

**Football** is a family of [team sports](#) that involve, to varying degrees, [kicking](#) a [ball](#) to score a [goal](#). Unqualified, [the word football](#) normally means the form of football that is the most popular where the word is used. Sports commonly called *football* include [association football](#) (known as *soccer* in North America, Ireland and Australia); [gridiron football](#) (specifically [American football](#) or [Canadian football](#)); [Australian rules football](#); [rugby union](#) and [rugby league](#); and [Gaelic football](#).<sup>[1]</sup> These various forms of football share to varying extents common origins and are known as "**football codes**".

There are a number of references to traditional, ancient, or prehistoric ball games played in many different parts of the world.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup> Contemporary codes of football can be traced back to [the codification of these games at English public schools](#) during the 19th century.<sup>[5][6]</sup> The expansion and cultural influence of the [British Empire](#) allowed these rules of football to spread to areas of British influence outside the directly controlled Empire.<sup>[7]</sup> By the end of the 19th 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>[8]</sup> In 1888, [The Football League](#) was founded in England, becoming the first of many professional football associations. During the 20th century, several of the various kinds of football grew to become some of the most popular team sports in the world.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Common elements

---



The action of kicking in (clockwise from upper left) association, gridiron, rugby, and Australian football

The various codes of football share certain common elements and can be grouped into two main classes of football: *carrying* codes like American football, Canadian football, Australian football, rugby union and rugby league, where the ball is moved about the field while being held in the hands or thrown, and *kicking* codes such as association football and Gaelic football, where the ball is moved primarily with the feet, and where handling is strictly limited.<sup>[10]</sup>

Common rules among the sports include:<sup>[11]</sup>

- 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 using only their body to move the ball, i.e. no additional equipment such as bats or sticks.

In all codes, common skills include [passing](#), [tackling](#), evasion of tackles, catching and [kicking](#).<sup>[10]</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.

## Present-day codes and families

---

### Association

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



An [indoor soccer](#) game at an open-air venue in Mexico.



The [referee](#) has just awarded the red team a free kick.

Street



football, Venice (1960)  
in [Yyteri Beach](#), [Pori](#), Finland

Women's [beach soccer](#) game at YBF 2010

*These codes have in common the prohibition of the use of hands (by all players except the goalkeeper, though outfield players can "throw-in" the ball when it goes out of play), unlike other codes where carrying or handling the ball by all players is allowed*

- Association football, also known as *football*, *soccer*, *footy* and *footie*
- Indoor/basketball court variants:
  - [Five-a-side football](#) – game for smaller teams, played under various rules including:
    - [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>[157]</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
- [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](#)
- [Walking football](#) – players are restricted to walking, to facilitate participation by older and less mobile players
- [Rushball](#)

The hockey game [bandy](#) has rules partly based on the association football rules and is sometimes nicknamed as 'winter football'.

There are also motorsport variations of the game.

## Rugby



[Rugby sevens](#); [Fiji](#) v [Wales](#) at the [2006 Commonwealth Games](#) in Melbourne  
Griffins RFC Kotka, the [rugby union](#) team from [Kotka](#), Finland, playing in the Rugby-7 Tournament in 2013

*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 during play is prohibited by anyone except the goalkeeper. They also feature various methods of scoring based upon whether the ball is carried into the goal area, or kicked above the goalposts.*

- [Rugby football](#)
  - [Rugby union](#)
    - [Mini rugby](#) a variety for children.
    - [Rugby sevens](#) and [Rugby tens](#) – variants for teams of reduced size.

- [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 sevens](#) and [Rugby league nines](#) – 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 formalised
- [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.
    - [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
    - [Flag football](#) – non-contact variant in which a flag attached to a player is removed to indicate a tackle.
    - [Touch football](#) – non-tackle variants
  - [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](#) – indoor variants, particularly [arena football](#)
  - [Wheelchair football](#) – variant adapted to play by athletes with [physical disabilities](#)

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](#)

## Irish and Australian



International rules football test match from the [2005 International Rules Series](#) between Australia and Ireland at [Telstra Dome](#), [Melbourne](#), Australia

*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
  - 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
- Gaelic football – Played predominantly in Ireland. Commonly referred to as "football" or "Gaelic"
  - Ladies Gaelic football
- International rules football – a compromise code used for international representative matches between Australian rules football players and Gaelic football players

See also: Comparison of Australian rules football and Gaelic football

## Medieval

- Calcio Fiorentino – a modern revival of Renaissance football from 16th century Florence.
- la Soule – a modern revival of French medieval football
- lelo burti – a Georgian traditional football game

### Britain

- 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

## Recent and hybrid

- 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.

### *Association*

- Three sided football
- Triskelion

### *Rugby*

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

### *Hybrid*

- 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.
- Cycle ball – a sport similar to association football played on bicycles
- Footgolf – golf played by kicking an association football.
- 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 about 1942.
- Underwater football – played in a pool, and the ball can only be played when underwater. The ball can be carried as in rugby.
- 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>[158]</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.

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

## Tabletop games, video games, and other recreations

### *Based on association football*

- Blow football
- Button football – also known as **Futebol de Mesa**, **Jogo de Botões**
- Fantasy football
- FIFA Video Games Series
- Lego Football

- Mario Strikers
- Penny football
- Pro Evolution Soccer
- Subbuteo
- Table football – also known as **foosball**, **table soccer**, **babyfoot**, **bar football** or **gettone**

*Based on American football*

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

*Based on Australian football*

- AFL video game series
  - List of AFL video games

*Based on rugby league football*

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