



Sports Time!

Nonfiction stories about different sports.

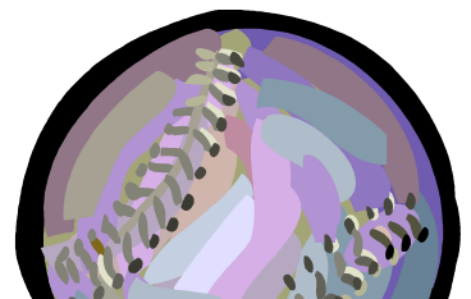


SUMMARY:

Each story explains the basic concepts behind many popular sports, while comparing them to other sports. Each one is explained from the perspective of a boy or a girl who plays the sport, explaining not only the rules but also what they enjoy about the game.

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Badminton Time!

Tara played badminton. It was her favorite sport. Badminton has a lot of the fun and excitement of hitting back and forth like tennis and volleyball, but it takes finesse and careful aim. It can be a LOT of fun. If you like ping pong at all, you should definitely give badminton a shot.



Badminton requires only a net, a racket, and a birdie or shuttlecock. Unlike other sports that require balls, badminton's birdie has a unique shape. It looks like half of a rubber ball attached to a plastic lace cone. Because of its shape, it flew differently. It was bottom heavy, so it would sail into the air ball end first, and then the rubber side of it would fall downward, so you could hit it with your racket. Badminton rackets are much lighter and smaller than tennis rackets, although they do look similar.

Badminton is played with as a one-on-one or a two-on-two game, just like tennis. The courts are much smaller than tennis, though. A badminton court is about 20 foot by 40 foot, with a 5 foot net splitting it halfway. Badminton is played to a score of 21. You only get points on your team's serve. A strange thing about serving is that you're supposed to switch from the left side to the right to serve depending on if your current score when serving is even or odd! That's different, right? Also, unlike volleyball, you can only touch the birdie once before it goes over the net. You don't get 3 hits or touches. It's very fast back and forth!

Usually you play a set of 3 matches in badminton. You must win by 2 points, too, so if you get to 21 points and your opponent is at 20, you have to keep going. It's a very exciting game that will have you running all over the court. Because the court is smaller than in other sports, you really need to work on your control and technique. You need to be able to drop the birdie right inside the lines and work on your aim a lot!

Tara liked playing singles games. She could play doubles, but she liked running all over the court and hitting the birdie back without having to work with or around another player. There were a lot of subtle moves in badminton that could make a big difference. You could make it look like you were going to spike the birdie, but then only lightly touch it to get it to barely drop over the net. The aerodynamics of the birdie made it an interesting thing to play with, too. It just flew differently and travelled differently than any other ball or object in other sports she'd played.





Tara knew that not everyone knew a lot about her sport. It was sort of a strange mix of tennis and volleyball with an even stranger ball to hit! It was fun for her though, and a great workout. It was also cheap to start playing and it was not full contact. She didn't like crashing into people when she played sports, so it was great for her. However, she had twisted an ankle once or twice trying to get to a birdie that was just falling in the wrong place!

Are you going to try to watch or play badminton?

Badminton Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Tara play?
 - A. Pickle ball
 - B. Tennis
 - C. Badminton
 - D. Ping Pong

2. What do you have to score to win a game of badminton?
 - A. 12
 - B. 20
 - C. 21
 - D. 25

3. Usually there are how many players on a badminton team?
 - A. 1 or 2
 - B. 2 or 3
 - C. 3 or 5
 - D. Always only 1

4. TRUE OR FALSE: According to the story, badminton is very similar to football.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: The 'ball' in badminton is called a birdie or a shuttlecock.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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 - B. False

Baseball Time!

Robbie played baseball. It was his favorite sport. Sure, the other ones were fun, but there was something special about baseball. Baseball was a series of slow, tense moments waiting for something to happen. When something did happen, it was exciting and sudden. You always had to be ready for it!



Baseball isn't too expensive to play. There are cheap, safe versions of the game like wiffle ball, which is all played with a plastic ball and bat. You can use your hands to catch the ball. It's very fun! Softball is pretty similar, too. To play baseball or softball, you need a uniform, which is a jersey, athletic pants, socks, cleats, and a hat. You also need a glove to play in the field or a helmet and a bat to hit the ball. Batting gloves are nice, too, because they minimize the stinging if you hit a fast ball.

Baseball usually has 9 players per team. That's a pitcher, a catcher, four infielders, and three outfielders. Outfielders are named by where they stand: left, right, and center fielders. Infielders are the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd basemen, along with the shortstop, who helps out between 2nd and 3rd base. The pitcher stands at the middle of the infield, throwing the ball toward home plate, where the catcher must catch the ball. He needs special equipment to protect his legs, chest, and face, because he can catch a baseball in the body pretty easily if the ball comes off the ground or off a bat wrong!

Baseball has 9 innings, which seems like a weird number compared to sports with halves, periods, or quarters, right? Each inning has a top and a bottom, where either the home team is trying to hit the ball or the away team is. That means each team has 9 chances to score and 9 chances to defend. A special break is taken after the 7th inning, called the "7th inning stretch."

Robbie played as a pitcher. He was decent when it was his chance to bat, but he loved being out on the pitcher's mound, staring down at the batter. It was a mind game between him and the batter, with some help from the catcher, who gave him hints and signals on where to throw the ball. Each batter could have up to 3 misses when they swung. If they hit the ball, they had to run to 1st base before someone got the ball there. If someone caught the ball in the air before it bounced, the runner was out, too. Each team only got three outs per inning, so striking out by missing the ball too many times, getting the ball you hit caught, or by not running fast enough was a way to let your team down.

As a pitcher, it was Robbie's job to throw the ball in such a way as to make it very difficult to hit. He had to get it over home plate so the batter had a chance to hit it, but he could throw it too close to the batter, too high, too low, or even too fast! The batter had to watch the ball and predict where it would go so they could hit it. Good batters could aim the ball to a place in the field where there were no players, and they could get on the bases and run around to score. Scoring was a team effort

usually, requiring players to advance a base or two at a time until they crossed home plate to score a point for their team.

