a schoolboys match between [Melbourne Grammar School](#) and [Scotch College](#). Following these matches, organised football in Melbourne rapidly increased in popularity.

Wills and others involved in these early matches formed the [Melbourne Football Club](#) (the oldest surviving Australian football club) on May 14, 1859. Club members Wills, William Hammersley, J. B. Thompson and Thomas H. Smith met with the intention of forming a set of rules that would be widely adopted by other clubs. The committee debated rules used in English public school games; Wills pushed for various rugby football rules he learnt during his schooling. The first rules share similarities with these games, and were shaped to suit to Australian conditions. H. C. A. Harrison, a seminal figure in Australian football, recalled that his cousin Wills wanted “a game of our own”.<sup>[79]</sup> The code was distinctive in the





Wood engraving of an Australian rules football match at the Richmond Paddock, Melbourne, 1866

prevalence of the **mark**, **free kick**, **tackling**, lack of an off-side rule and that players were specifically penalised for **throwing the ball**.

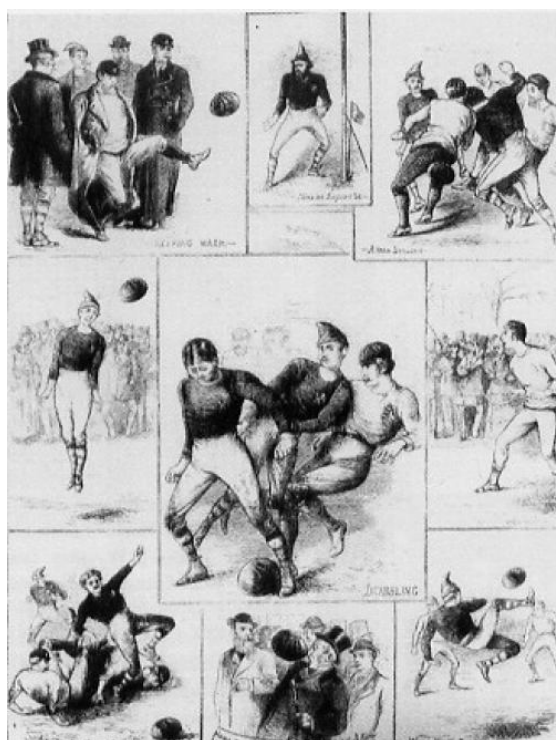
The Melbourne football rules were widely distributed and gradually adopted by the other Victorian clubs. The rules were updated several times during the 1860s to accommodate the rules of other influential Victorian football clubs. A significant redraft in 1866 by H. C. A. Harrison's committee accommodated the **Geelong Football Club's** rules, making the game then known as "Victorian Rules" increasingly distinct from other codes. It soon adopted cricket fields and an oval ball, used specialised goal and behind posts, and featured **bouncing the ball while running** and **spectacular high marking**. The game spread quickly to other **Australian colonies**. Outside of its heartland in southern Australia the code experienced a significant period of decline following **World War I** but has since grown throughout Australia and in **other parts of the world**, and the **Australian Football League** emerged as the dominant professional competition.

## 4.6 Football Association

Main article: **The Football Association**

During the early 1860s, there were increasing attempts in England to unify and reconcile the various public school games. In 1862, J. C. Thring, who had been one of the driving forces behind the original Cambridge Rules, was a master at **Uppingham School** and he issued his own rules of what he called "The Simplest Game" (these are also known as the Uppingham Rules). In early October 1863 another new revised version of the Cambridge Rules was drawn up by a seven member committee representing former pupils from Harrow, Shrewsbury, Eton, Rugby, Marlborough and Westminster.

At the **Freemasons' Tavern**, Great Queen Street, London on the evening of October 26, 1863, representatives of several football clubs in the **London Metropolitan area**



The first football international, Scotland versus England. Once kept by the Rugby Football Union as an early example of rugby football.

met for the inaugural meeting of **The Football Association** (FA). The aim of the Association was to establish a single unifying code and regulate the playing of the game among its members. Following the first meeting, the public schools were invited to join the association. All of them declined, except Charterhouse and Uppingham. In total, six meetings of the FA were held between October and December 1863. After the third meeting, a draft set of rules were published. However, at the beginning of the fourth meeting, attention was drawn to the recently published Cambridge Rules of 1863. The Cambridge rules differed from the draft FA rules in two significant areas; namely running with (carrying) the ball and hacking (kicking opposing players in the shins). The two contentious FA rules were as follows:

IX. A player shall be entitled to run with the ball towards his adversaries' goal if he makes a fair catch, or catches the ball on the first bound; but in case of a fair catch, if he makes his mark he shall not run.

