

SPORTS

Why do sport?

There are many benefits of doing sport. First of all, it is **very important for your health**. If you want to be fit, you need to move. Doing sport can also make you **stronger mentally**. Playing a team sport can teach you **how to work with other people**. Doing sport is also a good way of **meeting new people** and **finding new friends**. And people who want to be good at sport usually don't smoke.

However, not everybody thinks that doing sport is a good thing. The famous English author George Orwell wrote that competitive sport is basically **war without shooting**.¹ People sometimes support their favourite team so much that they start hating the people who support other teams. The worst of these people are called **hooligans**. They damage stadiums and attack other spectators.

Some people do sport just **for fun** but other people do it **for money**. Professional sportsmen can become very famous and very rich. People from very poor countries, for example from Kenya, often see sport as the only way to escape from their situation.

However, it is very hard to become one of the top players or athletes. Professional sportsmen have to **train very hard** every day. Sometimes, they want to win so much that they **start cheating**. They **start taking drugs** that make them stronger and faster but that **damage their health**. One of the most famous cheaters was the cyclist **Lance Armstrong**. All his victories have been cancelled and he cannot take part in cycling competitions anymore.

¹ http://www.orwell.ru/library/articles/spirit/english/e_spirit

Kinds of sports

Individual sports and team sports

There are a lot of kinds of sports. In some sports, for example athletics or judo, people usually compete as individuals. That is why these sports are called **individual sports**. In other sports, for example in football or ice hockey, people need to make teams before they can start playing. That is why these sports are called **team sports**.

Summer sports

Some sports are usually done in the summer. If you want to do them in winter, you usually need to be inside. Many of these sports are part of **the Summer Olympic Games**.

Football

Football is one of the most popular sports in the world. In the USA, it is usually called **soccer**. It is popular all over the world. There are **two teams** that play against each other. Each team has **11 players**. Ten of them are trying to kick the ball into the other team's goal. They **mustn't touch the ball with their hands**. Only the eleventh player can touch the ball with his hands. This man defends his team's goal and he is called a **goal keeper**. If somebody does something against the rules, he gets a **yellow card**. If he does something bad again or if he does something really serious, he gets a **red card** and he **has to stop playing**.

The most famous football league in the world is probably the **Premier League**. It is played in England. Some of the most famous Premier League clubs are **Manchester United, Chelsea, Arsenal, and Liverpool**. Other famous leagues are **Bundesliga** (in Germany) or **La Liga** (in Spain). Some of the most famous football teams in the world are **Barcelona, Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain or FC Bayern Munich**. The best European teams compete against each other in the **UEFA Champions League**.

The most famous football competition in the world is probably the **World Cup**. In this competition, the national teams of the world's countries play against each other. The most successful team in history is **Brazil**. They have won this competition **five times**. Some of the most

famous footballers of all time are **Pelé, Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, David Beckham**, and others.

American football

When Americans say the word football, they usually mean **American football**. This sport is **more similar to rugby** than to European football. The players **can touch the ball with their hands** and they can **make the opponent fall down**. Injuries are quite common in this sport. It is **the most popular sport in the USA**. The final of the National Football League is called the **Superbowl** and it is watched by a lot of people.

Baseball

Baseball is a sport that is very popular **in the USA** and in some other countries. You play it with a **bat and a ball**. The most famous baseball league in the world is **Major League** in the USA. Some of the most famous baseball teams are **New York Yankees** and **Boston Red Sox**.

Basketball

Basketball is played by **two teams of five players**. The players are trying to throw a ball into a basket that is about three metres high so it is good for basketball players to be **tall**. Basketball is very popular in **the USA**. The top American basketball league is the **NBA** (National Basketball Association). Some of the most famous American basketball teams are **Los Angeles Lakers** and **Chicago Bulls**. The most famous basketball player of all time is probably **Michael Jordan**.

Volleyball

Volleyball is a team sport. There are **six players** in a volleyball team. The teams are separated by a net and they are trying to **hit a ball over the net**. A very popular version of this game is **beach volleyball**. It is played by teams of two players on a sand court.

Tennis

Tennis is a very popular summer sport. The players are separated by a net and they are trying to **hit a ball over a net with a racket**. If there is only one player on each side of the net, it called **singles**. If there are two players on each side of the net, it is called **doubles**. Tennis players usually wear **white clothes**. The most famous tennis competition in the world is definitely **Wimbledon**. It is the oldest tennis tournament in the world. It is played in London. Some famous male tennis players are for example **Roger Federer** and **Andy Murray**. Some famous female tennis players are **the Williams sisters, Maria Sharapova**, and **Martina Navrátilová**.