Umpires watch each pitch to see if it is a good one, a strike, or a bad one, a ball. If a player collects 4 bad pitches (balls) without swinging at them before they get 3 good ones (strikes), they get to get on 1st base for free. This is called a walk. This doesn't happen too often. Usually a player hits the ball to get on base or have the fielders get them out, or they strike out. The fielders are very quick to catch balls and get them to the right base in order to get the runners out. There are umpires watching bases, too, to see if a runner is safe or out. Sometimes it is a very close call!

There are not many penalties in baseball. Most play happens pretty smoothly. You either hit the ball or you don't. You either catch it or you don't. You either run faster than the ball gets caught or you don't. It's a simple set of concepts, but it is very difficult to play! Imagine trying to hit the ball at 90-some miles per hour!

Robbie knew not everyone loved his sport as much as he did. Baseball was pretty big in America. It is nicknamed, 'America's Game.' It's not as popular as it once was, falling behind things like Football and Basketball these days, but the most popular teams are still hugely popular. In Central America and East Asia, baseball is a big deal, too. For Robbie, standing on that red dirt and raked gravel, seeing the perfectly-cut grass and the lights coming on at night during a game was enough. He couldn't beat that feeling.

Are you going to try to watch or play baseball?



Baseball Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Robbie play?
 - A. Softball
 - B. Wiffle Ball
 - C. Kickball
 - D. Baseball

2. How many innings are in a baseball game?
 - A. 4
 - B. 6
 - C. 9
 - D. 12

3. What position does Robbie play?
 - A. Catcher
 - B. Pitcher
 - C. 1st Base
 - D. Shortstop

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Baseball is nicknamed 'America's Game.'
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Batters get 5 balls before they get a walk.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Baseball Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Jake play?
 - A. Roller Hockey
 - B. Ice Hockey**
 - C. Field Hockey
 - D. Football

2. How many minutes is a hockey game?
 - A. 60**
 - B. 45
 - C. 90
 - D. 120

3. What sport is never compared to hockey in this story?
 - A. Soccer
 - B. Baseball**
 - C. Basketball
 - D. Football

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Ice Hockey is the most popular sport to watch in most countries of the world.
 - A. True
 - B. False**

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Hockey players wear a lot of padding and equipment.
 - A. True**
 - B. False

Basketball Time!

Jordan played baseball. It was her favorite sport. The other sports were fun, and she liked swimming, too, but basketball definitely was her favorite sport. In fact, her dad was a big basketball fan, and had even named her after a famous basketball player!

Basketball is a pretty cheap sport to play in terms of equipment. So long as you have shoes and clothes and a ball, you can play. You can play with 1 hoop or 2, but it is way more fun to have a full court to play on and several friends to do it with. Of course, you can have knee braces, expensive shoes, and some fancy jerseys if you want, but you can play without them if you want.

Basketball is a game of 5-on-5. There are tournaments with 1-on-1, 2-on-2, or 3-on-3, but official games are played with 5 players per team. There are 5 different positions: point guard, shooting guard, center, small forward, and power forward. These are kind of like hockey and soccer positions, in that some positions are more defensive and some are more offensive. Unlike some other sports, all players can score points, and there is NO goalkeeper. There isn't a boring position to play!

Basketball has 4 quarters. Teams switch directions of play after each quarter. For pro games, quarters are 15 minutes. The clock keeps moving unless there are fouls, the ball goes out of bounds, or if the whistle blows.

Jordan played as a point guard. That meant she was just about the fastest person on the team. It was her job to get the ball to the right person to score. She was a coordinator, the type that got lots of assists and made big plays happen.

Referees watched the teams play and watched for things like tripping, charging, and double-dribbling. In basketball, you can dribble (bounce) the ball as you walk or run up the court, but once you stop dribbling, you can't start again. You have to pass the ball to another player or shoot toward the basket. Some players are good at blocking shots or at stealing passes. Basketball is a very fast sport, moving back and forth quickly.

Normal shots in the game are worth 2 points. These are anything from layups where you drop the ball into the hoop or short shots from the court. If you're far enough out, beyond the 3-point line, shots are worth more. After a foul, you may get chances to shoot for bonus points.



These free-throws are worth 1 point each if you make them in. With only 5 people on the court and shots being worth 1-3 points, scoring in games can be pretty high. Some teams manage to score more than 100 points in a game!

Jordan knew not everyone loved her sport as much as she did. She just couldn't get enough of the excitement. There was a lot of running, fast passes, and some great jumping! Basketball is pretty big in America – it was invented here after all! Basketball is an Olympic sport, too. Many countries have their own leagues, and it is especially popular in East Asia.

Are you going to try to watch or play basketball?



Basketball Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Jordan play?
 - A. Baseball
 - B. Basketball
 - C. Soccer
 - D. Football

2. What kind of parts is a basketball game divided into?
 - A. Halves
 - B. Quarters
 - C. Periods
 - D. Innings

3. What position does Robbie play?
 - A. Center
 - B. Power Forward
 - C. Point Guard
 - D. Small Forward

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Basketball was invented in America.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: There are 5 players per team in basketball.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Basketball Time!

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Bowling Time!



Jess played bowling. It was her favorite sport. Sure, the other ones were fun, but there was something special about bowling. Unlike team sports or most competitive sports, bowling was one person and a ball versus 10 pins at the end of a long stretch of oiled wood. There was something beautiful in that. Much like archery or target practice, it was all about concentration and aim. You had to hit the pins, while avoiding the gutters on the sides of the lane.

Bowling is probably one of the cheaper sports to play. Really, you only need to go to a bowling alley. Once there, you can rent shoes and a ball. It can cost a few dollars per game though. Of course, if you're serious about bowling, you'll want to get your own shoes, which can cost more than a nice pair of athletic shoes, and you'll want a custom ball of your own. There are a lot of advantages to having your own ball to practice with, mostly because of consistency – you know how the ball will react when you throw it. It's a good idea to have a hand towel to wipe the lane's oil off the bowling ball and maybe a wrist brace, too, if you're going to get serious about bowling.

Bowling is 10 frames. Each frame has up to 2 balls to throw, except the last frame, where you might get a chance to throw a third ball. The first ball you always have a chance to knock down 10 pins. If you knock them all down, you get a strike. This is the best you can do. If you knock some of them down and get the rest with the second ball, you get a spare. This is good, also. If you leave some pins standing after your second ball, the machines will sweep them away, and you have an open frame. This is not a great result, and it will hurt your score. The idea of knocking over pins is pretty simple, but in practice it can be very hard to get a ball to hit exactly where you want it to when the pins are so far away.