X. If any player shall run with the ball towards his adversaries' goal, any player on the opposite side shall be at liberty to charge, hold, trip or hack him, or to wrest the ball from him, but no player shall be held and hacked at the same time.

—[80]

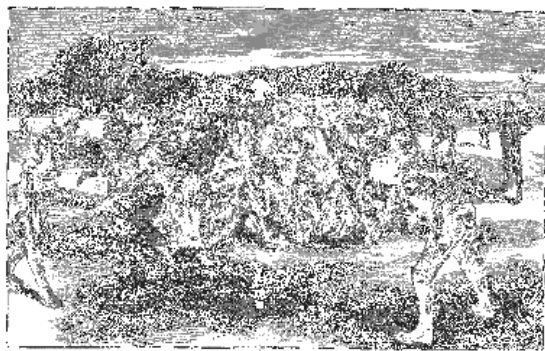
At the fifth meeting it was proposed that these two rules be removed. Most of the delegates supported this, but **F. M. Campbell**, the representative from **Blackheath** and the first FA treasurer, objected. He said: “hacking is the true football”. However, the motion to ban running with the ball in hand and hacking was carried and Blackheath withdrew from the FA. After the final meeting on 8 December, the FA published the “**Laws of Football**”, the first comprehensive set of rules for the game later known as **Association Football**. The term “soccer”, in use since the late 19th century, derives from an abbreviation of “Association”.<sup>[81]</sup>

The first FA rules still contained elements that are no longer part of association football, but which are still recognisable in other games (such as Australian football and rugby football): for instance, a player could make a fair catch and claim a *mark*, which entitled him to a free kick; and if a player touched the ball behind the opponents’ goal line, his side was entitled to a *free kick* at goal, from 15 yards (13.5 metres) in front of the goal line.

## 4.7 Rugby football

Main article: **History of rugby union**

In **Britain**, by 1870, there were about 75 clubs play-



*A rugby scrum in 1871*

ing variations of the Rugby school game. There were also “rugby” clubs in Ireland, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. However, there was no generally accepted set of rules for rugby until 1871, when 21 clubs from London came together to form the **Rugby Football Union (RFU)**. The first official RFU rules were adopted in June 1871. These rules allowed passing the ball. They also included the *try*, where touching the ball over the line allowed an attempt at goal, though drop-goals from marks and general play, and penalty conversions were still the main form of contest.

## 4.8 North American football codes

Main articles: **History of American football** and **Canadian football § History**

As was the case in Britain, by the early 19th century, North American schools and universities played their own local games, between sides made up of students. For example, students at **Dartmouth College** in **New Hampshire** played a game called **Old division football**, a variant of the association football codes, as early as the 1820s.<sup>[82]</sup> They remained largely “**mob football**” style games, with huge numbers of players attempting to advance the ball into a goal area, often by any means necessary. Rules were simple, violence and injury were common.<sup>[83]</sup> The violence of these mob-style games led to widespread protests and a decision to abandon them. **Yale University**, under pressure from the city of **New Haven**, banned the play of all forms of football in 1860, while **Harvard University** followed suit in 1861.<sup>[83]</sup> In its place, two general types of football evolved: “kicking” games and “running” (or “carrying”) games. A hybrid of the two, known as the “**Boston game**”, was played by a group known as the **Oneida Football Club**. The club, considered by some historians as the first formal **football club** in the United States, was formed in 1862 by schoolboys who played the “Boston game” on **Boston Common**.<sup>[83][84]</sup> The game began to return to American college campuses by the late 1860s. The universities of Yale, **Princeton** (then known as the College of New Jersey), **Rutgers**, and **Brown** all began playing “kicking” games during this time. In 1867, Princeton used rules based on those of the **English Football Association**.<sup>[83]</sup>



