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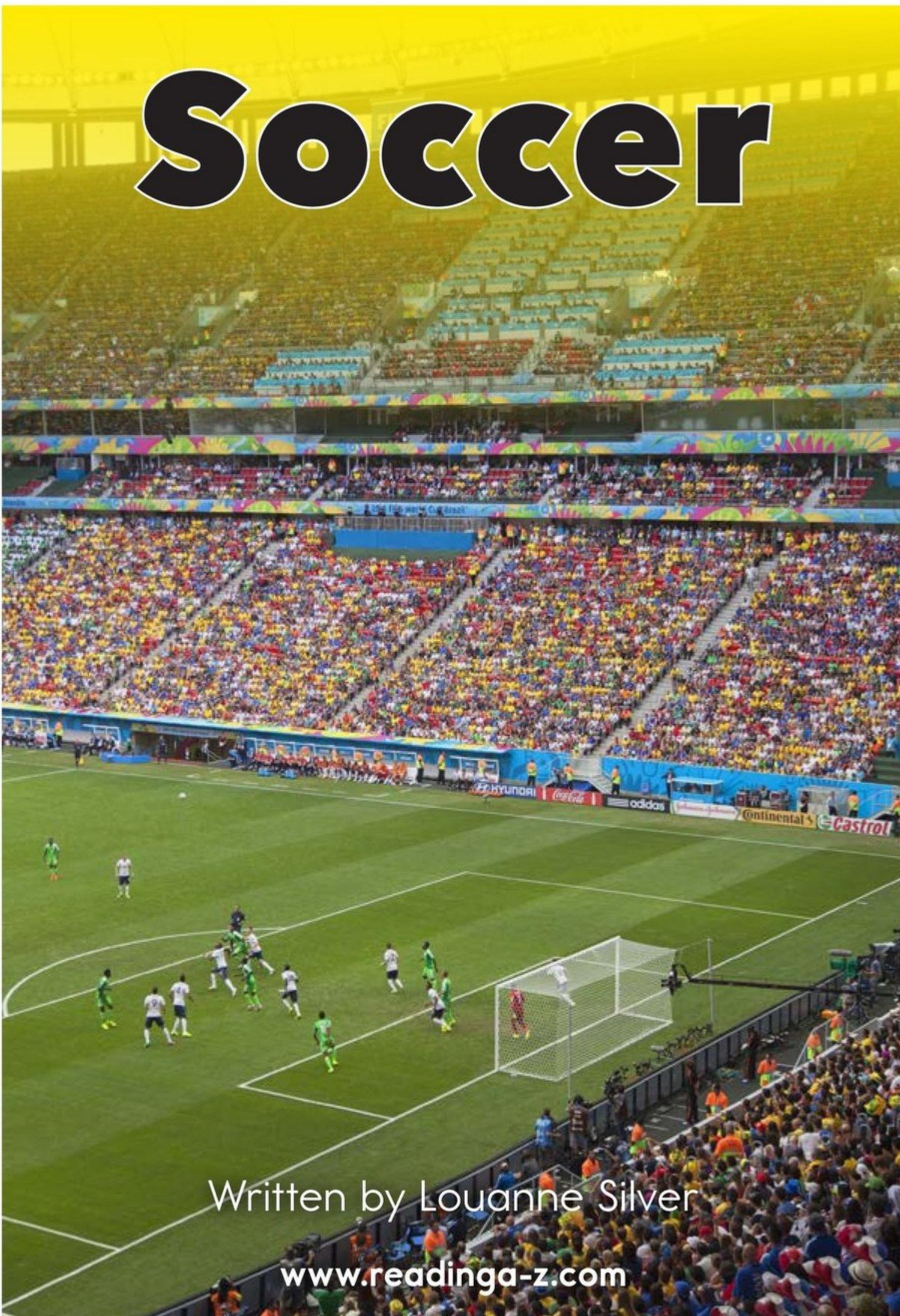
# Soccer



Written by Louanne Silver

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

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## Focus Question

What makes soccer different from other popular sports?



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South China (in red) battled a team from the Philippines in Manila in 2015. China won the match 6-1.

## The Beautiful Game

For thousands of years, people around the world have enjoyed playing games. Many of these games involve kicking a ball toward another team's goal. Today, soccer is by far the most popular of these games. Why is the sport so loved by people everywhere?

People can play soccer outdoors in all kinds of weather. The sport is easy to learn, and it helps players stay **fit**. The only **equipment** you need is a ball. Best of all, it's great fun!

## The Beginning of Soccer

People played early types of soccer in Britain starting in the eighth century. The game, which was called *football*, was much rougher back then, and there weren't many rules. Paved school playgrounds in the early 1900s weren't good for playing the rough types of soccer, so new rules were invented. Soccer became a regular part of school because of the **teamwork** needed to play.