Scoring in bowling is a little confusing until you get the hang of it. Each pin is worth 1 point, but sometimes you get to count pins more than once, if you get strikes or spares. If you have a spare, you get 10 points, because you knocked down all 10 pins for that frame using both of your shots. You get to count the pins from the next throw in the next frame, too, as a bonus for the spare. So if your next ball knocked down 5 pins, then you will get a score of 15 for the previous frame, because it's $10 + 5$.

Strikes are even better. If you roll a strike by knocking down all of the pins with your first throw in a frame, you get to count your next *two* shots toward that frame's score as a bonus for the strike. So, you have the 10 pins from that frame, plus you might roll a 6 and a 3 with your next two balls, giving you 19 total points for the previous frame. The whole point of bowling, you can hopefully see, is to get as many spares and strikes as possible, because it greatly increases your end score. A perfect score is 300 points, and it can only be made by throwing 12 strikes in a row, 1 for each of the first 9 frames, and 3 in the last frame, because of the special rules in the 10th frame, which allow you to get an extra ball if you get a spare or a strike.

Unlike other sports that need umpires and referees, the game of bowling was much simpler: you either hit the pins or you didn't. Sometimes you might step too far, and you could get a foul, but mostly it was about hitting the pins. There were a few fancy names for different situations, like splits, turkeys, and fences, but a player didn't really need to know those, so long as they could knock pins down.



Jess was a pretty good bowler. Jess bowled for fun on her own, challenging herself to get better scores each time. It was like the card game of solitaire, where you can play against yourself, trying to beat your own records. She also bowled on a league. She was on a team of four boys and girls, and they took turns throwing balls and knocking down pins. Each team compared scores at the end of the 10 frames to see which team had the best scores. Scores were kept track of for months, and there were trophies and championship tournaments. It was fun stuff!

Jess knew that not everyone knew much about her sport or even played it very often. She saw a lot of young people coming in to the alleys and playing a game or two now and then, but she took it as seriously as other people took golf, hockey, or basketball. Her father, mother, grandfather, and uncle all bowled, too! It was a family sport, and she practiced a lot to get better.

Are you going to try to watch or play bowling?

Bowling Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Jess play?
 - A. Archery
 - B. Skeet Shooting
 - C. Shuffleboard
 - D. Bowling

2. How many frames are in a bowling game?
 - A. 8
 - B. 9
 - C. 10
 - D. 12

3. What is the score in a perfect game of bowling?
 - A. 100
 - B. 200
 - C. 300
 - D. 500

4. TRUE OR FALSE: A perfect game in bowling requires 11 strikes.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: If you get a spare, you get to count the next ball's pins toward that frame, too.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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Football Time!



Walter played football. It was his favorite sport. He didn't mean the football that most of the world meant, either. Most of the world called soccer "football." That kind of made sense to call soccer that, because you play soccer with your feet, but he meant American football, which was actually a lot closer to rugby.

Football is expensive to play in its full version. Sure, a lot of people play a friendly game in their back yards or in the park, but that is not full tackle football usually. You can also play a no-tackle version with flags tied around your waist called flag football. It's very fun and doesn't cause many injuries. Walter played full contact football though, and that meant a helmet with a faceguard, full shoulder pads, along with pads for his hips, back, ribs, and thighs. He also needed cleats, gloves, a mouth guard, and a chinstrap. It didn't hurt to have elbow pads either. When it came to football, it was like knights in an old joust: you were going to get hit, so be prepared.

Football has 4 quarters of 15 minutes each. Football can take a long time to play, because there is a lot of stopping of the clock, a LOT of it. If a catch is dropped, if a penalty flag is thrown, if a whistle is blown, if there is an injury, if a team scores, between quarters, if the ball goes out of bounds... there are a lot of reasons to stop the clock, so that means you get a pretty full 60 minutes of actual heavy-hitting plays. Each play starts and ends with the crash of helmets and people running all over the field to stop the ball from moving.

Football is played on a 100 yard field with 10 yards of end zones on each side, so it's really 120 yards. If a team can run the ball into or catch the ball in the opponent's end zone, they get a touchdown, which is worth 6 points and a chance for an extra point (or a special 2-point conversion). If a team kicks the ball between their opponent's field goal posts, they get 3 points. There is also a special 2 point safety where you tackle the opponent in their own end zone, but this rarely happens. Generally speaking, football scores come in 7's (6 + 1 extra point) and 3's.

Football has a lot of players with a lot of positions. Each team has 11 men on the field at any given time. Positions vary for defense and offense, and the whole set of players switches when a team goes from offense to defense. There are also other sets of players for specific situations, which is called special teams. So, each team really needs 3 sets of players, plus backups for injuries. A good football squad is often 60 or more players! Players had specialized jobs to play in certain areas, to protect the ball, to kick the ball, to throw ball, or many other things!

The offensive unit is lead by the quarterback. He is defended by a line of men, whose job it is to stop him from getting tackled, so he has time to hand the ball off to a running back or fullback or to throw the ball to a receiver or tight end down the field. Those are the two ways to move the ball: running it or throwing it. The important thing is to move 10 yards in 4 tries. If you can't move the ball that far, the other team gets the ball, so usually a team gives up its 4th try to kick the ball way down the field and give the other chance their turn. If you make it the 10 yards (or more), you get 4 fresh tries. You keep moving the ball down the field, sometimes in short stretches and sometimes in long amounts, and then you score.

The defensive team also has men on the front line. They all try to break through the offensive line to get the quarterback or the running backs. If they do it fast enough, they can even stop the quarterback from throwing the ball past them to a waiting receiver. A group of linebackers are behind them, trying to stop anyone who gets past that first line and to prevent short passes from getting completed. Past them and to the outsides of the field are another set of defenders, who watch for receivers, who are trying to run past them and catch long passes thrown by the quarterback.

Special teams consists of teams who are trained to catch, block, and return kicks. There are punters who catch the ball and kick it as far as they can. There are place kickers who try to kick the ball between the field goal posts far down the field. There are special runners who specialize in catching balls punted high and far, and then running them back down the field into a crowd of people trying to knock them down! There are many special positions and jobs in football. Some of them only get to play for a few seconds per game, but they can make the difference between winning and losing.

