



Soccer

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,550

Connections

Writing

Choose any country from FIFA's 209 member countries. Research to learn about that country's national team, including its history, record, and famous players. Write a report sharing your findings.

Social Studies

Make a timeline showing the development of soccer, starting with the eighth century and continuing to today. Compare your timeline with a partner's.

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Soccer



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Focus Question

How has soccer developed and changed into the modern game we know today?

Words to Know

administrators	formidable
anticipating	fostered
avid	phenomenon
conditioning	stamina
endurance	standardized
enticed	transcends

Front cover: Spanish players in a semifinal championship match in Barcelona, Spain, in 2015.

Title page: A soccer player dribbles toward defenders.

Page 3: Playing for Italy, Patrice Evra gets a header playing against Cristiano Ronaldo of Spain.

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Spectacular Sports
Level X Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL X

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Zinedine Zidane (left) makes the winning goal against Portugal. He played for the French national team from 1989 to 2006.

An Amazing Sport

The date is June 28, 2000. The French and Portuguese national soccer teams are competing in the Euro 2000 championship. The score is tied at 1-1, and the match has gone into extra time. With only three minutes left, a referee awards a penalty kick to France. Now it's up to superstar Zinedine Zidane. He calms himself before confidently kicking the ball into the upper left corner of the net to give France the win. The crowd is still cheering wildly as Zidane runs a partial victory lap and teammates surround him in a group embrace.

Thrilling moments like this one have **enticed** millions of soccer enthusiasts to pick up a soccer ball and experience the game for themselves. Fans have become **avid** spectators, too, watching matches on television or at one of thousands of stadiums around the world. Soccer is a spectacular sport for people of all ages in every country.

Playing at All Levels

As the most popular sport in the world, soccer—also called *association football*—is played by about 240 million people in more than 300,000 clubs. Estimates place the number of fans as high as 3.5 billion—half the total number of people on Earth!

Professional soccer is governed by FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), which was founded in 1904 and is based in Switzerland. As of early 2015, FIFA had 209 member countries, each of which has a national team. FIFA organizes international competitions between teams that hope to advance to the World Cup, which takes place every four years for men and women. Thirty-two men's teams and twenty-four women's teams are selected to play in the World Cup. Millions of people watch the final matches.



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



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

The United States Soccer Federation (USSF), commonly referred to as U.S. Soccer, is a member of FIFA and governs all soccer leagues in the United States, including amateur, professional, men's, women's, youth, and Paralympic teams. Soccer is popular among students at every level, from elementary school to college.

Players don't even have to be members of a team to enjoy the sport. As few as two people can grab a ball and play the game in a park or practically any other open area, which is part of soccer's widespread appeal.

Soccer is played in almost every country around the world. The sport **transcends** national borders as well as cultural and income differences in both industrialized and developing countries.

Although most people associate the sport with outdoor fields, some people play the sport indoors in a gymnasium or on an ice hockey rink covered with artificial turf.

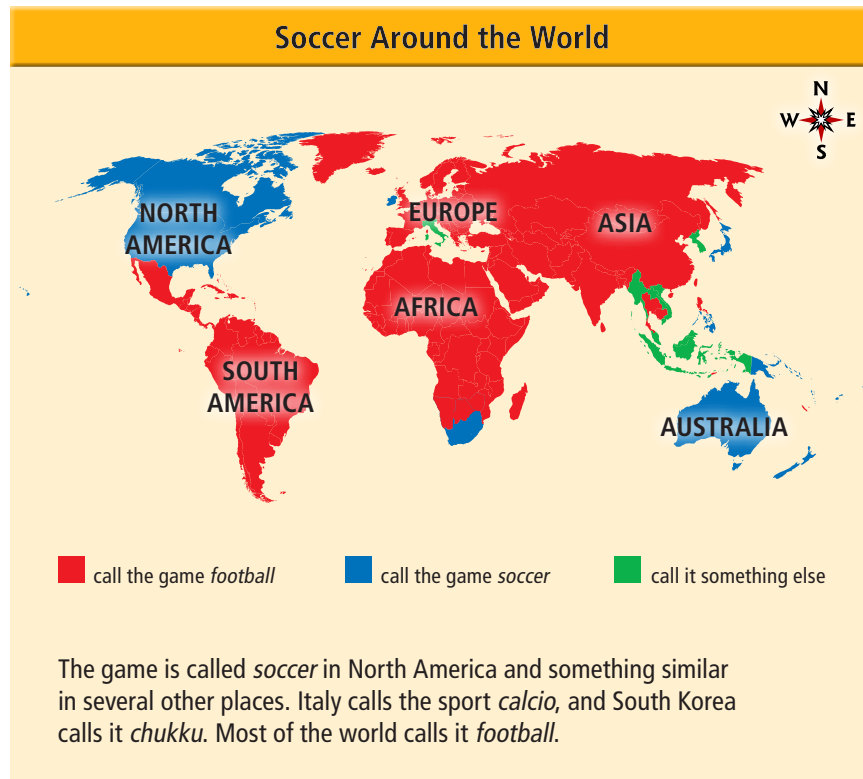
Men's soccer has been included in all but one Summer Olympic Games since 1900. Women's soccer was added to the Games in 1996.

