

**ball**<sup>1</sup> S1 W2

/bɔːl \$ bɒl/

noun

**1 | round object** TO PLAY WITH[countable] a round object that is thrown, kicked, or hit in a game or sport:

**throw/hit/kick/catch etc a ball**

*Weiskopf hit the ball 330 yards and a cheer went up.*

**a tennis/golf/cricket etc ball**

**2 | round shape** ROUND SHAPE[countable] something formed or rolled into a round shape:

*a ball of string*

*Shape the dough into balls.*

**3 | game/sport** [uncountable]any game or sport played with a ball, especially baseball or BASKETBALL:

*D'you want to go out and **play ball**?*

*Dad likes college ball.*

**4 | foot/hand the ball of the foot/hand**

the rounded part of the foot at the base of the toes, or the rounded part of the hand at the base of the thumb

**5 on the ball** (informal) INTELLIGENT

able to think or act quickly and intelligently:

*an assistant who's really on the ball*

**6 set/start/keep the ball rolling** START DOING SOMETHING

to start something happening:

*To start the ball rolling, the government was asked to contribute £1 million.*

**7 the ball is in somebody's court** DECIDE

it is their turn to take action or to reply:

*I've emailed him – now the ball's in his court.*

**8 | formal occasion** DANCE[countable] a large formal occasion at which people dance

**9 have a ball** (informal) ENJOY/LIKE DOING SOMETHING  
to have a very good time

**10 balls** [plural] (informal) (not polite)

a)

TESTICLES

b) BRAVE

courage:

*I didn't have the balls to ask.*

c) STUPID/NOT SENSIBLE (BrE) (spoken)

something that is stupid or wrong

**SYN** nonsense

*That's a load of balls!*

→ BALLS<sup>1</sup>

**11 a fast/good/long etc ball**

a ball that is thrown, hit, or kicked fast etc in a game or sport:

*He hit a long ball to right field.*

**12 | cricket no ball**

a ball that is thrown too high, low etc towards someone trying to hit it, in the game of CRICKET or ROUNDERS

**13 | baseball no ball** [countable]

a ball that the hitter does not try to hit, because it is not within the correct area

**14 the whole ball of wax** ALL/EVERYTHING (AmE) (informal)

the whole thing

**SYN** everything

**15 a ball of fire** (informal)

someone who has a lot of energy and enthusiasm

## 16 keep several/too many etc balls in the air

to struggle to deal with more than one problem or job at the same time:

*The company just won't be able to keep that many balls in the air.*

## 17 drop the ball (also take your eye off the ball)

to make a mistake when dealing with something because you stop thinking carefully or paying attention

## 18 ball-buster/ball-breaker (informal)

### a) PROBLEM

a problem that is very difficult to deal with

### b) CONTROLWOMAN

an offensive word for a woman who uses her authority over men

→ CANNONBALL,  
CRYSTAL BALL,  
WRECKING BALL,

→ **play ball** AT PLAY<sup>1</sup> (7)

## COLLOCATIONSSense 1 verbs

throw a ball *Suzy threw the ball to Matthew.*

catch a ball *He's useless at sport; he can't even catch a ball.*

hit a ball *He swung the bat back and hit the ball hard.*

kick a ball *Greg kicked the ball upfield to Will.*

bounce a ball *He was in the yard bouncing a ball against the wall.*

get the ball *Then the Cowboys got the ball again.*

miss a ball (= not catch or hit it) *I was trying hard but I kept missing the ball.*

a ball rolls *The ball just rolled past the hole.*

a ball flies/ sails *The ball flew over the goalkeeper's head and into the net.*

a ball bounces *In tennis, the ball must only bounce once.*

a ball rebounds (= hits something and moves back and away from it again) *The ball hit the goalpost and rebounded.*

## ADJECTIVES/NOUN + ball

a tennis/ cricket/ golf/ rugby etc ball *She was practising hitting golf balls.*

a ping-pong/ billiard/ snooker etc ball *He was bouncing around like a ping-pong ball.*

a beach ball (= a large light ball used on the beach) *Dad, will you blow up the beach ball?*

## ball + NOUN

a ball game *He's always watching ball games on TV.*

ball skills *Practising ball skills helps a child's coordination.*

### Word origin

Sense 1-7, 10-17:

**Date:** 1200–1300

**Language:** Old Norse

**Origin:** *böllr*

Sense 8-9:

**Date:** 1600–1700

**Language:** French

**Origin:** *bal*, from *Old French baller* 'to dance', from Late Latin *ballare*, from Greek *ballizein*

# ball<sup>2</sup>

verb

[transitive]

**1** (also **ball up**) to make something form a small round shape:

*Ray balled up his fists.*

**2** (*AmE*) (informal) (not polite) to have sex with a woman

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