*The “Tigers” of Hamilton, Ontario, circa 1906. Founded 1869 as the Hamilton Foot Ball Club, they eventually merged with the Hamilton Flying Wildcats to form the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, a team still active in the Canadian Football League.<sup>[85]</sup>*

In Canada, the first documented football match was a practice game played on November 9, 1861, at **University College, University of Toronto** (approximately 400 yards west of Queen’s Park). One of the participants in the game involving University of Toronto students was (Sir) William Mulock, later Chancellor of the school.<sup>[86]</sup> In 1864, at **Trinity College, Toronto**, F. Barlow Cumberland, Frederick A. Bethune, and Christopher Gwynn, one of the founders of Milton, Massachusetts, devised rules based on rugby football.<sup>[86]</sup> A “running game”, resem-



bling rugby football, was then taken up by the **Montreal Football Club** in Canada in 1868.<sup>[87]</sup>

On November 6, 1869, Rutgers faced Princeton in a game that was played with a round ball and, like all early games, used improvised rules. It is usually regarded as **the first game of American intercollegiate football**.<sup>[83][88]</sup>

Modern North American football grew out of a match between **McGill University** of Montreal, and Harvard University in 1874. During the game, the two teams alternated between the rugby-based rules used by McGill and the Boston Game rules used by Harvard.<sup>[89][90][91]</sup> Within a few years, Harvard had both adopted McGill's rules and had persuaded other U.S. university teams to do the same. On November 23, 1876, representatives from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and **Columbia** met at the **Massasoit Convention** in **Springfield, Massachusetts**, agreeing to adopt most of the Rugby Football Union rules, with some variations.<sup>[92]</sup>



*Rutgers College Football Team, 1882*

In 1880, Yale coach **Walter Camp**, who had become a fixture at the Massasoit House conventions where the rules were debated and changed, devised a number of major innovations. Camp's two most important rule changes that diverged the American game from rugby was replacing the **scrummage** with the **line of scrimmage** and the establishment of the **down-and-distance** rules.<sup>[92]</sup> American football still however remained a violent sport where collisions often led to serious injuries and sometimes even death.<sup>[93]</sup> This led **U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt** to hold a meeting with football representatives from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton on October 9, 1905, urging them to make drastic changes.<sup>[94]</sup> One rule change introduced in 1906, devised to open up the game and reduce injury, was the introduction of the legal **forward pass**. Though it was underutilized for years, this proved to be one of the most important rule changes in the establishment of the modern game.<sup>[95]</sup>

Over the years, Canada absorbed some of the developments in American football in an effort to distinguish it from a more rugby-oriented game. In 1903, the **Ontario Rugby Football Union** adopted the **Burnside rules**, which implemented the **line of scrimmage** and **down-and-distance** system from American football,

among others.<sup>[96]</sup> Canadian football then implemented the legal forward pass in 1929.<sup>[97]</sup> American and Canadian football **remain different codes**, stemming from rule changes that the American side of the border adopted but the Canadian side has not.

## 4.9 Gaelic football



*The All-Ireland Football Final in Croke Park, 2004.*

Main article: [History of Gaelic football](#)

In the mid-19th century, various traditional football games, referred to collectively as **caid**, remained popular in Ireland, especially in **County Kerry**. One observer, Father W. Ferris, described two main forms of **caid** during this period: the “field game” in which the object was to put the ball through arch-like goals, formed from the boughs of two trees; and the epic “cross-country game” which took up most of the daylight hours of a Sunday on which it was played, and was won by one team taking the ball across a **parish** boundary. “Wrestling”, “holding” opposing players, and carrying the ball were all allowed.

