World Cup 2010

Glossary of Football Words and Expressions

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
18 yard box
Another way to say PENALTY BOX

Abandoned match
A match that the REFEREE stops before REGULATION TIME (and sometimes before the game starts), for example because of very bad weather, or a bad PITCH INVASION

Above the relegation zone
In a position that will mean that you don’t have to worry about being RELEGATED to a lower DIVISION if you are still in that position at the end of the SEASON, e.g. the fifth team from the bottom. Often used with a number of points, e.g. “Blackpool must be relieved now that they are seven points above the relegation zone”

Accuracy
Putting the ball where you want to go, usually used about PASSes and SHOTs. Often used in contrast to power.

Aerial skills
Being good at HEADing the ball

aet
A short form of AFTER EXTRA TIME

After extra time
The score after 90 minutes plus an extra thirty minutes, because the score was EVEN after 90 minutes

Against the run of play
A goal scored when the other team seems to be doing much better, for example when most of the play is in the other half of the pitch

Agent
Usually used to talk about the people who represent the players, e.g. during TRANSFER negotiations

Aggregate score
Calculated by adding the two scores together when teams play two matches, one at HOME and one AWAY, for example in the SEMI FINALS

All
Used to show that the FINAL SCORE was a draw, e.g. “Two all” for “Two two”
All-seater
A stadium with no standing room on the TERRACES where everyone must sit down instead. All
British grounds in the top divisions have to be all-seaters due to safety concerns

Anticipation
Being able to predict what will happen next, for example where a STRIKER will try to score

Area (the)
The rectangular part of the pitch near the goal within which the GOALKEEPER is allowed to use
their hands to control the ball. More properly called the PENALTY AREA

Artificial turf
TURF made from man-made materials rather than the usual grass. It is easier to maintain but
difficult to play on and can injure players who fall on it

Assistant referee
The modern official name for a LINESMAN

Association football
The official name of football, to contrast it with rugby football. The informal form SOCCER is a
shortening of the word “association” in this expression

Attacker
(1) Any player with the ball who is trying to move it towards the OPPOSITION’s goal (2) A striker

Attempt
Usually means a failed SHOT AT GOAL

Automatic booking –
A YELLOW CARD or RED CARD that the referee has to give due to the rules, with no place to
make their own judgement on the matter, e.g. a LATE TACKLE from behind with STUDS UP

Automatic promotion
Teams who can go up to the next DIVISION without needing to go through a PLAYOFF match
with other candidates for PROMOTION, usually because they finished first or second in their
division at the end of the REGULAR SEASON

Away fans
SUPPORTERs of the team that is not playing at their own GROUND, almost always fewer in
number than the HOME FANs

Away goal (rule)

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
When the AGGREGATE SCORE from HOME and AWAY matches is a DRAW (e.g. 2-2), goals scored AWAY count more than goals scored at home and so can decide which team progresses to the next round (in the example, the team who was playing at home in the second match because they scored once away from home wins).

**Away leg**

When a TIE is played in LEGs at both teams’ GROUNDS, the match that isn’t played at your own ground. The opposite of HOME LEG

**Away**

Playing away from your HOME GROUND at the ground of the OPPOSITION. The opposite of HOME

**Away strip**

A second set of clothes (KIT) that teams use when teams play AWAY and their usual strip would be too similar to that of the HOME TEAM, e.g. because both Liverpool and Manchester United play in red.

**Azzurri**

Nickname for the Italian NATIONAL SIDE, meaning “the Blues” due to the colour of their STRIP

**B team**

Another way to say RESERVES.

**Back four**

The DEFENDERs of one team

**Back heel**

Using the back of your foot to PASS the ball, or sometimes SHOOT

**Back of the net (in the)**

A goal, as a ball which goes into the goal is usually trapped at the back of the net until it is picked up

**Back pages**

A nickname for the sports pages of a newspaper, due to their position in British and other newspapers

**Bafana Bafana**

The nickname for the South African team, meaning “The Boys”

**Ball control**
Ball watching
Looking only at the ball and so not seeing where the other players are, especially the player who you are trying to MARK

Balloon shot
A SHOT that went far too high

Banner
A long piece of cloth that has a message written on it and is usually supported at both ends by poles. It is displayed by the crowd to support particular players, protest decisions by the management, etc.

