

Football

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Football

Football refers to a number of [sports](#) that involve, to varying degrees, [kicking](#) a [ball](#) with the foot to score a [goal](#). The most popular of these sports worldwide is [association football](#), more commonly known as just "football" or "soccer". Unqualified, the word [football](#) applies to whichever form of football is the most popular in the regional context in which the word appears, including association football, as well as [American football](#), [Australian rules football](#), [Canadian football](#), [Gaelic football](#), [rugby league](#), [rugby union](#),^[1] and other related games. These variations of football are known as football codes.

Various forms of football can be identified in history, often as popular [peasant](#) games. Contemporary codes of football can be traced back to [the codification of these games at English public schools](#) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The influence and power of the [British Empire](#) allowed these rules of football to spread to areas of British influence outside of the directly controlled Empire, though by the end of the nineteenth 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. In 1888, [The Football League](#) was founded in England, becoming the first of many [professional](#) football competitions. During the twentieth century, several of the various kinds of football grew to become among the most popular team sports in the world.



History

The [Ancient Greeks](#) and [Romans](#) are known to have played many ball games, some of which involved the use of the feet. The Roman game [harpastum](#) is believed to have been adapted from a [Greek](#) team game known as "ἐπίσκυρος" ([Episkyros](#)) or "φαινίνδα" (phaininda), which is mentioned by a Greek playwright, [Antiphanes](#) (388–311 BC) and later referred to by the [Christian](#) theologian [Clement of Alexandria](#) (c.150-c.215 AD). These games appear to have resembled [rugby football](#).^{[11][12][13][14][15]} The Roman politician [Cicero](#) (106–43 BC) describes the case of a man who was killed whilst having a shave when a ball was kicked into a barber's shop. Roman ball games already knew the air-filled ball, the [follis](#). The Ancient Greek game of Episkyros recognised as an early form of football by FIFA.

According to [FIFA](#) the competitive game [cuju](#) is the earliest form of football for which there is scientific evidence.^[19] It occurs namely as an exercise in a military manual from the third and second centuries BC. Documented evidence of an activity resembling football can be found in the Chinese [military](#) manual [Zhan Guo Ce](#) compiled between the 3rd century and 1st century BC. It describes a practice known as [cuju](#) (蹴鞠, literally "kick ball"), which originally involved kicking a leather ball through a small hole in a piece of [silk](#) cloth which was fixed on bamboo canes and hung about 9 m above ground.

During the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), cuju games were standardized and rules were established. Variations of this game later spread to Japan and Korea, known as kemari and chuk-guk respectively. Later, another type of goal posts emerged, consisting of just one goal post in the middle of the field.

The Japanese version of cuju is [kemari](#) (蹴鞠), and was developed during the [Asuka period](#). This is known to have been played within the Japanese imperial court in [Kyoto](#) from about 600 AD. In kemari several people stand in a circle and kick a ball to each other, trying not to let the ball drop to the ground (much like [keepie uppie](#)). The game appears to have died out sometime before the mid-19th century. It was revived in 1903 and is now played at a number of festivals.

There are a number of references to [traditional](#), [ancient](#), or [prehistoric](#) ball games, played by [indigenous peoples](#) in many different parts of the world. For example, in 1586, men from a ship commanded by an English explorer named [John Davis](#), went ashore to play a form of football with [Inuit](#) (Eskimo) people in [Greenland](#). There are later accounts of an Inuit game played on ice, called Aqsaqtuk. Each match began with two teams facing each other in parallel lines, before attempting to kick the ball through each other team's line and then at a goal. In 1610, [William Strachey](#), a colonist at [Jamestown, Virginia](#) recorded a game played by [Native Americans](#), called Pahsaheman.

On the [Australian continent](#) several tribes of [indigenous people](#) played kicking and catching games with stuffed balls which have been generalised by historians as [Marn Grook](#) ([Djab Wurrung](#) for "game ball"). The earliest historical account is an [anecdote](#) from the 1878 book by [Robert Brough-Smyth](#), *The Aborigines of Victoria*, in which a man called Richard Thomas is quoted as saying, in about 1841 in [Victoria, Australia](#), that he had witnessed Aboriginal people playing the game: "Mr Thomas describes how the foremost player will drop kick a ball made from the skin of a [possum](#) and how other players leap into the air in order to catch it." Some historians have theorised that Marn Grook was one of the [origins of Australian rules football](#).

The [Māori](#) in [New Zealand](#) played a game called [Ki-o-rahi](#) consisting of teams of seven players play on a circular field divided into zones, and score points by touching the 'pou' (boundary markers) and hitting a central 'tupu' or target.

[Games played in Mesoamerica](#) with rubber balls by indigenous peoples are also well-documented as existing since before this time, but these had more similarities to [basketball](#) or [volleyball](#), and since their influence on modern football games is minimal, most do not class them as football. Northeastern American Indians, especially the [Iroquois](#) Confederation, played a game which made use of net racquets to throw and catch a small ball; however, although a ball-goal foot game, [lacrosse](#) (as its modern descendant is called) is likewise not usually classed as a form of «football».

Football Association

During the early 1860s, there were increasing attempts in England to unify and reconcile the various public school games. In 1862, J. C. Thring, who had been one of the driving forces behind the original Cambridge Rules, was a master at [Uppingham School](#) and he issued his own rules of what he called "The Simplest Game" (these are also known as the Uppingham Rules). In early October 1863 another new revised version of the Cambridge Rules was drawn up by a seven member committee representing former pupils from Harrow, Shrewsbury, Eton, Rugby, Marlborough and Westminster.

At the [Freemasons' Tavern](#), Great Queen Street, London on the evening of October 26, 1863, representatives of several football clubs in the [London Metropolitan area](#) met for the inaugural meeting of [The Football Association](#) (FA). The aim of the Association was to establish a single unifying code and regulate the playing of the game among its members. Following the first meeting, the public schools were invited to join the association. All of them declined, except Charterhouse and Uppingham. In total, six meetings of the FA were held between October and December 1863. After the third meeting, a draft set of rules were published. However, at the beginning of the fourth meeting, attention was drawn to the recently published Cambridge Rules of 1863. The Cambridge rules differed from the draft FA rules in two significant areas; namely running with (carrying) the ball and hacking (kicking opposing players in the shins). The two contentious FA rules were as follows:

IX. A player shall be entitled to run with the ball towards his adversaries' goal if he makes a fair catch, or catches the ball on the first bound; but in case of a fair catch, if he makes his mark he shall not run. X. If any player shall run with the ball towards his adversaries' goal, any player on the opposite side shall be at liberty to charge, hold, trip or hack him, or to wrest the ball from him, but no player shall be held and hacked at the same time.

At the fifth meeting it was proposed that these two rules be removed. Most of the delegates supported this, but [F. M. Campbell](#), the representative from [Blackheath](#) and the first FA treasurer, objected. He said: "hacking is the true football". However, the motion to ban running with the ball in hand and hacking was carried and Blackheath withdrew from the FA. After the final meeting on 8 December, the FA published the "[Laws of Football](#)", the first comprehensive set of rules for the game later known as [Association Football](#). The term "soccer", in use since the late 19th century, derives from an abbreviation of "Association".

The first FA rules still contained elements that are no longer part of association football, but which are still recognisable in other games (such as Australian football and rugby football): for instance, a player could make a fair catch and claim a mark, which entitled him to a free kick; and if a player touched the ball behind the opponents' goal line, his side was entitled to a free kick at goal, from 15 yards (13.5 metres) in front of the goal line.