Walter was a fullback, which is a position on offense. That meant that when play started, he was near the quarterback. Walter, as a fullback, had to help protect the quarterback and the other players that the quarterback might give the ball to. He was a blocker for the most part, but sometimes he took the ball. He was a pretty big guy, so he could make room for a running back to run. His favorite plays were the ones where he got the ball. Sometimes his team only had to move the ball a short distance in a play, and it required someone big and hard to stop. He could take the ball and try to punch through the defense to move the ball a few feet. Sometimes he only had to move it a few inches, and 21 other people were all crashing around him to make that happen or make it NOT happen. It was wild!

Football has a TON of rules. Referees, Line Judges, and other officials watched the game to make sure you weren't offsides, pulling on someone's facemask, holding, tripping, or being unsportsmanlike. Each play was different, too. Every time the ball started moving, there was a specific pattern or play being made. Of course, with 22 people all moving in different ways, the plan rarely went as it was supposed to. It was an idea of what could happen, and then luck, skill, and determination took over. The referee just made sure what happened was within the rules!

Walter loved playing football. He knew he played one of America's most popular sports, and similar versions like Australian football or rugby were pretty popular around the world. People loved to watch, but playing was seriously hard and dangerous. He hoped to play in high school and college and then professionally one day. There were huge followings of the pro teams, and the Super Bowl Championship game was one of the biggest sporting events of the year. Maybe someday he'd be in it!

Are you going to try to watch or play football?

Football Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Walter play?
 - A. Rugby
 - B. Soccer
 - C. Australian Football
 - D. American Football

2. How long is a football game?
 - A. 30 minutes
 - B. 45 minutes
 - C. 90 minutes
 - D. 60 minutes

3. What position does Walter play?
 - A. Quarterback
 - B. Fullback
 - C. Lineman
 - D. Punter

4. TRUE OR FALSE: According to the story, football is a little similar to rugby.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Walter does not have to wear any protection when he plays.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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Golf Time!



Bob played golf. It was his favorite sport. He knew it wasn't the most exciting sport, with people crashing into each other or running fast, but it was a game of concentration and finesse. He loved how he could play against himself or against other people. It was a great game.

Golf *can* be cheap with starter equipment, but anyone who plays very long ends up spending a LOT of money on clubs and equipment. The thing is, golf is a situational sport, so you need a lot of clubs for different situations. Otherwise, you really just need shoes, clothes, a hat, and maybe some golfing gloves.

Golf comes in increments of 9 holes. A full round was 18 holes, usually called the front 9 and the back 9, because there were two halves. In tournaments, you might play 18 holes per day on several different days. The end scores are compared to see who did the best. Each hole has a par. Par is how many tries it is supposed to take you to get the ball in the hole. There are many different golf terms for par and how well you do on a hole. If you do 1 shot better than par, it's a birdie. If you do 2 strokes under par, it's an eagle. 1 extra shot, which is worse than par, is a bogie. Take 2 extra shots and it's a double-bogie. The whole aim of golf is to finish the holes you're playing close to or under par, meaning you kind of beat the course.

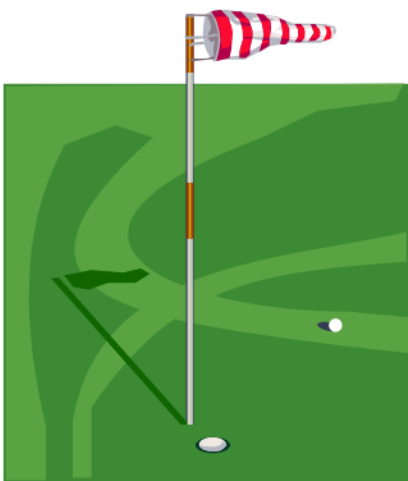
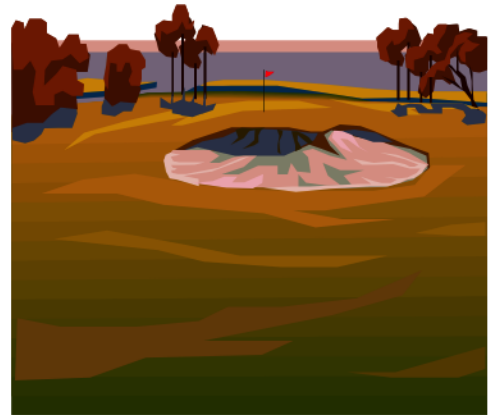
To play golf, you start by teeing off and hitting the ball on a small raised peg called a tee. You hit it with a large club, usually a driver or a wood. These hit the ball farther than the other clubs. Be careful to hit it right, or the ball will slice, or curve one way or another from where you are aiming. The idea is simple, but getting the ball to go right where you want is surprisingly hard. After teeing off, you will use woods and most likely irons to get the ball to the green. Irons are clubs with varying degrees of pitch to them that help you either hit far and low or short and high. The green is the end of the hole, usually 200-400 yards from the start position. On the green there is a hole and a flag in it. This is your goal. Once you use your irons and woods to get you on the green, where the grass is very short and smooth, you switch to a putter. A putter is for making gentle, carefully-aimed shots to put the egg-sided ball in a cup in the ground not much bigger than a coffee cup. It's NOT easy.



Golf was unlike many other sports, because each hole, each stroke (each time you hit the ball) was different. Not only did the wind and weather vary per day and per hour, but each time you played the course it could be different. If you play in the fall, there might be leaves on the course and more wind. In summer, the sun could be pretty punishing and get in your eyes when you tried to hit the ball. The grass might be drier or wetter, changing how the ball rolled or stuck to the grass. You didn't have a controlled environment to play in, like bowling or some other sports.

There are no referees in golf really. In tournaments, there are people checking to make sure you don't break the rules and that you are keeping accurate scores, but when you're on your own or in a small group of friends, you have to stay honest with your scores. Golf is a mental game, because chasing that little white ball for hundreds of yards and putting it in the cup on each green is very challenging. If you lose focus or get frustrated, you can't do a good job. Your good round of golf can quickly become a bad round!