Beat the keeper
Score a goal

Beat
Win against another team
Typical mistake “SPURS won Aston Villa” should be “Spurs beat Aston Villa”

Beautiful game (the)
Football

Bench warmer
A player who is always a substitute and rarely used

Benefit match
A match where the profits go towards a charity or a player’s retirement

Bicycle kick
A shot in which the player flips their body over to SHOOT (or more unusually CROSS) by kicking the ball while it is over their own head

Bid for a player
A team saying how much they would pay the team that a player has a contract with if that player was to TRANSFER to their club

Big man
A tall player, often used for an attacker in a team that plays LONG BALL football

Big-money signing

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
A player that the club had to pay a lot of money in TRANSFER FEES for

**Blind**

A common insult used for referees who have made a wrong decision, e.g. not seen a FOUL

**Blues (the)**

Nickname for English side Birmingham City, due to the colour of their HOME STRIP

**Blunder**

A bad, probably embarrassing, mistake

**Bobble (n/v)**

Movement of the ball on the ground, e.g. due a PITCH that isn’t flat, that means that it doesn’t move in a straight line and so makes it difficult to kick, TRAP or SAVE

**Boo (n/v)**

A noise made by the FANs to show disapproval

**Bookie**

A very common short form of BOOKMAKER

**Booking**

Being shown a YELLOW CARD or RED CARD for doing something wrong, such as HANDBALL or a FOUL

**Bookmaker**

A person or company who takes bets. In the UK, bookmakers will take bets on anything apart from when someone is likely to die, so you could bet today on David Beckham’s son being in the England team one day

**Boots the ball**

Kick the ball hard and far, perhaps without thinking about where you want it to go

**Bosman (transfer)**

A FREE TRANSFER of a player who has come to the end of their contract, possible due to a ruling by the European Court of Justice on the case of Belgian footballer Jean Marc Bosman

**Bosman ruling**

See BOSMAN (TRANSFER)

**Bottom half of the table**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
If there are 12 teams in a division, the lowest 6 teams at that time. This expression is usually used to indicate that those teams are in danger of RELEGATION at the end of the season.

**Bottom of the table**

The 12th team in a twelve team DIVISION, likely to suffer a automatic DEMOTION to a lower division if they don’t win soon

**Bovril**

A hot drink made from meat extract that smells like gravy and is popular in English football grounds, as it keeps you warm and alcohol is not available

**Box (the)**

see PENALTY BOX

**Box to box**

A move that quickly goes from near one goal to the other end of the PITCH

**Brace**

Two goals, usually by the same player, in one match. One less than a HAT TRICK

**Bring someone down**

Tackle someone so that they fall on the ground. Often, but not always, a FOUL

**Bury the ball (in the net)**

Score a goal

**Cap**

An appearance for a team, e.g. the NATIONAL SIDE. Often used to express the number of times that a player has played for one side, e.g. “David Beckham got his 100th cap for England last weekend”

**Captain**

A player who is given responsibility for organising the other players on the pitch

**Captain’s armband**

A piece of fabric worn around the upper arm that shows who the CAPTAIN of each team is. If the captain is SUBSTITUTED, this is passed to another player.

**Card**

YELLOW CARDS and RED CARDS given for breaking the rules of the game. Often used to show how badly one or both sides broke the rules during the match, e.g. “Last night’s match produced a record 12 cards, including 4 red ones, for the two sides”

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Carrying (the ball)

A GOALKEEPING walking more than three steps while holding the ball

Caution

Being told by the REFEREE that you are doing something wrong. Usually followed by a YELLOW CARD or RED CARD if you do the same thing again

Central defenders

The one or (usually) two DEFENDERS who play near the middle of the PITCH rather than on the WINGS

Central midfield

MIDFIELDERS who play near the centre circle rather than on the WING

Centre circle

The circle in the centre of the PITCH, with a 10 yard radius centred on the CENTRE SPOT. The KICK OFF takes part at the centre of this, with players from the opposing side staying outside this circle until the whistle for kick off is blown.

Centre forward

The FORWARD who plays nearest to the goal and so is often the TARGET MAN

Centre half

Another way to say CENTRAL DEFENDER

Centre spot

The point right in the middle of the pitch where you KICK OFF from

Chairman

The businessman who organises the business side of a football club, often someone who owns the club or has invested a lot of money in it. Higher up the chain of command than the MANAGER, but much less involved in the day to day running of the club

Champions’ League - the European Champions’ League.

The most prestigious competition in Europe, where the top teams from each national league play against each other in GROUP and KNOCKOUT stages

Change ends

At HALF TIME, the teams have to switch which goal their GOALKEEPER plays in and so which goal they will try and score in (to avoid advantages from things such as wind direction and a sloping pitch)
Changes at half time  
SUBSTITUTIONS that happen during the 15 minute HALF TIME break

Changing rooms  
The place where the players change into and out of their KIT, take a shower etc. Also LOCKER ROOM and DRESSING ROOM

Chant  
Songs that SPECTATORS sing or shout during the match, often based on other songs and supporting or making fun of a particular player

Charity Shield  
The normal and informal way of saying the FA Community Shield (from its old name), a one off match played between the previous SEASON’s winners of the LEAGUE and FA CUP in England and so therefore theoretically deciding on the best SIDE in the country

