

American football

Pronunciation

- Aerosmith /'eərəsmiθ/
- Baltimore /'bɔ:lɪtmə:/
- Buccaneers /'bʌkə'niəz/
- Canton /'kæntən/
- Diana Ross /daɪ.ənə 'rɒs/
- Doug Atkins /,dɒg 'ætkinz/
- finale /fi'na:l/
- George Blanda /,dʒɔ:dʒ 'blændə/
- honours /'hɒnəz/
- Jerry Rice /,dʒeri 'raɪs/
- Johnny Unitas /,dʒɒni 'ju:nɪtəs/
- Larry Csonka /,læri 'zɒŋkə/
- Mike Ditka /,maɪk 'dɪtkə/
- Princeton /'prɪnstən/
- Roger Staubach /rɒdʒə 'staubæk/
- Rutgers /'rʌtgəz/
- Steve Young /,sti:v 'jʌŋ/
- Tampa Bay /'tæmpə 'beɪ/
- Tom Petty /,tɒm 'peti/
- Troy Aikman /,trɔɪ 'aɪkmən/

Football game, Morgantown, West Virginia, 2012



Although both basketball and baseball are highly popular in the United States, it is American football that draws the greatest number of high school and college participants across the country. Also, it is the most uniquely American sport of the three, as unlike basketball and baseball it hasn't gained much popularity outside North America. The name 'American football' is used so as not to confuse it with the England-born football (or 'soccer' for Americans), but in the United States it is simply called football. The rules of the game were based on those of Rugby football. Rugby originated in the mid-19th century in England and later became very popular in Canada as well. In the 1860s Americans modified the rules of the game and initiated college football, which soon gained popularity across the United States. As in rugby, American football players are supposed to catch the ball and then run with it, doing their best not to allow the players of the opposing team to stop them. However, in rugby one cannot throw the ball forward or block the player who is not carrying the ball. The first official game of American football was played in 1869 between the teams of Princeton University and Rutgers University.

The American Professional Football Association was formed in 1920 with eleven teams. Two years later it changed its name to the currently used National Football League (NFL). Today it includes 32 teams which are divided into two conferences: American Football Conference and National Football Conference. A typical NFL season lasts 17 weeks during which

each team plays sixteen games and has one 'bye' (a week without playing). The six best teams from each conference play against each other in the NFL playoffs and the winners meet in the championship game called Super Bowl. The game is a very important national event, and in recent years it has been watched annually by over 90 million viewers. In effect, the airtime prices for commercials during Super Bowl are much higher than at any other time during the year. It is also regarded as very prestigious for artists to perform during Super Bowl halftime shows. Some American stars who have headlined the shows so far are: Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince, Tom Petty and Aerosmith.

The best place to visit if one wishes to learn more about the history of American football is the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. It was opened in 1963 and since then it has been extensively expanded so as to include a museum, library, gift shop and, most impressively, a modern GameDay Stadium, which allows NFL fans to watch films on an enormous Cinemascope screen. Pro Football Hall of Fame also honours legendary football players by inducting them during an annual ceremony. Chicago Bears are the team with the record number of thirty Hall of Famers, including George Blanda (1927–2010), Doug Atkins (1930–2015) and Mike Ditka (born 1939). Some other important inductees are: Johnny Unitas (1933–2002; Baltimore Colts), Roger Staubach (born 1942; Dallas Cowboys), Larry Csonka (born 1946; Miami Dolphins), Steve Young (born 1961; Los Angeles Express, Tampa Bay Buccaneers and San Francisco 49ers), Jerry Rice (born 1962; San Francisco 49ers) and Troy Aikman (born 1966; Dallas Cowboys).

The magic of American football has never been more effectively captured on film than in the TV series *Friday Night Lights*. It lasted for five seasons (2006–2011), received numerous Emmy awards and its finale is remembered as one of the most emotional moments on American TV.

Do you know?

There are several indoor variants of American football played on smaller fields. The most popular of them is called Arena football and it was developed in 1981.

EXERCISES



Match the word and the definition.

- (to) capture • conference • (to) headline • (to) honour • inductee • (to) originate • participant • (the) playoffs • stadium
- a) a group of teams that play against each other to see who is the best _____
 - b) to give someone public praise or a reward in order to show respect and admiration _____
 - c) a series of games played by the best teams in a competition in order to decide the final winner _____
 - d) to appear as the main performer at an entertainment event _____
 - e) a person who takes part in an activity or event _____
 - f) a building used for sports events which consists of a playing field surrounded by rows of seats _____
 - g) to record or take a picture of something using a camera _____
 - h) a person who is introduced formally or with a special ceremony to an organization _____
 - i) to come from a particular place, time, situation _____



Fill in the missing prepositions.

- a) American football draws the greatest number _____ high school and college participants _____ the country.
- b) The rules _____ the game were based _____ those _____ Rugby football.
- c) _____ American football players are supposed to catch the ball and then run _____ it.
- d) The first official game _____ American football was played _____ 1869 _____ the teams _____ Princeton University and Rutgers University.
- e) The six best teams _____ each conference play against each other _____ the NFL playoffs.
- f) The winners meet _____ the championship game called Super Bowl.
- g) _____ effect, the airtime prices _____ commercials _____ Super Bowl are much higher than at any other time _____ the year.
- h) It is regarded as very prestigious _____ artists to perform _____ Super Bowl halftime shows.
- i) The GameDay Stadium allows NFL fans to watch films _____ an enormous Cinemascope screen.



Put the correct article in each gap. If no article is required, put '—' in the gap.

- a) _____ American football hasn't gained _____ much popularity outside _____ North America.
- b) _____ Rugby originated in _____ mid-19th century in _____ England.
- c) In _____ 1860s _____ Americans modified _____ rules of _____ game and initiated _____ college football.
- d) In _____ rugby one cannot throw _____ ball forward or block _____ player who is not carrying _____ ball.