Table tennis and other sports similar to tennis

Table tennis is also known as **Ping-Pong**. Like tennis, it can be played by two or by four players. It is a very **fast sport**. It is especially **popular in Asia**. **Badminton** is also similar to tennis. It is not played with a ball but with a **shuttlecock**. Another sport that is played with a ball and with rackets is **squash**. It is played inside and the players have to hit the ball against the walls.

Golf

Golf comes from **Scotland**. In golf, you hit a small ball with a stick and try to **get it into a hole**. The most famous golf player is probably **Tiger Woods**.

Cricket

Cricket is a **typically English sport**. It is popular in many countries that were part of the British empire – for example **India, Pakistan, Australia, and South Africa**. It is something like football, golf and baseball put together.

Water sports

A lot of sports are played or done **in water**. There are swimming competitions all over the world. Some competitions are about **speed**. The fastest swimmer wins. Other competitions, like synchronised swimming, are more about **beauty**. Some of the most famous swimmers are **Ian Thorpe** and **Michael Phelps**.

There are some water team sports, for example **water polo**. It looks a bit like rugby in water. Then there are sports that don't take place in the water but **on the water**. There are various boat races and competitions with **kayaks, rafts, yachts and other kinds of ships**. The most famous boat race in the world is probably **the race between Oxford and Cambridge**.

Athletics

Athletics is a name for a group of sports that are based on **running, jumping, and throwing**. Some disciplines that are part of athletics are **sprinting, long distance running, long jump, high jump, javelin throw, discus throw, shot put, decathlon, and others**. The most important athletics event is the Olympic Games. The longest Olympic distance for running is **the marathon** – it 42,195 metres long. One of the most famous athletes of all time is the sprinter **Usain Bolt**. Some of the most famous Czech athletes are **Jan Železný** (javelin), **Emil Zátopek** (long-distance running), **Jarmila Kratochvílová** (running), **Helena Fibingerová** (shot put), **Barbora Špotáková** (javelin) **Tomáš Dvořák** and **Roman Šebrle** (decathlon).

Gymnastics

There are quite a **lot of gymnastic disciplines**. Gymnasts can perform their tricks with or without special equipment. It is **beautiful** to look at but it can also be **dangerous**. One of the greatest gymnasts of all time is **Simone Biles** from the USA. The most famous Czech gymnast is **Věra Čáslavská**.

Aerobics

Aerobics is a bit similar to gymnastics. It is **physical exercise performed in the rhythm of music**. It is especially popular among women. They usually do it in a group led by an instructor.

Martial arts, boxing and sumo

Martial arts are sports that include **fighting**. Most of these sports come from **Asia**. **Karate, aikido** and **judo** are famous Japanese martial arts. **Kung fu** comes from China. There is a famous American movie **Kung Fu Panda** about it. One of the most famous martial artists of all time is **Bruce Lee**. He was also an actor. **Krav Maga** is a martial art from Israel.

Boxing is probably the most famous fighting sport. Boxers usually wear **gloves** and hit each other in a **boxing ring**. It can be **dangerous** and amateur boxers have to wear helmets. Some of the most famous boxers of all time are **Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson** and **Wladimir Klitschko**.

Sumo is a **Japanese** kind of wrestling. Sumo fighters are massive. Their goal is to get the opponent out of the ring or make him touch the ground.

Weightlifting and body building

Weightlifting is about **strength**. The point is to lift as much weight at once as possible. It is an Olympic sport. **Body building** is more about **looks** than about strength. Bodybuilders want to look very **muscular**. Sometimes, they start taking **steroids**. These drugs are **very dangerous** and have many negative effects. They can damage the heart and other organs. Steroids make your muscles bigger but your testicles smaller. The most famous body builder of all time is **Arnold Schwarzenegger**.

Horse riding

There are many competitions that involve horses. The most common ones are probably **horse races**. These are about speed. The fastest horse and its jockey win. The most famous horse race in Britain is the **Grand National**. It takes place in Liverpool. The most famous horse race in the Czech Republic is **Velká Pardubická**. It includes a jump called Taxis. It is very high and dangerous and about thirty horses have died after trying to do this jump.

Winter sports

Winter sports are done in the winter. If you want to do them in the summer, you have to go to the mountains or to some place with special equipment. Many of these sports are part of the **Winter Olympic Games**.

Ice hockey

One of the most famous winter sports is ice hockey. It is very popular in **northern countries**. It is played on a **rink** and the players have to wear **skates**. There are **six players** in one ice hockey team. Five of them are skating all over the rink. They are using **hockey sticks** and they are trying to **get the puck into the other team's goal**. The sixth player is called a goaltender or **goalie**. He is defending the team's goal.