Modern soccer began in England in 1863 when soccer—also called *association football*—and rugby football became two different sports. Soccer players mainly move the ball with their feet, while rugby players also use their hands.

Modern soccer rules began in the late 1930s and were updated in 1997.

"Mob football" was played long ago. Entire villages often played against each other.



## Soccer Around the World



■ call the game *football*

■ call the game *soccer*

■ call it something else

The game is called *soccer* in North America and something similar in several other places. Italy calls the sport *calcio*, and South Korea calls it *chukku*. Most of the world calls it *football*.

## Soccer Around the World

People in almost every country play soccer. The sport is popular among both adults and children. People of every background and religion love soccer.

Most people think of soccer as an outdoor sport, but it can also be played indoors.

Men's soccer has been part of all but two Summer Olympic Games. Women's soccer was added in 1996.

## All Levels of Play

About 240 million people in more than 300,000 clubs play soccer. **Estimates** place the number of fans as high as 3.5 billion. That's half the total number of people on Earth!

FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) is in charge of **professional** soccer. Founded in 1904, FIFA had 209 member countries as of early 2015. The countries have teams that **compete** for a chance to play in the World Cup, a competition to see which team is the best in the world. Thirty-two teams play in the World Cup, which takes place every four years.



Mario Gotze of Germany scored the winning goal past Sergio Romero of Argentina in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. The final score was 1-0.

In the United States, the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), or U.S. Soccer, is the main soccer group. There are professional, men's, women's, and children's soccer teams.

Soccer is popular among students of all ages, and you don't even have to be on a team to enjoy the sport. As few as two people can play the game in a park or on a playground.



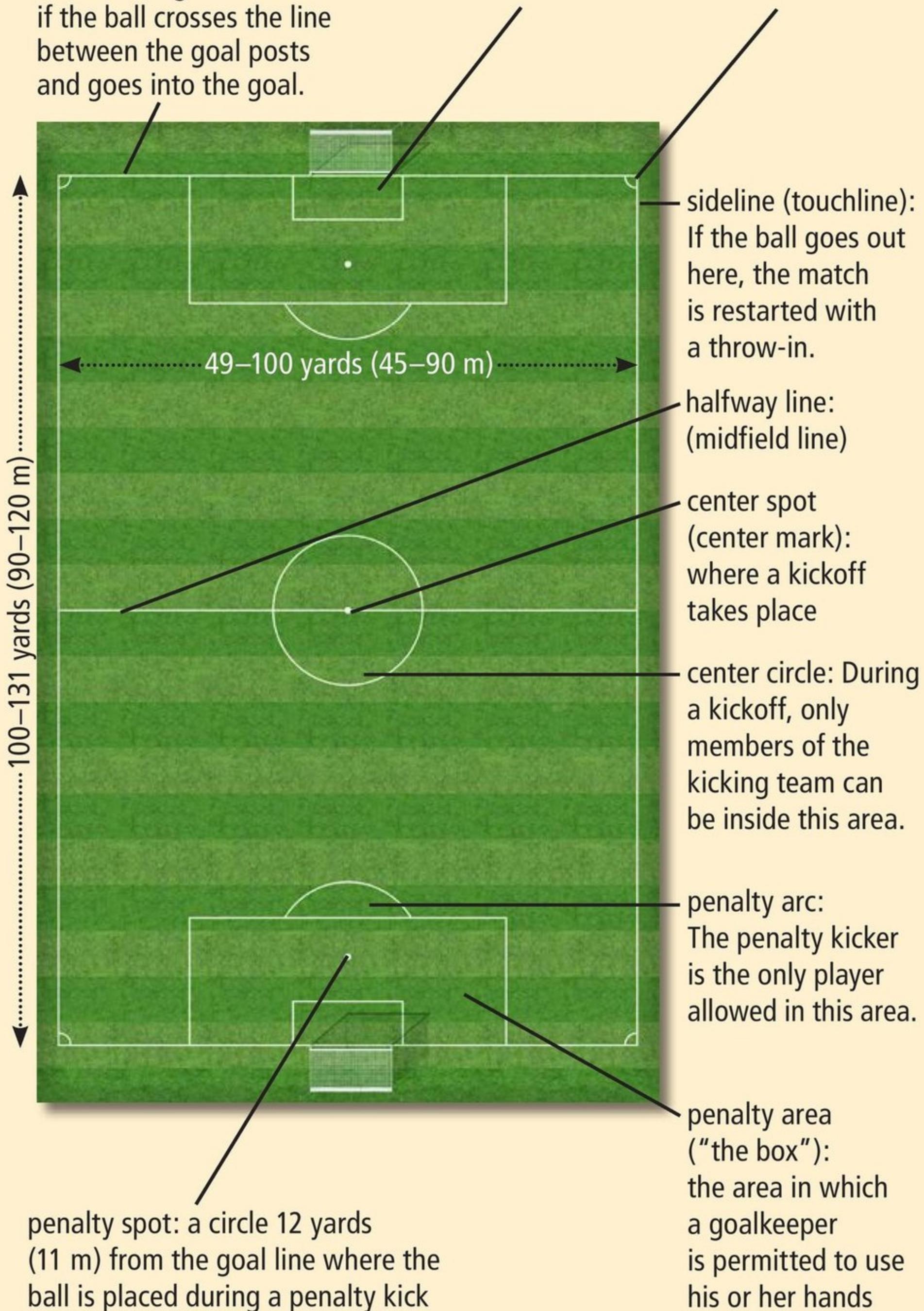
Some youth teams play internationally. A Colorado team (blue) played against the Yuwa Supergoats (red), a girls' soccer team from India, in Blaine, Minnesota, on July 12, 2014.

