Soccer

**History**

Games revolving around the kicking of a ball have been played in many countries throughout history. According to FIFA, the "The very earliest form of the game for which there is scientific evidence was an exercise from a military manual dating back to the second and third centuries BC in China", which was known as [*cuju*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuju)*.* The modern rules of association soccer are based on the mid-19th century efforts to standardize the widely [varying forms of soccer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_public_school_football_games) played at the public schools of England. The history of soccer in England dates back to [at least the eighth century](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_football).

The [Cambridge Rules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_Rules), first drawn up at [Cambridge University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_University) in 1848, were particularly influential in the development of subsequent codes, including association soccer. The Cambridge Rules were written at [Trinity College, Cambridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_College,_Cambridge), at a meeting attended by representatives from [Eton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eton_College), [Harrow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harrow_School), [Rugby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rugby_School), [Winchester](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winchester_College) and [Shrewsbury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrewsbury_School) schools. They were not universally adopted. During the 1850s, many clubs unconnected to schools or universities were formed throughout the English-speaking world, to play various forms of soccer. Some came up with their own distinct codes of rules, most notably the [Sheffield Soccer Club](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheffield_F.C.), formed by former public school pupils in 1857, which led to formation of a [Sheffield FA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheffield_%26_Hallamshire_Football_Association) in 1867. In 1862, [John Charles Thring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._C._Thring) of [Uppingham School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uppingham_School) also devised an influential set of rules.

These ongoing efforts contributed to the formation of [The Soccer Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Football_Association) (The FA) in 1863, which first met on the morning of 26 October 1863 at the [Freemasons' Tavern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freemasons%27_Tavern) in [Great Queen Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Queen_Street), London.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-FAhistory-19) The only school to be represented on this occasion was [Charterhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charterhouse_School). The Freemason's Tavern was the setting for five more meetings between October and December, which eventually produced the first comprehensive set of rules. At the final meeting, the first FA treasurer, the representative from [Blackheath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackheath_Rugby_Club), withdrew his club from the FA over the removal of two draft rules at the previous meeting: the first allowed for running with the ball in hand; the second for obstructing such a run by hacking (kicking an opponent in the shins), tripping and holding. Other [English rugby soccer clubs followed this lead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_rugby_union) and did not join the FA, or subsequently left the FA and instead in 1871 formed the [Rugby Soccer Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rugby_Football_Union). The eleven remaining clubs, under the charge of [Ebenezer Cobb Morley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebenezer_Cobb_Morley), went on to ratify the original thirteen laws of the game. These rules included handling of the ball by "marks" and the lack of a crossbar, rules which made it remarkably similar to [Victorian rules soccer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_rules_football) being developed at that time in Australia. The Sheffield FA played by its own rules until the 1870s with the FA absorbing some of its rules until there was little difference between the games.

The laws of the game are currently determined by the [International Soccer Association Board](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Football_Association_Board) (IFAB). The Board was formed in 1886[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-22) after a meeting in [Manchester](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester) of The Soccer Association, the [Scottish Soccer Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Football_Association), the [Soccer Association of Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football_Association_of_Wales), and the [Irish Soccer Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Football_Association). The world's oldest soccer competition is the [FA Cup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FA_Cup), which was founded by [C. W. Alcock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._W._Alcock) and has been contested by English teams since 1872. The [first official international soccer match](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland_v_England_(1872)) took place in 1872 between Scotland and England in [Glasgow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasgow), again at the instigation of C. W. Alcock. England is home to the world's first [soccer league](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Football_League), which was founded in [Birmingham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birmingham) in 1888 by [Aston Villa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aston_Villa_F.C.) director [William McGregor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_McGregor_(football)).[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-23) The original format contained 12 clubs from the [Midlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Midlands) and the [North of England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_of_England). [FIFA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration_Internationale_de_Football_Association), the international soccer body, was formed in [Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris) in 1904 and declared that they would adhere to Laws of the Game of the Soccer Association.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-Wherebegan-24) The growing popularity of the international game led to the admittance of FIFA representatives to the [International Soccer Association Board](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Football_Association_Board) in 1913. The board currently consists of four representatives from FIFA and one representative from each of the four British associations.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-IFAB_works-25)

Today, soccer is played at a [professional](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_sports) level all over the world. Millions of people regularly go to soccer stadiums to follow their favorite teams, while billions more watch the game on television or on the internet.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-27) A very large number of people also play soccer at an amateur level. According to a survey conducted by FIFA published in 2001, over 240 million people from more than 200 countries regularly play soccer. Soccer has the highest global television audience in sport.

In many parts of the world soccer evokes great passions and plays an important role in the life of individual [fans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fan_(aficionado)), local communities, and even nations. The [Côte d'Ivoire national soccer team](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C3%B4te_d%27Ivoire_national_football_team) helped secure a truce to the nation's [civil war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivorian_Civil_War) in 2006 and it helped further reduce tensions between government and rebel forces in 2007 by playing a match in the rebel capital of [Bouaké](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bouak%C3%A9), an occasion that brought both armies together peacefully for the first time.[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-31) By contrast, soccer is widely considered to be the final proximate cause in the [Soccer War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football_War) in June 1969 between [El Salvador](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Salvador) and [Honduras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honduras). The sport also exacerbated tensions at the beginning of the [Yugoslav wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslav_wars) of the 1990s, when a match between [Dinamo Zagreb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NK_Dinamo_Zagreb) and [Red Star Belgrade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Star_Belgrade) degenerated into rioting in March 1990.