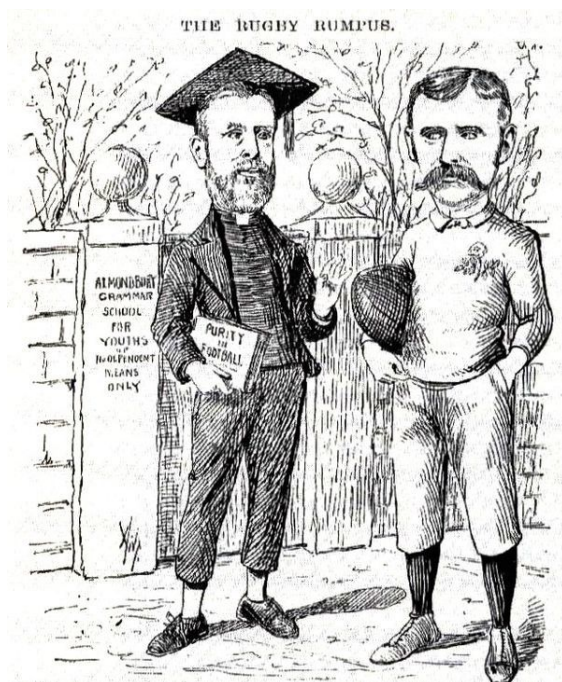
By the 1870s, Rugby and Association football had started to become popular in Ireland. **Trinity College, Dublin** was an early stronghold of Rugby (see the **Developments in the 1850s** section, above). The rules of the English FA were being distributed widely. Traditional forms of **caid** had begun to give way to a “rough-and-tumble game” which allowed tripping.

There was no serious attempt to unify and codify Irish varieties of football, until the establishment of the **Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)** in 1884. The GAA sought to promote traditional Irish sports, such as **hurling** and to reject imported games like Rugby and Association football. The first Gaelic football rules were drawn up by **Maurice Davin** and published in the *United Ireland* magazine on February 7, 1887. Davin's rules showed the influence of games such as hurling and a desire to formalise a distinctly Irish code of football. The prime example of this differentiation was the lack of an offside rule (an attribute which, for many years, was shared only by other Irish games like hurling, and by Australian rules football).

## 4.10 Schism in Rugby football

Further information: [History of rugby league](#)





An English cartoon from the 1890s lampooning the divide in rugby football which led to the formation of *rugby league*. The caricatures are of Rev. Frank Marshall, an arch-opponent of player payments, and James Miller, a long-time opponent of Marshall. The caption reads: Marshall: "Oh, fie, go away naughty boy, I don't play with boys who can't afford to take a holiday for football any day they like!" Miller: "Yes, that's just you to a T; you'd make it so that no lad whose father wasn't a millionaire could play at all in a really good team. For my part I see no reason why the men who make the money shouldn't have a share in the spending of it."

The *International Rugby Football Board* (IRFB) was founded in 1886, but rifts were beginning to emerge in the code. *Professionalism* was beginning to creep into the various codes of football.

In England, by the 1890s, a long-standing *Rugby Football Union* ban on *professional* players was causing regional tensions within rugby football, as many players in northern England were *working class* and could not afford to take time off to train, travel, play and recover from injuries. This was not very different from what had occurred ten years earlier in soccer in Northern England but the authorities reacted very differently in the RFU, attempting to alienate the working class support in Northern England. In 1895, following a dispute about a player being paid broken time payments, which replaced wages lost as a result of playing rugby, representatives of the northern clubs met in *Huddersfield* to form the *Northern Rugby Football Union* (NRFU). The new body initially permitted only various types of player wage replacements. However, within two years, NRFU players could be paid, but they were required to have a job outside sport.

The demands of a professional league dictated that rugby

had to become a better "spectator" sport. Within a few years the NRFU rules had started to diverge from the RFU, most notably with the abolition of the *line-out*. This was followed by the replacement of the *ruck* with the "play-the-ball ruck", which allowed a two-player ruck contest between the tackler at marker and the player tackled. *Mauls* were stopped once the ball carrier was held, being replaced by a play-the ball-ruck. The separate Lancashire and Yorkshire competitions of the NRFU merged in 1901, forming the *Northern Rugby League*, the first time the name *rugby league* was used officially in England.

Over time, the RFU form of rugby, played by clubs which remained members of national federations affiliated to the IRFB, became known as *rugby union*.

