

# History

The sport originated in Victorian England, where it was played among the upper-class as an after-dinner [parlour game](#). It has been suggested that makeshift versions of the game were developed by British military officers in [India](#) around the 1860s or 1870s, who brought it back with them. A row of books stood up along the center of the table as a net, two more books served as rackets and were used to continuously hit a golf-ball.

The name "ping-pong" was in wide use before British manufacturer [J. Jaques & Son Ltd](#) trademarked it in 1901. The name "ping-pong" then came to describe the game played using the rather expensive Jaques's equipment, with other manufacturers calling it table tennis. A similar situation arose in the United States, where Jaques sold the rights to the "ping-pong" name to [Parker Brothers](#). Parker Brothers then enforced its trademark for the term in the 1920s, making the various associations change their names to "table tennis" instead of the more common, but trademarked, term.

The next major innovation was by James W. Gibb, a British table tennis enthusiast, who discovered novelty [celluloid](#) balls on a trip to the US in 1901 and found them ideal for the game. This was followed by E.C. Goode who, in 1901, invented the modern version of the racket by fixing a sheet of pimpled, or stippled, [rubber](#) to the wooden blade. Table tennis was growing in popularity by 1901 to the extent that tournaments were being organized, books were being written on the subject, and an unofficial world championship was held in 1902. In those early days, the scoring system was the same as in [lawn tennis](#).

Although both a "Table Tennis Association" and a "Ping Pong Association" existed by 1910, a new [Table Tennis Association](#) was founded in 1921, and renamed the [English Table Tennis Association](#) in 1926. The [International Table Tennis Federation](#) (ITTF) followed in 1926. London hosted the first official [World Championships](#) in 1926. In 1933, the [United States Table Tennis Association](#), now called USA Table Tennis, was formed.

In the 1930s, [Edgar Snow](#) commented in *[Red Star Over China](#)* that the Communist forces in the [Chinese Civil War](#) had a "passion for the English game of table tennis" which he found "bizarre". On the other hand, the popularity of the sport waned in the 1930s Soviet Union, partly because of the promotion of team and military sports, and partly because of a theory that the game had adverse health effects.

In the 1950s, paddles that used a rubber sheet combined with an underlying sponge layer changed the game dramatically, introducing greater spin and speed. These were introduced to Britain by sports goods manufacturer S.W. Hancock Ltd. The use of [speed glue](#) beginning in the mid-1980s increased the spin and speed even further, resulting in changes to the equipment to "slow the game down". Table tennis was introduced as an Olympic sport at the [Olympics in 1988](#).