Bob was a pretty good golfer. He had good days and bad, but usually came in near par on his scorecard. He enjoyed the walking, the weather, and trying new golf courses. Each hole on each course had a specific set of challenges. Some had water you had to keep your ball out of. Others had sand traps, where you'd quickly lose a stroke or two if you didn't know how to use a special pitching wedge to get the ball out of the trap. It was a fun game to play alone and practice, and he was challenging himself each time he stepped up to hit the ball.



Bob knew that not everyone enjoyed his favorite sport. He'd started playing when he was little, going out on the course with his grandpa on weekends. He'd fell in love with the game, selecting a club carefully to fit the situations, like choosing a weapon in a duel. It wasn't always the most exciting thing to watch, either. It wasn't hockey or baseball or soccer. It was one of those games you had to play to get the real feeling for.

Are you going to try to watch or play golf?

Golf Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Bob play?
 - A. Hockey
 - B. Archery
 - C. Golf
 - D. Bowling

2. How many holes were in a full round of golf?
 - A. 9
 - B. 18
 - C. 27
 - D. 36

3. What is it called in golf when you score exactly what you're supposed to for the hole?
 - A. Par
 - B. Eagle
 - C. Birdie
 - D. Bogie

4. TRUE OR FALSE: A Bogie is better than a Birdie.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: If you get 2 under par it is called an Eagle.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Golf Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Bob play?
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 - B. False**

5. TRUE OR FALSE: If you get 2 under par it is called an Eagle.
 - A. True**
 - B. False

Hockey Time!



Jake played hockey. It was his favorite sport. Sure, the other ones were fun, but there was something very fun about ice hockey. It was a full-contact sport, but so were other sports. It was fast, and some sports were fast, but this was a sort of breakneck, crash the boards, shoot the puck sort of crazy. Maybe that's what he liked best about it: the crashing and the skating. It was a skate until you can't hardly breathe and get that puck in the net kind of excitement that was one of a kind.

Hockey is a little expensive to start playing. You can play roller hockey on rollerblades with just a stick, some elbow and knee pads, and a mask. That was pretty cheap. Field hockey was played in grass. You only need shoes, a stick, a ball, and maybe a mask for safety. Ice hockey was another thing altogether. You had full body pads, especially on the hips and shoulders. Knee and elbow pads helped, because hitting the ice hurt. You also needed a helmet with a mask, because the puck could break teeth or bones if it hit. It was important to have good ice skates, padded gloves to protect your hands, too. You probably want shin pads and a mouth guard also. Anywhere that could get hit should be covered up. So, you can see why it is a bit expensive with all of this equipment. You should see all the special equipment a goalkeeper needs, too!

Hockey usually has 6 players per team, including a goalkeeper. Players are usually broken up into three groups: goalkeepers, defense and forwards. There are different kinds of defense, midfielders, and forwards, each with a slightly different job, but each team only has one goalkeeper. Hockey is a lot like soccer, in that the goalkeeper has special rights to hold and use the puck. Unlike soccer, players *can* use their hands or feet or other body parts to catch and stop the puck. However, passes and shots must be made with the stick. Hand passes or kick passes are not allowed.

Hockey is interesting because it doesn't have halves or quarters. Instead it has 3 periods of 20 minutes each. There is an intermission, usually 10-15 minutes between these periods. Hockey also has a lot of substitutions, as often as every couple minutes. You don't see these kind of changes in any other sport, except maybe football, where whole teams change with the possession of the ball. Because there is such a quick change of players, teams try to keep fresh, energized players on the ice at all times. This means you skate your heart out, up and down the rink until your shift is over. It is like running a sprint, taking a few minutes off, and doing it again repeatedly.

Jake liked playing goalkeeper. He felt like a gladiator on the ice. He had an oversized helmet to protect his neck from incoming shots. He had a net glove on one hand, and an oversized stick on the other, which had a blocking glove on the back. He also had very large shin and leg guards to help block the net. Positioned right, he could fully block around half the goal with his body, his pads and his stick.

Hockey is a game of mere inches, though, and strong forwards could slide the puck into the smallest holes in his defense. Some could lift it over his shoulder and catch the corner of the net. Sometimes he missed a block right between his skates! The goalkeeper was arguably the hardest position to play, but also the most important. The goalkeeper prevented scores for the other team, directed defense, and helped control the pace of the game.

Hockey is a lightning-fast sport. Pucks fly at up to 100 miles per hour! Can you imagine snapping a puck at that speed or having to catch that with a glove? It is smaller than the balls in most sports, remember, and it comes out of nowhere in a hurry. Like soccer or basketball, passing is huge. There are also fast breaks down the rink.

Referees watch for tripping, offsides penalties, slashing, tripping, and other rules infractions, but mostly they like to keep the game moving along smoothly. Most minor infractions, like offsides or hitting the puck out of bounds usually just end with the blow of a whistle and teams have a face-off. This is where one player from each time has to try to take the puck when it is dropped. This is somewhat like a jump ball in basketball. Get the puck, get it to your team, and try to make shots on goal.

Penalties happen a few times per period. In cases of penalties, one team loses a player for a few minutes. This gives the other team a 1 or sometimes even 2-man advantage for up to a few minutes. The shorthanded team must go on defense, while the other team takes their time setting up good passes for shots on goal. Lots of goals are made during these power play chances, and the typical hockey game might end at 4-2 or 1-0. It is a bit higher scoring than soccer.

Jake knew not everyone loved his sport as much as he did. What wasn't to like, though? On hot summer days, a cool ice rink was fun to visit. Fans of basketball and soccer could see some of the same game play ideas, too. The contact was much like football or rugby, too. It was a rough, fun, and fast game to watch! Hockey is the biggest sport in Canada and several northern European countries. Hockey is also an Olympic sport, and there are several international competitions as well.



Are you going to try to watch or play hockey?

Hockey Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Jake play?
 - A. Roller Hockey
 - B. Ice Hockey
 - C. Field Hockey
 - D. Football

2. How many minutes is a hockey game?
 - A. 60
 - B. 45
 - C. 90
 - D. 120

3. What sport is never compared to hockey in this story?
 - A. Soccer
 - B. Baseball
 - C. Basketball
 - D. Football

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Ice Hockey is the most popular sport to watch in most countries of the world.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Hockey players wear a lot of padding and equipment.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Hockey Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Jake play?