#### 4.11 Globalisation of association football

Main article: *History of FIFA*

The need for a single body to oversee association football had become apparent by the beginning of the 20th century, with the increasing popularity of international fixtures. The English Football Association had chaired many discussions on setting up an international body, but was perceived as making no progress. It fell to associations from seven other European countries: France, Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, to form an international association. The *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) was founded in Paris on May 21, 1904. Its first president was *Robert Guérin*. The French name and acronym has remained, even outside French-speaking countries.

#### 4.12 Further divergence of the two rugby codes

Rugby league rules diverged significantly from rugby union in 1906, with the reduction of the team from 15 to 13 players. In 1907, a New Zealand professional rugby team toured Australia and Britain, receiving an enthusiastic response, and professional *rugby leagues* were *launched in Australia* the following year. However, the rules of professional games varied from one country to another, and negotiations between various national bodies were required to fix the exact rules for each international match. This situation endured until 1948, when at the instigation of the French league, the *Rugby League International Federation* (RLIF) was formed at a meeting in *Bordeaux*.

During the second half of 20th century, the rules changed further. In 1966, rugby league officials borrowed the American football concept of *downs*: a team was allowed to retain possession of the ball for four tackles (rugby union retains the original rule that a player who is tackled

and brought to the ground must release the ball immediately). The maximum number of tackles was later increased to six (in 1971), and in rugby league this became known as the *six tackle rule*.

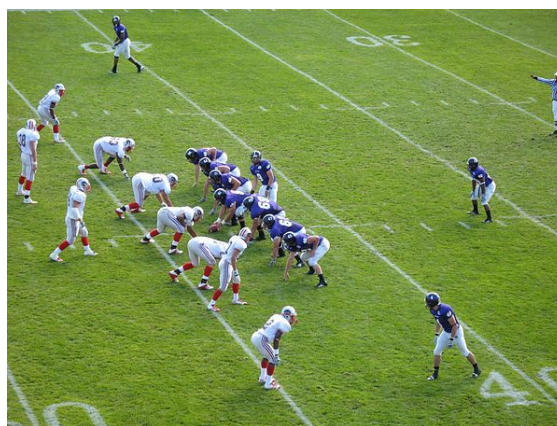
With the advent of full-time professionals in the early 1990s, and the consequent speeding up of the game, the five metre off-side distance between the two teams became 10 metres, and the replacement rule was superseded by various interchange rules, among other changes.

The laws of rugby union also changed during the 20th century, although less significantly than those of rugby league. In particular, goals from *marks* were abolished, kicks directly *into touch* from outside the *22 metre* line were penalised, new laws were put in place to determine who had possession following an inconclusive *ruck* or *maul*, and the lifting of players in *line-outs* was legalised.

In 1995, rugby union became an “open” game, that is one which allowed professional players. Although the original dispute between the two codes has now disappeared — and despite the fact that officials from both forms of rugby football have sometimes mentioned the possibility of re-unification — the rules of both codes and their culture have diverged to such an extent that such an event is unlikely in the foreseeable future.



*A player takes a free kick, while the opposition form a “wall”, in Association football*



*Players assemble at the line of scrimmage in an American football game.*

Association football is known generally as *soccer* where other codes of football are dominant, including: the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. American football is always *football* in the United States. In francophone Quebec, where Canadian football is more popular, the Canadian code is known as *football* and association football is known as *le soccer*.<sup>[98]</sup> Of the 45 national FIFA affiliates in which English is an official or primary language, most currently use *Football* in their organizations’ official names; the FIFA affiliates in Canada and the United States use *Soccer* in their names. A few FIFA affiliates have recently “normalized” to using “Football”, including:

- Australia’s association football governing body changed its name in 2005 from using “soccer” to “football”<sup>[99]</sup>
- New Zealand’s governing body also changed in 2007, saying “the international game is called football.”<sup>[100]</sup>
- Samoa changed from “Samoa Football (Soccer) Federation” to “Football Federation Samoa” in 2009.<sup>[101][102]</sup>

## 5 Use of the word “football”

For more details on this topic, see [Football \(word\)](#).

The word “*football*”, when used in reference to a specific game can mean any one of those described above. Because of this, much friendly controversy has occurred over the term *football*, primarily because it is used in different ways in different parts of the English-speaking world. Most often, the word “football” is used to refer to the code of football that is considered dominant within a particular region. So, effectively, what the word “football” means usually depends on where one says it.