Playing the Game

During a soccer match, two teams compete on the pitch, or field. Each team attempts to score goals by getting the ball into their opponent's net, and they also attempt to block their opponents from scoring.

A soccer team consists of eleven players—one goalkeeper (goalie) and ten field players who play different positions to cover different parts of the pitch. Defenders primarily play defense and try to keep their opponents from scoring. Midfielders frequently switch back and forth between offense and defense, while forwards primarily play offense. The center forward, or striker, is generally the leading scorer on the team and the most **formidable** offensive player. Regardless of position, all players need to be prepared to switch quickly between offense and defense. Players besides the goalkeeper can only touch the ball with their feet, legs, chest, and head. The goalkeeper can use his or her hands within the penalty area.

The match begins with a kickoff. The ball is placed on the center spot, and a member of the starting team kicks, or passes, the ball to a teammate. The starting team tries to move the ball down the pitch and score a goal by getting the ball past the other team's goalkeeper and into the net.



Soccer Pitch and Player Positions

The diagram illustrates a soccer pitch with various lines and player positions. Key areas and lines are labeled with leader lines:

- 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.
- penalty area ("the box"):** the area in which a goalkeeper is permitted to use his or her hands
- corner arc:** where a corner kick must be taken from
- sideline (touchline):** If the ball goes out here, the match is restarted with a throw-in.
- center spot (center mark):** where a kickoff takes place
- halfway line: (midfield line)**
- center circle:** During a kickoff, only members of the kicking team can be inside this area.
- penalty arc:** The penalty kicker is the only player allowed in this area.
- penalty spot:** a circle 12 yards (11 m) from the goal line where the ball is placed during a penalty kick
- goal box:** the area in which a goal kick must be taken

Player positions are indicated by letters in colored circles:

- G** – goalie
- D** – defender
- M** – midfielder
- F** – forward

Dimensions are shown on the left:

- Width: 49–100 yards (45–90 m)
- Length: 100–131 yards (90–120 m)

Soccer is a demanding sport that requires training and **conditioning** to play well. A soccer pitch is 100–131 yards (90–120 m) long and 49–100 yards (45–90 m) wide. Pitch sizes are different depending on whether the field is an international playing field, an Olympic field, or a youth or high school field. Whatever the size, a pitch is large compared to the playing fields of most other sports. Matches consist of two 45-minute halves with only one 15-minute break. During a match, players can cover up to 7 miles (12 km), most of it at a fast pace. Players train to develop **stamina** and **endurance** as well as flexibility to avoid injuries and muscular strength to hold off players who are trying to gain control of the ball.

Soccer players are always working to polish their skills and master the game. Goalkeepers are responsible for stopping any balls that get past their team's defenders. They have to be strong, tough, fast, and not afraid of getting hurt.

Field players must master many skills, including kicking, dribbling, passing, heading, shooting to score a goal, and getting the ball away from an opponent with different kinds of tackles.