## Soccer Pitch (field)

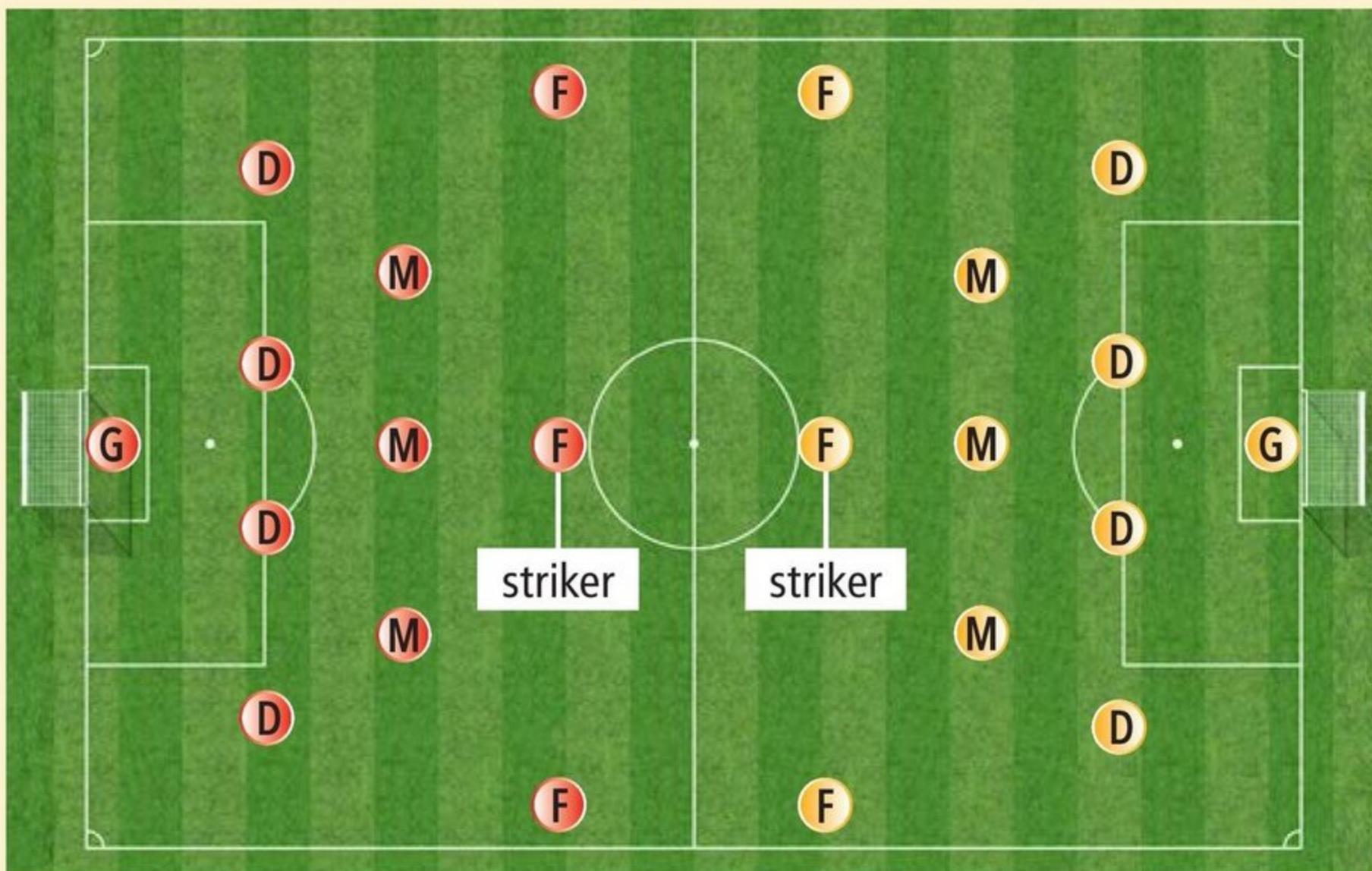
goal line (endline): If the ball crosses this line, a goal kick or corner kick is awarded. A goal is awarded if the ball crosses the line between the goal posts and goes into the goal.