The most famous ice hockey competition in the world is the **NHL** (National Hockey League). It is played in **North America**. There are about thirty teams from the USA and from Canada. Some teams that play in the NHL are for example **Toronto Maple Leafs, Pittsburgh Penguins, New York Rangers**, and others. The winner of the NHL gets the **Stanley Cup**. Some of the most famous ice hockey players of all time are **Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux, and Jaromír Jágr**.

Skiing

There are many kinds of skiing. **Cross-country skiing** is like running, but on skis. **Alpine skiing** (also called **downhill skiing**) is different. The skiers get to the top of a mountain and then slide down. If they want to get back to the top, they usually have to use a **ski lift**.

Many people do skiing **for fun** but there are also a lot of **skiing competitions**. There are also special skiing competitions like **ski jumping** or **biathlon**. Biathlon is a combination of cross-country skiing and shooting.

The most famous Czech professional skiers are probably **Kateřina Neumannová** and **Ester Ledecká**. Kateřina Neumannová did cross-country skiing and Ester Ledecká does downhill skiing. **Aleš Valenta** is a famous Czech freestyle skier.

Snowboarding

Snowboarding is similar to downhill skiing. It is also similar to summer sports like surfing or skateboarding. People stand on a board and ride down a snowy slope. Professional snowboarders can do a lot of **interesting tricks**. Snowboarding became an Olympic sport in Nagano in 1998. The most famous Czech snowboarder is probably **Ester Ledecká**.

Skating

One of the most popular winter sports is skating. People come to a **frozen lake or pond**, put on their skates and start gliding on the ice. Or they can go to an **ice rink**. Skating on a rink is safer. If you are skating on a lake or on a pond and the ice breaks, you can die very horribly.

There are many kinds of skating competitions. In **speed skating**, the fastest skater wins. The most famous Czech speed skater is probably Martina Sáblíková. **Figure skating** is very popular with spectators. There are a lot of varieties – individuals, pairs, groups, ice dance and so on. The skaters jump and spin and the judges decide whose performance is the most beautiful.

Bobsleigh

In bobsleigh, two or four people are riding in a **sledge**. There is a famous movie *Cool Runnings* about the **Jamaican bobsleigh team**. They didn't win any medals but they became very popular with the audience.

Extreme sports

Extreme sports are sports that are **very dangerous**. These sports are usually quite new. People who enjoy doing extreme sports often say that they give you a **sense of adventure**. Others say that some people just can't be happy when they are safe so they invented a lot of **crazy ways to get killed**.

Bungee jumping

Bungee jumping was invented in **New Zealand**. People jump from a high place (a bridge or a tower, for example) but they don't usually hit the ground. That is because they are **tied with a rope** to the place they jumped from.

Sky diving

Sky divers jump out of helicopters or planes. They usually go up very high because they want to **spend a lot of time falling**. They have **parachutes** on their backs. If the parachutes open, they glide gently to the ground.

Ice climbing

Ice climbers look for **glaciers, frozen waterfalls** and other such places. When they find them, they climb them.

Water skiing

Water skiing is skiing on water. How is it possible? The skiers are holding a rope that is tied to a speedboat.

Mind sports

There are some sports that are more **about thinking** than about moving or strength. The most famous mind sport is **chess**. There are chess tournaments all over the world and the best players can earn quite a lot of money. Some of the most famous chess players of all time are **Mikhail Tal, Bobby Fisher, and Gary Kasparov**. The current world champion (2018) is **Magnus Carlsen** from Norway. The best Czech chess player is **David Navara**. Another famous mind sport is the Japanese game **go**. It is popular especially in **East Asia**. Some people think that these games are not real sports.

Weird Sports

There are some sports that are not serious. People do them because they want to have fun. Some cities are famous for these special sports. People from all over the world travel there every year and take part in these competitions. Here are some examples:

Cheese rolling

This event takes place in Gloucestershire in the UK every year. How does it work? A large cheese is rolling down a steep hill and people are running after it. The first person to get to the bottom wins the cheese.

Wife carrying

This strange sport comes from Finland. The husband has to carry his wife through a course full of obstacles as fast as possible. There is even a world championship. It takes place in Finland. The winner gets the weight of his wife in beer.

Chess boxing

Chess boxing is a combination of boxing and chess. There are five rounds of boxing and six rounds of chess. You win if you either knockout or checkmate your opponent before the time runs out.

This overview is largely based on the following articles and websites:

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/>

- <https://www.extremesportscompany.com/list-of-extreme-sports>

- https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/10-super-weird-and-bizarre-sports_us_55f09755e4b002d5c077e25c