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

The Birth of Soccer

People played soccer in the British Isles from the eighth to the nineteenth centuries. The number of players wasn't **standardized**, and entire villages sometimes played. The game was less organized and more violent, even to the point of permitting kicking and otherwise physically attacking an opponent without penalty. These rough early versions of soccer were popular, but they also faced opposition from authorities who wanted this violent form of recreation stopped.



Long ago, one version of the game permitted any tactic besides murder to get the ball to its target.

Soccer experienced a big shift at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when educators brought the game into public schools, which developed different rules for widely different playing fields. For example, paved school playgrounds required fewer rough-and-tumble tactics and more dribbling skill. Schools favored different styles of play; some preferred the use of feet (soccer), while others wanted to include the use of hands (rugby).

As school **administrators** noticed the value of teamwork and cooperation that the sport fostered, soccer became a standard part of school.

In 1863, Cambridge University developed rules to unify the ways that schools played. The rules banned the use of hands, and because of this, football (soccer) split off from rugby football. Soccer's first organization, the Football Association, was founded on October 26, 1863. It had fifty member clubs by 1871, and it held its first competition, the FA Cup, the following year. Outside of Great Britain, the sport gained steam in last decade of the 1800s and beyond. FIFA was founded in 1904 and had twenty-one national associations by 1912, thirty-six by 1925, and forty-one by 1930, when the first World Cup was played. In the late 1930s, soccer rules from the 1800s were modernized and reorganized. The rules were similarly revised in 1997. Today, soccer is a worldwide **phenomenon** whose appeal continues to grow.

British soccer players in 1875 under the Football Association's rules



Soccer Legends

Soccer has had a wealth of gifted players over the years. Pelé is widely considered the greatest soccer player in the history of the sport and is the only player ever to have played on teams that won the World Cup three times. Playing as striker for Brazil's national team, he was active from 1956 to 1977, scoring 1,281 goals in 1,363 matches, a world record that still stands. Pelé's gifts included an amazing talent for **anticipating** players' movements.

Playing as a forward for seventeen years, Mia Hamm helped the United States win the first FIFA Women's World Cup in 1991 as well as the 1999 Women's World Cup. She won gold medals at the 1996 and 2004 Summer Olympic Games and was included on FIFA's 2004 list of the "125 Greatest Living Soccer Players." In addition to her formidable soccer triumphs, Hamm has also been a powerful role model for girls aspiring to succeed in sports.



Everyone Can Play

World Cup soccer is far from the only way to play the game. Some players choose futsal, a fast-paced indoor version of soccer. Others prefer to play on the shore and choose beach soccer. Most players, however, prefer something a little more traditional and opt for old-fashioned soccer.

There are many ways for students to get involved. They can find out if their city or town has a soccer organization with teams for different age groups. Coaches will help young players build handling skills and learn offensive and defensive strategies. Playing soccer is a great way to learn about sportsmanship and teamwork—ideals that are important both on and off the soccer field. Millions of cheering fans and players around the world can't be wrong—the spectacular sport of soccer promises excitement for everyone.

Youth leagues are popular around the world. Here, a boys' match is underway in Bucharest, Romania.



Glossary

administrators (<i>n.</i>)	people who run an organization, such as a company, school, or hospital (p. 13)
anticipating (<i>v.</i>)	expecting something in the future, often with excitement (p. 14)
avid (<i>adj.</i>)	showing a great interest in or desire for something; eager (p. 4)
conditioning (<i>n.</i>)	the work of becoming better or stronger at something through training and exercise (p. 10)
endurance (<i>n.</i>)	the ability to deal with strain or suffering over a period of time (p. 10)
enticed (<i>v.</i>)	attracted or tempted someone by offering something pleasant (p. 4)
formidable (<i>adj.</i>)	very impressive or powerful; inspiring respect or fear due to size, strength, or ability (p. 8)
fostered (<i>v.</i>)	encouraged the development of something (p. 13)
phenomenon (<i>n.</i>)	a remarkable event or occurrence; someone or something that is very impressive or popular because of an unusual ability or quality (p. 13)
stamina (<i>n.</i>)	the strength or energy to do something for a long time (p. 10)
standardized (<i>v.</i>)	caused something to agree or conform to a set of rules (p. 12)
transcends (<i>v.</i>)	goes beyond or surpasses limits or expectations (p. 7)