### Players, equipment, and officials

Each team consists of a maximum of eleven players (excluding [substitutes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Substitute_(football))), one of whom must be the [goalkeeper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goalkeeper_(football)). Competition rules may state a minimum number of players required to constitute a team, which is usually seven. Goalkeepers are the only players allowed to play the ball with their hands or arms, provided they do so within the [penalty area](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penalty_area_(football)) in front of their own goal. Though there are a variety of [positions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association_football_positions) in which the outfield (non-goalkeeper) players are strategically placed by a coach, these positions are not defined or required by the Laws.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-LAW301-12)

The basic equipment or [*kit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kit_(association_football)) players are required to wear includes a shirt, shorts, socks, footwear and adequate [shin guards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shin_guard). [Headgear](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association_football_headgear) is not a required piece of basic equipment, but players today may choose to wear it to protect themselves from head injury. Players are forbidden to wear or use anything that is dangerous to themselves or another player, such as jewelry or watches. The goalkeeper must wear clothing that is easily distinguishable from that worn by the other players and the match officials.

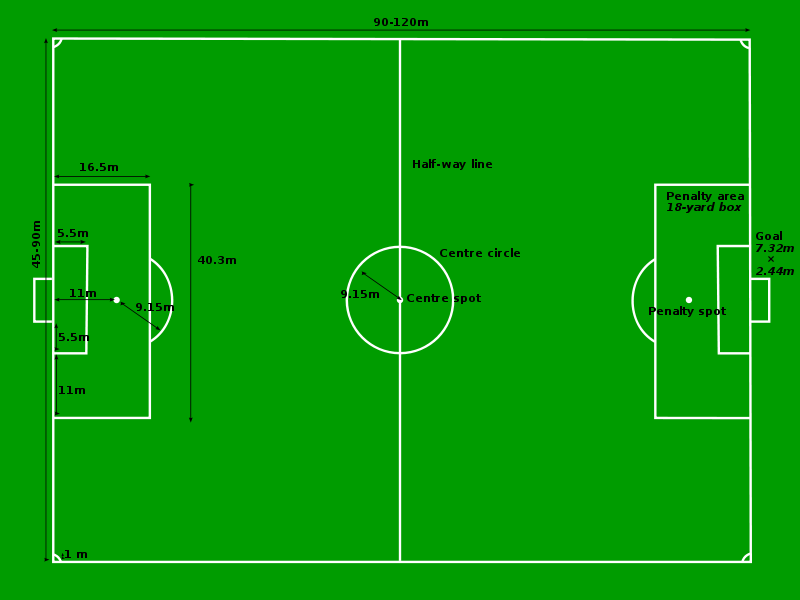
A number of players may be replaced by substitutes during the course of the game. The maximum number of substitutions permitted in most competitive international and domestic league games is three, though the permitted number may vary in other competitions or in friendly matches. Common reasons for a substitution include injury, tiredness, ineffectiveness, a tactical switch, or [timewasting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timewasting) at the end of a finely poised game. In standard adult matches, a player who has been substituted may not take further part in a match. IFAB recommends that "that a match should not continue if there are fewer than seven players in either team." Any decision regarding points awarded for abandoned games is left to the individual soccer associations.[[38]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer#cite_note-37)

A game is officiated by a [referee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referee_(association_football)), who has "full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed" (Law 5), and whose decisions are final. The referee is assisted by two [assistant referees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assistant_referee). In many high-level games there is also a [fourth official](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_official) who assists the referee and may replace another official should the need arise.

### Ball in and out of play

Under the Laws, the two basic states of play during a game are *ball in play* and *ball out of play*. From the beginning of each playing period with a kick-off until the end of the playing period, the ball is in play at all times, except when either the ball leaves the field of play, or play is stopped by the referee. When the ball becomes out of play, play is restarted by one of eight restart methods depending on how it went out of play:

* [Kick-off](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kick-off_(association_football)): following a goal by the opposing team, or to begin each period of play.
* [Throw-in](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throw-in): when the ball has crossed the touchline; awarded to opposing team to that which last touched the ball.
* [Goal kick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goal_kick): when the ball has wholly crossed the goal line without a goal having been scored and having last been touched by a player of the attacking team; awarded to defending team.
* [Corner kick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corner_kick): when the ball has wholly crossed the goal line without a goal having been scored and having last been touched by a player of the defending team; awarded to attacking team.
* [Indirect free kick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indirect_free_kick): awarded to the opposing team following "non-penal" fouls, certain technical infringements, or when play is stopped to caution or send-off an opponent without a specific foul having occurred. A goal may not be scored directly (without the ball first touching another player) from an indirect free kick.
* [Direct free kick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_free_kick): awarded to fouled team following certain listed "penal" fouls. A goal may be scored directly from a direct free kick.
* [Penalty kick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penalty_kick_(football)): awarded to the fouled team following a foul usually punishable by a direct free kick but that has occurred within their opponent's penalty area.
* [Dropped-ball](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dropped-ball): occurs when the referee has stopped play for any other reason, such as a serious injury to a player, interference by an external party, or a ball becoming defective. This restart is uncommon in adult games.

[](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Football_pitch_metric.svg)