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Soccer Is a Kick!



Written by Anthony Curran

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A group of girls play soccer in Arizona.

The World's Game

Soccer is one of the oldest and most popular sports in the world. In the United States, the sport is called *soccer*. In most other places, it's known as *football*.



Goalkeepers (in caps) defend their goals in matches in 1905 (top) and 1930 (bottom).

Word Wise

The rules for soccer as we play it today were created in 1863. The game was called *Association Football*. British schoolboys called the new game *assoccer* (AY-sawk-ur). The nickname was soon shortened to just *soccer*.



A soccer field, or “pitch,” has a goal at each end.

The Basics

In soccer, two teams play with a round ball on a large field. Each team tries to put the ball into the other team’s **goal**.



A goalie focuses on the ball as he defends his team's goal.

Goalies

A player called a *goalkeeper*, or *goalie*, guards each team's goal. Goalies are the only players who can touch the ball with their arms and hands on the field.



Instead of using hands, players use their chests, feet, heads, and legs.

Moving the Ball

The other players move the ball around the field by kicking it. They can also “trap” the ball by stopping it with their feet, knees, or chests. They can even “head” a ball in the air using their heads!



A player in the Under 11 league shows his dribbling skills in a match in Cape Town, South Africa.

Players run with the ball by **dribbling** it. They kick the ball to themselves with short, quick taps.

Offense and Defense

Whenever a team has the ball and is trying to score, they are on offense. The team playing defense tries to keep the offense from scoring. They also try to take the ball away from the other team. Each team plays offense and defense many times during a **match**.



Do You Know?

People were already playing soccer-like games more than 2,000 years ago. Ancient China, Greece, and Rome were all big fans of sports in which players kicked a ball around a field.



Fouls

The referees make sure the players follow the rules. Players are not allowed to push, hold, or trip members of the other team. A referee can call a **foul** if a player breaks a rule. The referee can give the other team a free kick or a penalty kick.



Cleats and shin guards are the only special equipment most players use.

Equipment

Players often wear **cleats** on their feet so they can run on the grass without slipping. Players also wear shin guards to protect their legs.



A player throws the ball back into play from the side of the field.

Out-of-Bounds

If a ball goes out-of-bounds, a player throws it back into play. The player uses a special throw that starts with both hands behind the head.



A player prepares to make a shot at the goal.

Scoring and Winning

A team gets one point for each goal it scores. At the end of the game, the team with the most goals wins.

If the game ends in a tie, the teams may keep playing until someone scores. They may also take turns doing penalty kicks to decide the winner.



Players from different teams shake hands after playing a match.

Soccer Is Good for You

Soccer is great exercise and lots of fun to play! Players learn how to work together and be good sports.

Do You Know?

Soccer players need to be very healthy to chase the ball around the field.

A professional soccer player often runs more than 7 miles (11.2 km) in a game.



Glossary

cleats (<i>n.</i>)	athletic shoes with studs sticking out of the bottoms that help prevent the wearer from slipping (p. 12)
dribbling (<i>v.</i>)	quickly moving the ball forward in soccer using repeated bounces or taps with the feet (p. 9)
foul (<i>n.</i>)	an action in a sport that is against the rules and for which a player receives a penalty (p. 11)
goal (<i>n.</i>)	the place where a ball or puck must end up to score points in a game (p. 6)
match (<i>n.</i>)	a contest or game (p. 10)
tie (<i>n.</i>)	the outcome of a game in which competitors finish with the same number of points (p. 14)

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