

Sports in the USA

51 MP3

Teens in the US love sport. They do some kind of sport on a regular basis, go to matches and watch them on TV. American sport is unique. There are not many other countries that play American football or baseball. Baseball and American football are not international sports – all the teams are American.



Baseball is called America's national pastime. It is the oldest American team sport and comes from the English game of rounders. Each year more than 100 million people watch baseball games. There are two professional leagues¹ – the National Baseball League and the American Baseball League. The team's name is usually formed by a city name and a nickname – the Texas Rangers, the Chicago Cubs... Two teams with nine players play on a baseball field (also called 'pitch', 'diamond', 'ball field' or 'baseball diamond'). The term is also used as a metonym for baseball park. There are four bases and the teams take turns to bat². They hit the ball and run round all four bases and back to the home base to score a run.

American football is very popular and attracts more television viewers than baseball. American football developed from rugby and there are lots of similarities. They play with an oval ball and there are two teams of eleven players. Like rugby they have to carry the ball across the opponent's goal line and score a touchdown or kick the ball between the goalposts³. A difference from rugby is that they can only pass the ball forwards. American football players look quite strange when they play because they wear a helmet and a mask to protect their faces and pads⁴ on their shoulders, elbows and knees. They play on a pitch called the gridiron. American football is the King of autumn sports. The league championship game is the Super Bowl. Super Bowl Sunday is the biggest annual sporting event in the United States.



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A Canadian invented **basketball** in Springfield (Massachusetts) in 1891. His name was James Naismith and he was a Physical Education teacher. He wanted a new game for his students to play inside during the winter, so he attached a peach basket⁵ to the top of a three-metre pole. Later he put open-ended nets⁶, so that the ball fell through the net every time someone scored a goal. The NBA is the men's professional basketball league of the United States. This sport is also popular in Europe.

WORDS YOU NEED

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. league | lega sportiva |
| 2. take turns to bat | battere a turno |
| 3. goalpost | palo della porta |
| 4. pad | imbottitura di protezione |
| 5. peach basket | cesto di vimini |
| 6. net | rete |
| 7. boost | promuovere, incrementare |
| 8. amateur | dilettante |
| 9. wind through | passare per |
| 10. cheer | fare il tifo |

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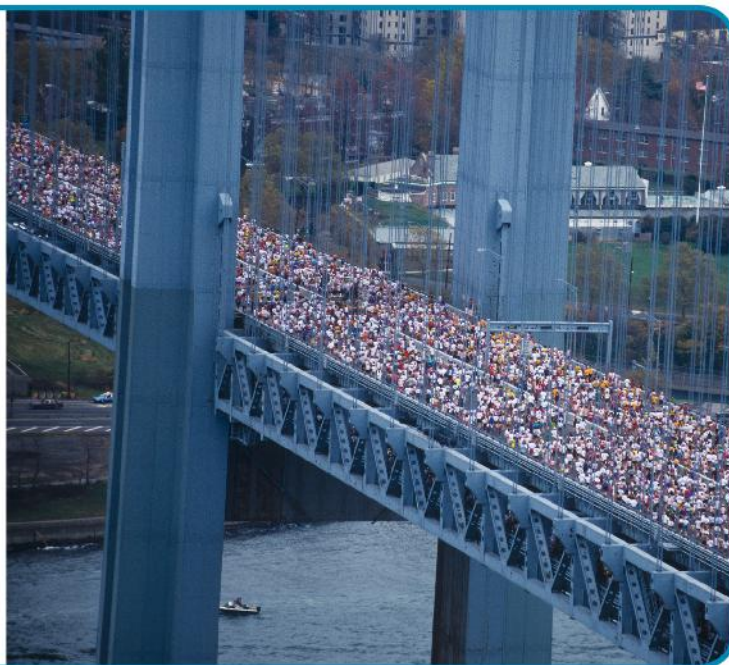
For many years Americans did not like **soccer**, but now things are changing. People in the USA are starting to like soccer. The famous footballer David Beckham spent five years at LA Galaxy and his presence boosted⁷ the popularity of this sport.

An increasing number of American children play soccer more than any other sport, including American football, baseball and basketball. There is a new soccer team in the Big Apple – New York City Football Club. Manchester City Football Club is the major owner of this new team and their biggest rival is the New York Red Bulls Soccer team from New Jersey.

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The New York City Marathon

Running is a popular sport in the USA and the New York Marathon is one of the largest marathons in the world with more than 50,000 runners. The course goes through all five boroughs of New York City. New York Road Runners organise the race on the first Sunday in November and it attracts professional marathon runners and amateurs⁸ from all over the world. The race begins on Staten Island near the Verrazzano Bridge, winds through⁹ Brooklyn and into Queens. After about 4 kms, runners cross the East River into Manhattan. The race goes into the Bronx, through Harlem, down Fifth Avenue and into Central Park. At Central Park South, thousands of spectators cheer¹⁰ runners on for the last mile.



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1 Ascolta e leggi i testi di p. 56, poi indica se le frasi sono vere (T) o false (F). Correggi le frasi errate.

- 1 Baseball comes from the English game of rugby. **T F**
- 2 The 'diamond' is the name of the American Football pitch. **T F**
- 3 Baseball is the oldest American team sport. **T F**
- 4 American football players wear pads. **T F**
- 5 An American invented basketball. **T F**
- 6 Basketball isn't popular in Europe. **T F**

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2 Ascolta e leggi i testi di p. 57, poi completa le frasi.

- 1 David Beckham boosted in the USA.
- 2 An increasing number of American play soccer more than any other sport.
- 3 There is a new soccer team in the Big
- 4 The New York City Marathon attracts professional marathon from all over the world.
- 5 The begins on Staten Island and finishes in
- 6 Thousands of cheer runners on for the last mile.

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3 Scrivi un breve paragrafo (45-60 parole) sul tuo sport preferito. Segui le seguenti tracce.

- Is it a team sport?
- Do you play it on a pitch, a court or in a gym?
- What do you need to play it? A ball, a bat, a net, rackets?
- What do you wear?
- How often do you play it?
- Who do you play it with?



4 And in your country?

- What traditional sports are there? Can you describe them?
- Why do you like/not like these sports?