- A. Roller Hockey
- B. Ice Hockey**
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- A. True
- B. False**

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Hockey players wear a lot of padding and equipment.

- A. True**
- B. False

Ping Pong Time!

Ricky played ping pong. It was his favorite sport. Ping Pong was also known as Table Tennis, because it was a lot like regular tennis. It was a lot of fun to play with friends or to play competitively.



Ping Pong requires a table, a net, two paddles, and a ball. To play, you hold the 6x6 inch paddle in your hand and use it to hit the ball back and forth. The object of the game is to not let the ball bounce on your side of the table more than once. You must hit the ball, having it bounce and touch your side of the table only once, go over the net, and hit the other side of the table at least once. If it hits either side of the table more than once, a point is scored. You don't want it to bounce twice on your side or you give up a point! The same thing happens if you hit the ball, it bounces once on the opponent's side, and they can't return the ball. That is another way to score. Sometimes you hit it just right so they can't hit it back, and, like in tennis, you get a point.

Ping Pong is a very fast sport usually played one-on-one, but also played in teams of two. The paddles in table tennis actually have been recorded to move at faster speeds than regular tennis! There are tricks to hitting the ball to give it spin, which makes it move less predictably, making it harder for the opponent to return the ball to your side of the table. Each side of the paddle might have a different kind of rubber on it, allowing you to hit with or without spin. The paddle itself is much smaller than tennis or badminton rackets, and it's about the size of a spread adult hand with a handle only a few inches long. The ping pong ball is very light, probably the lightest ball used in any sport. It is smaller than a golf ball, too. It is about the size of one of those big gumballs.

Games are played up to the score of 11, and you have to win by at least 2 points. Every two serves, the serve changes, up until 10 points have been scored by at least one player, at which point the serve changes with every point. Unlike regular tennis, you can score a point even if you're not serving. Whoever wins the rally, the back-and-forth returns of the ping pong ball, gets the point. Players usually play sets of matches, as many as 7. The winner is the one who wins the most of the matches out of the set, like 4 out of 7, or 3 out of 5.

Ricky loved ping pong. He practiced all the time. He liked to flip up half of the table, since it folded in the middle, and practice returning the ball against himself, since it bounced right back at him. He could get going really fast! He played everyone he knew: his father, his mother, his brother, and his friends.

Ricky wished everyone loved his sport as much as he did. Seeing the tiny white ball whiz back and forth and bounce off the dark green table was a lot of fun for him. Even the sound it made as it bounced was fun. In his mind, everyone should play some table tennis now and then. It was even an Olympic sport, and man could they play!



How about you? Are you going to try to watch or play ping pong?

Ping Pong Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Tara play?
 - A. Pickle ball
 - B. Tennis
 - C. Badminton
 - D. Ping Pong

2. What do you have to score to win a game of ping pong?
 - A. 11
 - B. 12
 - C. 21
 - D. 25

3. About how big is the ping pong paddle?
 - A. Like a tennis racket
 - B. Like a badminton racket
 - C. Like an adult's hand
 - D. Like a golf ball

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Ping pong balls are larger than in most sports.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: According to the story, ping pong is a very slow game for older people to play.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Ping Pong Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Tara play?
 - A. Pickle ball
 - B. Tennis
 - C. Badminton
 - D. Ping Pong**
2. What do you have to score to win a game of ping pong?
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5. TRUE OR FALSE: According to the story, ping pong is a very slow game for older people to play.
 - A. True
 - B. False**

Pool Time!



Johnny played pool or billiards. It was his favorite sport. Pool is a careful study of angles. You need to line up your shots and carefully aim. Then it's all geometry! He really liked the focus and control in the game, which was a lot like people sometimes described golf or archery.

To play you need a pool table. There are various pool table sizes, but they can go from about 12 foot by 6 foot down to about half that size. A pool table in someone's house is often about 10 by 5. You also need a pool stick, called a cue, and a set of pool balls. There are 15 balls and 1 cue ball. Other than that, you don't really need much. Some players like chalk for marking on the pool cue's tip. It helps change the way your cue reacts when you hit a ball with it.

There are several games that can be played with a pool table. Certain games like billiards only have a few balls, and you get points by how many bounces they take off bumpers or off of each other. There is also a game with pegs in the table that you have to play around, called bumper pool. Other games require 9 balls, and the balls have to be put into the pockets in order. The game Johnny liked was 8-ball. It was the most fun to him. In 8-ball, you start with all 15 balls arranged in a triangle nearly at the end of the table. A player has only the white cue ball at the other end. They must hit the cue ball and send it down the table to 'break' the formation and start the game. After that, players will start trying to put the balls into any of the 6 pockets that are around the table. Once a player gets a ball into one of the pockets, they will choose what kind of balls they want to put in. 7 of the balls have stripes, and 7 do not. The last, the black 8-ball is the final ball. It is sort of for both players, and it is the 8th ball to be put out of play, since they have 7+1 8-ball to put in the pockets to win the game.

To put a ball into the pockets, you have to take careful aim. You must hit the white cue ball and send it into one of your balls, knocking it into the pocket. If you were just going to shoot each ball straight into the pockets, that is not very hard, but hitting a ball that must send another ball ricocheting into the pocket takes practice. It takes a lot of skill to know how a ball will react when it is hit. Some combo shots send the cue ball into a ball which hits a ball which hits ANOTHER ball to put it into the pocket. You have to do this while avoiding the other player's balls, which are scattered around the table. So, if you're playing stripes, you have to hit all the stripes into the pockets and then the 8-ball to win before the other player can put all the solids (the balls without stripes) into the pockets.

When you shoot, if you get one of your balls into a pocket, you get to take another turn. This continues until you miss or until the table is cleared, and you win that round. If you miss, the other

player gets a turn. They might not put any balls in the pockets, or they might put several! It is hard to work around the other balls on the table, so one important skill is learning to leave the cue ball where you can set up another shot. You might have to hit harder or softer, put backspin or sidespin on the ball, or any other number of techniques to make your current shot and set yourself up for the next shot. In pool you always have to plan ahead. The goal is to make your current shot, and then set up the next shot or two, also. Not only that, but you don't want to leave the cue ball somewhere convenient for your opponent! You have to be both offensive and defensive in your playing.