## 6 Football codes board

### 6.1 Football codes development tree

## 7 Present day codes and families

### 7.1 Association football and descendants

Main article: [Variants of association football](#)

*These codes have in common the prohibition of the use of hands (by all players except the goalkeeper), unlike other codes where carrying or handling the ball is allowed*





An indoor soccer game at an open air venue in Mexico. The referee has just awarded the red team a free kick.

- **Association football**, also known as *football*, *soccer*, *footy* and *footie*
- **Indoor/basketball court variants**:
  - **Five-a-side football** — played throughout the world under various rules including:
    - **Futebol de Salão**
    - **Futsal** — the FIFA-approved five-a-side indoor game
    - **Minivoetbal** — the five-a-side indoor game played in East and West Flanders where it is extremely popular
    - **Papi fut** — the five-a-side game played in outdoor basketball courts (built with goals) in Central America.
  - **Indoor soccer** — the six-a-side indoor game, the Latin American variant (*fútbol rápido*, “fast football”) is often played in open air venues
  - **Masters Football** — six-a-side played in Europe by mature professionals (35 years and older)
- **Paralympic football** — modified game for athletes with a disability.<sup>[103]</sup> Includes:
  - **Football 5-a-side** — for visually impaired athletes
  - **Football 7-a-side** — for athletes with cerebral palsy
  - **Amputee football** — for athletes with amputations
  - **Deaf football** — for athletes with hearing impairments
  - **Powerchair football** — for athletes in electric wheelchairs
- **Beach soccer**, beach football or sand soccer — variant modified for play on sand
- **Street football** — encompasses a number of informal variants
- **Rush goalie** — a variation in which the role of the goalkeeper is more flexible than normal
- **Headers and Volleys** — where the aim is to score goals against a goalkeeper using only headers and volleys
- **Crab football** — players stand on their hands and feet and move around on their backs whilst playing
- **Swamp soccer** — the game as played on a swamp or bog field
- **Jorkyball**
- **Rushball**

There are also motorsport variations of the game.

## 7.2 Rugby school football and descendants

*These codes have in common the ability of players to carry the ball with their hands, and to throw it to teammates, unlike association football where the use of hands is prohibited by anyone except the goal keeper. They also feature various methods of scoring based upon whether the ball is carried into the goal area, or kicked through a target.*

- **Rugby football**
  - **Rugby league** — often referred to simply as “league”, and usually known simply as “football” or “footy” in the Australian states of New South Wales and Queensland.
    - **Rugby league nines** — variant for teams of reduced size.
  - **Rugby union**
    - **Mini rugby** a variety for children.
    - **Rugby sevens** and **Rugby tens** — variants for teams of reduced size.
  - **Beach rugby** — rugby played on sand
  - **Touch rugby** — generic name for forms of rugby football which do not feature tackles, one variant has been formalized
    - **Tag Rugby** — non-contact variant in which a flag attached to a player is removed to indicate a tackle.
- **Gridiron football**
  - **American football** — called “football” in the United States and Canada, and “gridiron” in Australia and New Zealand.





*Rugby sevens; Fiji v Cook Islands at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne*



*International rules football test match from the 2005 International Rules Series between Australia and Ireland at Telstra Dome, Melbourne, Australia.*

- Nine-man football, eight-man football, six-man football — variants played primarily by smaller high schools that lack enough players to field full teams.
- Street football/backyard football — played without equipment or official fields and with simplified rules
  - Touch football — non-tackle variants
  - Flag football — non-contact variant in which a flag attached to a player is removed to indicate a tackle.
- Canadian football — called simply “football” in Canada; “football” in Canada can mean either Canadian or American football depending on context. All of the variants listed for American football are also attested for Canadian football.
- Indoor football, arena football — indoor variants
- Auskick — a version of Australian rules designed by the AFL for young children
- Metro footy (or Metro rules footy) — a modified version invented by the USAFL, for use on gridiron fields in North American cities (which often lack grounds large enough for conventional Australian rules matches)
- Kick-to-kick — informal versions of the game
- 9-a-side footy — a more open, running variety of Australian rules, requiring 18 players in total and a proportionally smaller playing area (includes contact and non-contact varieties)
- Rec footy — “Recreational Football”, a modified non-contact variation of Australian rules, created by the AFL, which replaces tackles with tags
- Touch Aussie Rules — a non-tackle variation of Australian Rules played only in the United Kingdom
- Samoa rules — localised version adapted to Samoan conditions, such as the use of rugby football fields
- Masters Australian football (a.k.a. *Superules*) — reduced contact version introduced for competitions limited to players over 30 years of age
- Women’s Australian rules football — women’s competition played with a smaller ball and (sometimes) reduced contact

