

FOOTBALL

Lexile 660L

Football is a game played *between* two teams. The game is played on a large field shaped like a rectangle. The object of football is to score points by moving the ball into the other team's **end zone**. This is an area at the far end of the field. Teams can also score points in other ways as well. The team with the most points at the end of the game is the winner.

The game of football was invented in the late 1800s. It was very different back then. Over the years, the rules of the game changed many times. In 1920, the National Football League (NFL) was formed. The NFL grew to become very successful. Today, NFL football is the most popular sport in the United States.

Early History

The game of football grew from two different sports: **soccer** and **rugby**. In soccer, players try to score points by getting the ball into the other team's goal. Soccer players are not allowed to use their hands. Rugby is similar to soccer. In rugby, players can use their hands to carry the ball. They can also hit and push each other.

In 1869, two college teams decided to play a new type of game. They combined rules from both soccer and rugby. They also invented some new rules. This is considered to be the first football game ever played. Other college teams also began to play the game. The rules changed many times. The games were not like today's football.

In 1876, a man named Walter Camp decided to make rules for all teams to follow. Camp invented many of the rules used in today's football. He is often called the "Father of American Football."

NFL

Football was played by many college teams across the United States in the early 1900s. It was also played by some **professional** teams. A professional is someone who is paid money to play the game. Many professional football leagues followed different rules. The leagues disagreed on how games should be played. They disagreed on how players should be paid.

A group of teams formed the National Football League (NFL) in 1920. The NFL was not successful at first. Many teams ran out of money and stopped playing. The league stayed together and became better organized.

In 1933, the NFL changed its rules to make the game more exciting. It also played a championship game for the first time. The NFL slowly began to grow in popularity. At that time, college football was more popular.



Courtesy pixabay.com.

In 1958, the Baltimore Colts beat the New York Giants in the NFL Championship game. The game was very exciting. Many people watched it on television. This made the NFL very popular among the public.

Modern Era

A new football league formed in 1960. This league was called the American Football League (AFL). The AFL competed against the NFL at first. The two leagues decided to join together in 1966. They played a championship game between the two leagues in 1967. This game was known as the **Super Bowl**.

Since 1967, NFL football has become the most popular American sport. By 2019, the NFL had grown to thirty-two teams. The Super Bowl is the most popular sporting event in the United States. It is watched by millions of people on television each year.

College football has also remained very popular. Hundreds of colleges have football teams in the United States. Large schools and small schools play each other in their own championship games.

Basic Rules

The NFL and college football have many rules. Most of the rules are the same. The football is an oval-shaped ball. Both teams take turns trying to move the ball. The team that has the ball is called the offense. The other team is called the defense. The defense tries to stop the offense. Both offense and defense have eleven players on a side.

The offense has four plays to get ten yards. They can move the ball by running it on the ground. They can also throw it through the air. If a team gets the ten yards, it gets another four plays. This is called a first down. If a team cannot get a first down, the other team gets the ball. Then, it is their turn to go on offense.

Teams can score points in several different ways. A team scores a **touchdown** if one of its players takes the ball into the end zone. A touchdown is worth six points. Teams can also kick the ball through the goalposts for a **field goal**. The goalposts are two connected metal pipes that stick up into the air. They are located at the back of the end zone. A field goal is worth three points.

Teams can also score two points if an opponent with the ball is tackled in his own end zone. Teams can also decide to go for one point or two points after scoring a touchdown. They can kick the ball through the goalposts for one point. They can try to take the ball into the end zone for two points.

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■ By Richard Sheposh

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COMPREHENSION TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Football began as a combination of these two sports?

- A. bowling and rugby
 - B. tennis and soccer
 - C. hockey and soccer
 - D. soccer and rugby
-

2. How many teams were in the NFL in 2019?

- A. thirty
 - B. twenty-eight
 - C. thirty-two
 - D. twenty-five
-

3. How many points is a touchdown worth?

- A. two
 - B. six
 - C. three
 - D. seven
-

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

4. _____ was known as the "Father of American Football."

5. The _____ is the most popular sporting event in the United States.

6. A team needs to move the ball _____ to get a first down.

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWERS

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Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

4. Walter Camp was known as the "Father of American Football."

5. The Super Bowl is the most popular sporting event in the United States.

6. A team needs to move the ball ten yards to get a first down.