Johnny really liked playing pool. The crack of the cue ball when it hit the pack of 15 others was great! He also loved the clunk of a ball dropping into the pocket. It was kind of a nail-biting, lip-chewing, anxious sport. You always waited for your turn and tried very hard to give your opponents nothing but hard shots! Some people were very, very good, though. He knew people that could bounce the cue ball off the side rails, dodge the other balls on the table, and make the trick shot to put their own ball into the pocket!

Johnny knew that a lot of people played his sport now and then for fun, but he was serious about it. There were professionals that played it on TV! He wanted to do that someday, too. He practiced every time he got a chance, and he loved to play against his dad and uncles on their table at home. He wished everyone loved his game as much as he did.

Are you going to try to watch or play pool?

Pool Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Johnny play?
 - A. Snooker
 - B. Billiards
 - C. Bumper Pool
 - D. Pool

2. Which game does Johnny normally play?
 - A. 9-ball
 - B. billiards
 - C. 8-ball
 - D. bumper pool

3. What is the last ball you are supposed to put in the pocket in 8-ball?
 - A. the 7
 - B. the 8
 - C. the 9
 - D. the 15

4. TRUE OR FALSE: According to the story, pool is similar to golf or archery in some ways.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: The white ball in pool is called the 8-ball.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Pool Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Johnny play?
 - A. Snooker
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 - A. True**
 - B. False
5. TRUE OR FALSE: The white ball in pool is called the 8-ball.
 - A. True
 - B. False**

Soccer Time!

Bo played soccer. It was his favorite sport. Sure, the other ones were fun, but there was something very fun about soccer. It was competitive, but so were other sports. It was fast, and some sports were fast, but this was like a race. Maybe that's what he liked best about it: the running. It was like a zigzagging race while kicking a ball and that made it fun.



Basic soccer equipment is not expensive, which makes it an easy game to play. It can also be played casually among friends anywhere that you have a nice stretch of grass. Pro players wear a jersey, shorts, socks, cleats, and shin guards. At home, you can get away without the shin guards and probably wear tennis shoes. Cleats, however, help you grip the grass so you can run and turn more quickly. This is important for protecting your ankles and legs as you spin, turn, kick, and change directions often.

Soccer usually has 11 players per team, including a goalkeeper. Players are usually broken up into four groups: goalkeepers, defense, midfielders, and forwards. There are different kinds of defense, midfielders, and forwards, each with a slightly different job, but each team only has one goalkeeper. He or she is important, because the goalkeeper is the only one that can handle the ball with their hands. All other players must only use their feet, along with any part of their legs, chests, or heads.

Soccer is a 90 minute game split into two 45 minute halves. This is different than games like baseball, with its nine innings; basketball and football, which each have four quarters; or hockey with its three periods. Unlike football, there isn't a lot of stopping in soccer. While the game is playing, the clock keeps running. When it stops, it is only for a few seconds to set up for a kick or to give the other team the ball. Because of that, it is a fun sport to watch, too, because you don't have a lot of down time or breaks.

Bo liked playing as a midfielder. It was a fun position, probably with the most running involved. He not only had to help the defense fight off the other team's offense, he also had to help move the ball down the field to help his own team score. This meant that sometimes he would even take shots on the opponent's goal or set up a play for another one of his teammates. He loved getting assists on scores, because if he played just right, he knew he could help his team score and win.

Soccer is not like basketball or even football in terms of scoring. Each goal is only worth one point. It's most like ice hockey, if you have to compare it to any of the other major pro sports. Because the field is long, usually 100 meters (a meter is a little longer than a yard), and because there are so many players on the field, many soccer games end with scores of 0-1, 2-1, 2-0, or something like that. Games with more than three or four goals scored are kind of rare, unless the match is very uneven. Soccer is more about the near misses and exciting chances to score. With strong defense, one move and one kick can mean the difference between winning and losing. Close games are very thrilling to watch or play in!

Referees watch for tripping, offsides penalties, and other rules infractions, but mostly they like to keep the game moving along smoothly. Most minor infractions usually just end with the blow of a whistle and one team or the other gets to take the ball from where the event occurred. Major penalties are rare, so penalty shots are pretty interesting to watch. Sometimes they are 1-on-1 kicks against the goalie, or they might have whole teams lined up like a wall trying to kick or head the ball into the net!



Bo wished everyone loved soccer as much as he did. America has pro teams and even participates regularly in the international championship, FIFA's World Cup. However, it is in places like South America and Europe that you really see soccer's popularity. Soccer is easily the biggest sport to watch in most countries of the world. Even Africa and Asia have very strong soccer traditions.

Are you going to try to watch or play soccer?

Soccer Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Bo play?
 - A. Soccer
 - B. Baseball
 - C. Basketball
 - D. Football

2. How many minutes is a soccer game?
 - A. 60
 - B. 45
 - C. 90
 - D. 120

3. What sport is the scoring in soccer most like?
 - A. Ice Hockey
 - B. Baseball
 - C. Basketball
 - D. Football

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Soccer is the most popular sport to watch in most countries.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Soccer is a very high scoring game.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Soccer Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Bo play?

- A. Soccer**
- B. Baseball
- C. Basketball
- D. Football

2. How many minutes is a soccer game?

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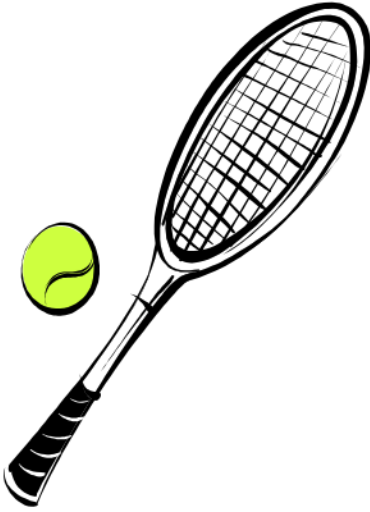
4. TRUE OR FALSE: Soccer is the most popular sport to watch in most countries.

- A. True**
- B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Soccer is a very high scoring game.

- A. True
- B. False**

Tennis Time!



Cara played tennis. It was her favorite sport. She really enjoyed all kinds of similar sports, like ping pong, volleyball, and badminton, but she really liked tennis the most. There was something about running back and forth on that green court and delivered a great backhanded return that really made her smile.