goal box: the area in which a goal kick must be taken

corner arc: where a corner kick must be taken from



## Soccer Playing Positions



G – goalie, D – defender, M – midfielder , F – forward

## Playing Soccer

A soccer field, called a *pitch*, has a net at each end. Each team tries to score goals by getting the ball into the other team's net. They also try to stop the other team from scoring.

A soccer team has eleven players—one goalie and ten field players. The field players are divided into three kinds of players. Forwards mainly try to score goals. Defenders mainly try to keep the other team from scoring. Midfielders switch between these two positions.

Field players are only allowed to touch the ball with their feet, legs, chest, and head. The goalie can use his or her hands when playing within the **penalty** area. The goalie's main job is to stop any balls that get past his or her team's defenders.

The **match** starts with a kickoff. The ball is placed on the center spot, and a member of the starting team passes the ball to a teammate. The starting team tries to move the ball down the pitch and score a goal. If ball goes out of **bounds**, the other team gains control of the ball. If the other team moves the ball out of bounds, the starting team keeps control of the ball.

In some cases, when a player gets too rough with a player on the other team, the other team is given a free penalty kick.

Goalies need to be quick and often need to dive for the ball to prevent a goal.



Field players must learn many skills to play well, including kicking, dribbling, passing, trapping, heading, and shooting to score a goal. They must also know how to get the ball away from a player with different kinds of tackles.

Players need to be in good shape to play well. Field players can cover up to 7 miles (12 km) during a match. They must be able to start and stop quickly. They need to have enough strength to last the entire match.



### Soccer Skills



- 1 Dribbling—moving the ball small distances with the feet
- 2 Tackling—getting the ball from a player on the other team
- 3 Heading—using the head to move the ball
- 4 Passing—moving the ball to another player
- 5 Shooting—kicking the ball to score a goal



## Soccer Greats

Pelé is considered the greatest soccer player in the history of the sport. He played center forward for Brazil's national team from 1956 to 1977. Although he stopped competing more than thirty-five years ago, his record of 1,281 goals during his career still stands.

Another bright star of men's soccer is Lionel Messi, the captain of Argentina's national team. Messi is known for his lightning speed and amazing control. He was the first player to win FIFA's award for the best male soccer player four times.

Mia Hamm was the first big star of women's soccer. She helped the United States win two Women's World Cups, including the first one, in 1991. She also won two Olympic gold medals.

Marta Vieira da Silva is a Brazilian forward. She has been named FIFA World Player of the Year five times in a row, starting in 2006. She was also the top scorer and Most Valuable Player of the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup.



Mia Hamm



Marta Vieira da Silva



Youth soccer is very popular with all ages and abilities. On some teams, girls and boys compete in soccer matches together.

## Getting Involved

Students who don't already play soccer can find out if their city or town has a soccer club. Clubs may have teams for different age groups. A coach will help build skills and teach the rules of the game. It's a great way to make new friends and learn about fair play and teamwork. Many students play just for fun, and others work toward playing at a higher level when they're older. Either way, they'll be taking part in an exciting sport that's loved by people all around the world.

## Glossary

<b>bounds</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	lines that mark or define an area; boundaries (p. 11)
<b>compete</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to do something for the purpose of winning (p. 7)
<b>equipment</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	tools used in work or play (p. 4)
<b>estimates</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	rough calculations (p. 7)
<b>fit</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	strong and healthy (p. 4)
<b>match</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a contest or game (p. 11)
<b>penalty</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a punishment for breaking a rule (p. 11)
<b>professional</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	earning money for taking part in an activity, rather than doing it purely for pleasure (p. 7)
<b>teamwork</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the cooperative effort of people in groups (p. 5)

# Words to Know

bounds  
compete  
equipment  
estimates  
fit

match  
penalty  
professional  
teamwork

Front cover: A goalie leaps to catch the ball.

Title page: Thousands of fans crowd a huge stadium in Brazil to watch a World Cup match in 2014.

Page 3: Professional players collide during a Ukrainian league soccer match.

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## Correlation

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