See also: Comparison of American football and rugby league, Comparison of American football and rugby union, Comparison of Canadian and American football and Comparison of rugby league and rugby union

### 7.3 Irish and Australian varieties

*These codes have in common the absence of an offside rule, the prohibition of continuous carrying of the ball (requiring a periodic bounce or solo (toe-kick), depending on the code) while running, handpassing by punching or tapping the ball rather than throwing it, and other traditions.*

- Australian rules football — officially known as “Australian football”, and informally as “football”, “footy” or “Aussie rules”. In some areas it is referred to as “AFL”, the name of the main organising body and competition
  - Ladies Gaelic football
- International rules football — a compromise code used for games between Gaelic and Australian Rules players

See also: Comparison of Australian rules football and Gaelic football

## 7.4 Surviving medieval ball games

### 7.4.1 Inside the UK

- The Haxey Hood, played on Epiphany in Haxey, Lincolnshire
- Shrove Tuesday games
  - Scoring the Hales in Alnwick, Northumberland
  - Royal Shrovetide Football in Ashbourne, Derbyshire
  - The Shrovetide Ball Game in Atherstone, Warwickshire
  - The Shrove Tuesday Football Ceremony of the Purbeck Marblers in Corfe Castle, Dorset
  - Hurling the Silver Ball at St Columb Major in Cornwall
  - The Ball Game in Sedgefield, County Durham
- In Scotland the Ba game (“Ball Game”) is still popular around Christmas and Hogmanay at:
  - Duns, Berwickshire
  - Scone, Perthshire
  - Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands

### 7.4.2 Outside the UK

- *Calcio Fiorentino* — a modern revival of Renaissance football from 16th century Florence.

## 7.5 Surviving UK school games



*Harrow football players after a game at Harrow School.*

Games still played at UK public (independent) schools:

- Eton field game
- Eton wall game
- Harrow football
- Winchester College football

## 7.6 Recent inventions and hybrid games

- **Keepie uppie** (keep up) — the art of juggling with a football using the feet, knees, chest, shoulders, and head.
  - **Footbag** — several variations using a small bean bag or sand bag as a ball, the trade marked term **hacky sack** is sometimes used as a generic synonym.
  - **Freestyle football** — participants are graded for their entertainment value and expression of skill.

### 7.6.1 Based on FA rules

- Cubbies
- Three sided football
- Triskelion

### 7.6.2 Based on rugby

- Force 'em backs a.k.a. **forcing back**, **forceman-back**

### 7.6.3 Hybrid games

- **Austus** — a compromise between Australian rules and **American football**, invented in **Melbourne** during World War II.
- **Bossaball** — mixes Association football and volleyball and gymnastics; played on inflatables and trampolines.
- **Footvolley** — mixes Association football and beach volleyball; played on sand
- **Football tennis** — mixes Association football and tennis
- **Kickball** — a hybrid of Association football and baseball, invented in the United States in about 1942.
- **Speedball** — a combination of American football, soccer, and basketball, devised in the United States in 1912.

- **Universal football** — a hybrid of Australian rules and rugby league, trialled in Sydney in 1933.<sup>[104]</sup>
- **Volata** — a game resembling Association football and European handball, devised by Italian fascist leader, Augusto Turati, in the 1920s.
- **Wheelchair rugby** — also known as **Murderball**, invented in Canada in 1977. Based on ice hockey and basketball rather than rugby.

Note: although similar to football and volleyball in some aspects, **Sepak takraw** has ancient origins and cannot be considered a hybrid game.