Tennis requires only a net, a racket, and some tennis balls. Tennis is played in singles or doubles. It is very much like badminton that way. If you have a wall, you can practice against yourself, returning the bouncing balls. You can also practice in an empty court, just serving a bucket of balls, or practicing against a machine that launches tennis balls your way (sort of like a batting machine for baseball).

Tennis is about serving and returning. Someone serves the ball, and the other player(s) have to return it from the other side of the net. The object is to get the ball to touch the ground in the other team's side twice, or to touch once and bounce out of bounds. If you do that, you either get the serve from the other team if they had it, or you score points.

When you serve, you have to serve from a certain area on the court. You have to hit the ball over the net and into a specific area of the court marked by white lines. If you hit the net on the way over, you get a redo. If you hit the net and it stops, your serve is done. If you hit the ball out of bounds, your turn is also done. The receiving team or player gets to stand wherever they want, and they're supposed to hit it back toward the serving player's side of the court. They want to get it to touch once and skip out of bounds so the other player can't send it back their way again. They can also try to get two bounces in on the other person's side, but that can be hard. These volleys can go back and forth pretty quickly, and they might go for several strokes before one player is put in a position where they can't return the ball, giving their opponent a point.

Scoring is strange in tennis. You need to get to 4 points to win, and you have to win by 2 points. However, they call the points strange thing. Instead of saying 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 points, they say: love, 15, 30, 40, game. A lot of games get stuck at 3-4 or 4-4, and they have to keep playing to get a 2 point win. So even though it seems easy to score 4 points and beat someone by 2, strong players can go back and forth a long time. Usually you play a set of several games.

After one player wins so many games, they get credit for winning the set and a new set is started. A match is won when you win enough sets, usually 3 or 5 sets. So, to win an entire match of tennis, you might have played several games in several sets! That's complicated, right?



Cara liked playing doubles games. She had a really good partner, and they worked well as a team. She was best at returning, while her teammate was great at serving. They worked well together. Still, Cara knew that her game wasn't as popular in America as some other sports. In Europe it was a big deal, and there were some very famous tennis players and matches you might have even heard of.

Are you going to try to watch or play tennis?

Tennis Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Cara play?
 - A. Pickle ball
 - B. Tennis
 - C. Badminton
 - D. Ping Pong

2. What is it called when you have 0 points in tennis?
 - A. love
 - B. 15
 - C. 30
 - D. 40

3. Usually there are how many players on a tennis team?
 - A. 1 or 2
 - B. 2 or 3
 - C. Always 2
 - D. Always only 1

4. TRUE OR FALSE: According to the story, tennis is similar to ping pong, volleyball, and badminton.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: You have to win just one set to win a match in tennis.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Tennis Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

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 - A. True
 - B. False**

Volleyball Time!



Sara played volleyball. It was her favorite sport. Volleyball was an exciting team competition event. It had brief pauses, which kept the action moving. As soon as the ball started, it was a flurry of activity until the ball crashed into the ground. Then it started all over again!

Volleyball does not require much equipment, which is nice. It can be played with as little as 4 players in teams of 2. All you need is a net and a ball. It can be played in a sandpit or on the beach, as well as indoors on a court. If you play indoors, you'll want some kneepads and elbow pads. Otherwise, you really just need clothes you can move quickly in. Usually this means shorts and a shirt. Swimwear is often used on the beach for beach volleyball.

Inside, you play 6 players per team, while on the beach it's usually pairs of players on teams. Either way, the game is pretty similar. Teams take turns serving the ball. This means they stand at the back of the playing area, loft the ball up, and hit it over the net into the other team's area of play. That team has up to 3 touches of the ball to get it back over the net without letting it touch the ground. Players can hit it back immediately, so long as they get it over the net, but a lot of times players will 'set' the ball up into the air for their teammates to hit back over the net in a more advantageous position. As soon as the ball touches the ground or goes out of bound, play stops and points are awarded or possession of the ball changes.

Volleyball is easy to score. It's 1 point per touch of the ball on the ground if it hits on your opponent's side. So, if team A serves the ball, and after volleying it back and forth it ends up touching the ground in play on team B's side, then team A gets a point. Then they serve again and try to get more points. If team A serves the ball and it touches the ground on their side after team B returns their serve, then no points are awarded and team B gets a chance to serve. Points can usually only be scored on your team's serve, but there are alternate rules that allow for scoring whenever the ball hits the ground on either side. Games are usually played to 25 points, and sets of 3 games are often played to see who wins the best out of 3. It is pretty similar in this way to tennis or badminton.

Sara was pretty tall, so she usually started on the front line. She was a good blocker. When the other team served, she and other players jumped and held their hands up, attempting to block the serve back at the other team. Such a move was often hard to return, and it could end up in scoring some points for her team. She was pretty good at setting and attacking, too. She could loft the ball back into the air right by the net for a teammate to spike into the ground on the enemy team's side. She could dig, too, but it wasn't her best skill. This was when the ball was low and looked like it might hit the ground, and she had to dive and deflect the ball back up before it hit the ground, allowing her team to try to get it back over the net. This took a LOT of practice. She was pretty good at serving, too. Everyone had to take a turn at serving. She loved to score points for her team with a good serve!



Volleyball is a fast-scoring team sport. There is a lot of jumping and you really need to keep your eyes on the ball and be aware of where your teammates are. You have to predict what they will do and where the ball will go. It takes intuition and great teamwork. Sara had a friend she played very well with, so when they went to the beach, sometimes they teamed up in a beach volleyball competition. They'd even won trophies!

Sara knew that a lot of people didn't know much about her game. It wasn't the most popular game in America, even though it was invented here like basketball and baseball. Still, it was pretty popular at the high school and college levels. There were also international and pro competitions she hoped to be part of when she got older.

Are you going to try to watch or play volleyball?



Volleyball Time!

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What sport does Sara play?
 - A. Badminton
 - B. Volleyball
 - C. Tennis
 - D. Handball

2. How many points do you need to score to win a volleyball game?
 - A. 12
 - B. 20
 - C. 21
 - D. 25

3. What skill is not Sara's best?
 - A. Setting
 - B. Serving
 - C. Digging
 - D. Blocking

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Volleyball was invented in America.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Sometimes Sara plays in beach volleyball competitions.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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