## 7.7 Tabletop games, video games and other recreations

### 7.7.1 Based on Association football

- Subbuteo
- Blow football
- **Table football** — also known as **foosball**, **table soccer**, **babyfoot**, **bar football** or **gettone**
- Fantasy football (soccer)
- Button football — also known as **Futebol de Mesa**, **Jogo de Botões**
- Penny football
- FIFA Video Games Series
- *Pro Evolution Soccer*
- *Mario Strikers*

### 7.7.2 Based on American football

- Paper football
- Blood Bowl
- Fantasy football (American)
- *Madden NFL*

### 7.7.3 Based on Australian football

- AFL video game series
  - List of AFL video games

### 7.7.4 Based on Rugby League football

- Sidhe's Rugby League series
  - Rugby League 3
- Australian Rugby League

## 8 See also

- Football field (unit of length)
- List of players who have converted from one football code to another
- Names for association football
- 1601 to 1725 in sports: Football
- Footgolf
- Underwater football

## 9 Notes

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Spencer, Ikiroid, Kungming2, CMacMillan, Colonies Chris, ACupOfCoffee, Ryanorulz, Konstable, Locriani, Darth Panda, Firetrap9254, AKMask, Ducaim, Mxcellent, Joey1898, Factoid Killer, Daddy Kindsoul, Marco79, Philc 0780, Suicidalhamster, Salmar, Rogermw, Mooncow, Can't sleep, clown will eat me, AntiVan, MisterHand, Jamse, TheGerm, Jorvik, Daniel rome18, Ioscus, Onorem, Skidude9950, Yidisheryid, EvelinaB, Cdh1984, Hippo43, Deeb, New World Man, LeContexte, 33311, Addshore, Grover cleveland, Krabstarr, BostonMA, Irish Souffle, Nibuod, Nakon, VegaDark, StephenMacmanus, MichaelBillington, Andymarczak, RaCha'ar, AdeMiami, Cryout, Isfalk, Wirbelwind, DylanW, Xagent86, DMacks, Jittero, Buidinhthiem, Kahuroa, Sayden, DDima, ElizabethFong, Mostlyharmless, Pilotguy, Kukini, Dane Sorensen, Nishkid64, Rory096, Robomaeyhem, Swatjester, Quendus, KrazyCaley, Platonides, Srikeit, Airmanrw, Molerat, Kuru, John, JackLumber, Acidburn24m, Markdr, Scientizzle, Ocee, Calum MacUisdean, KennyMan666, Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington, Shadowlynk, Skellious, Tim Q. 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Mrsmitiysuite, Eeekster, JoeC2004, Mathnarg, Fishiehelper2, Lartoven, Costlab, Okiefromokla, DeltaQuad, Holothurion, Gurpunk, Adamlcarter, Semajttam, Rmere, Mikaey, K33wud, Doepride922, Thingg, ThisMunkey, Aft14, PCHS-NJROTC, MelonBot, Paddy1991, MasterOfHisOwn-Domain, Novjunulo, InsteadOf, Boleyn, AlmightyClam, Maki d 2k7, Razheyz, Rror, DoctorHver, Ziggy55, Rreagan007, Angles theatre, HardRockDawg, Charleskelly, Grant's ghost, Tameamseo, Jaelanrodriguez, Yeryou, Zolstijers, Matejpostolka, Condonaloni, Soheid, Jothutton, Andrewtayeri, Tazbuc5, Celticsfan3324, Fladrif, TutterMouse, Info151, Nabablucknow, Speedy McG, Fieldday-sunday, CanadianLinuxUser, Redheadjew4, Bknouse99, Mnmazur, Nikhil17, Lihaas, Matthewwirwin28693, Michaelwuzthere, HonorTheKing, Ryan hays, Esasus, Lightbot, Krano, Steak, LuK3, Albeiror24, JohnnyPolo24, Legobot, GrumpyGuts, TheSuave, EchetusXe, Breezeonhold, Crispmuncher, Erb91, Washburnmav, THEN WHO WAS PHONE?, Brougham96, Cottonshirt, Guima102, IW.HG, Dickdock, 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