Chip also “chip shot”.  
A shot that is hit high in order to bend over the GOALKEEPER’s head and go into the goal

Clean sheet  
Not letting any goals in, often used to describe how well a GOALKEEPER or DEFENCE is playing, e.g. “Peter Shilton kept a clean sheet for 15 matches”

Clean sweep  
Winning all the TROPHIES that it is possible to in one season

Clean tackle  
Taking the ball from someone without it being a FOUL

Clearance  
Getting the ball away from your own goal, e.g. by kicking it far away towards the other goal

Climb  
Jump to HEAD the ball

Closing minutes/ Closing seconds  
The last few minutes or seconds of a match, often with one side desperately attacking to make up for a DEFICIT

Club side The opposite of INTERNATIONAL SIDE  
The team that players usually play for, in contrast to the NATIONAL SIDE.
Coach

Often confused with MANAGER, as a modern football manager has a job similar to a coach in earlier times, and newspapers often use the terms as synonyms. A coach is often someone between a manager and a TRAINER, and deals with practical things connected to play, whereas a manager takes a more strategic role connected to picking a team, tactics etc.

Coaching staff

The non-playing parts of the team, such as the COACH and masseurs

Coin toss

See TOSS

Comfortable on the ball

Good at DRIBBLING

Coming back from injury

playing or training after missing some matches due to injury,

Commentator

Someone on radio or TV who explains the action to listeners or viewers

Competitive match

The opposite of a FRIENDLY, in which the points gained actually count towards QUALIFICATION, winning a CHAMPIONSHIP etc

Concede a goal

A goal being scored against your team. The opposite of score a goal.

Control

TRAPping and DRIBBLing

Corner

Also “Corner kick”

A DEAD BALL situation in which you kick the ball from the spot on the corner of the pitch near the OPPOSITION goal, usually as a CROSS. Collocations Awarded a +, Take a +

Corner flag

The piece of fabric on a pole that marks the CORNER

Cramp
A medical condition in which it becomes impossible to move a muscle and it becomes stiff and painful, often used by not drinking enough liquids or not doing STRETCHes before playing

**Cross (n/v)**

The ball being kicked from the WINGS towards a player, usually a STRIKER, near the OPPOSITION goal. Collocations LOOPING CROSS, LOW CROSS

**Crossbar**

The piece of wood that goes horizontally across the top of the goal, supported by the two POSTs. “The ball hit the crossbar” usually means that it was nearly a goal.

**Cruise**

Win easily, or seem to be winning easily when something surprising happens

**Cup champion**

The opposite of a LEAGUE CHAMPION, a team that has won a CUP COMPETITION

**Cup competition**

A competition that includes or entirely consists of a KNOCKOUT competition. The opposite of a LEAGUE

**Cup tie**

A match in a KNOCKOUT completion, often contrasted with more important LEAGUE matches

**Cut (the)**

When it is decided which of the players won’t be on the TEAM SHEET for the forthcoming match or championship, e.g. when a World Cup coach leaves out seven players of the original list of thirty in order to only take 23 to the championship

**Cut infield**

A WINGER coming away from the TOUCHLINE and towards the PENALTY BOX

**D (the)**

The normal colloquial name for the PENALTY ARC, which players must stay outside while a penalty is being taken

**Dangerous in the air**

Likely to score goals with his head

**Dangerous position**

A FREE KICK which is likely to lead to a goal, for example because it is near the goal or the attacking side has a DEAD BALL SPECIALIST

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
**Dead ball**

A situation in which play has stopped and so the side which has the ball can take their time about how and when they move the ball into play, e.g. a penalty or corner. Some teams spend a lot of time planning and practising these situations.

**Dead ball specialist**

Someone who is particularly good in DEAD BALL situations, especially someone who is very good at FREE KICKs.

**Debut**

The first time a player plays for a particular side or at a particular level, e.g. “He must be very nervous to have his international debut at the age of 17”

**Decider**

A goal or match which settles which team will win, e.g. one which gives one side an UNASSAILABLE LEAD, or a GOLDEN GOAL.

**Decision**

What the referee decides, for example whether a player was OFF SIDE and so whether a goal should be DISALLOWED or not.

**Deducted**

Points taken off a team’s total for the season (so far) for breaking the rules, for example illegally TAPPING players, bribing REFEREES, going bankrupt, or THROWING a match.

**Defend a lead**

Stopping the other team scoring to even up the score, for example defending when it is 1-0 to your team at HALF TIME or when the score is 2-1 to your team after the FIRST LEG.

**Defender**

A person whose main role is to stop the opposition’s attacking players from scoring and getting the ball near their goal.

**Defensive midfielder**

A midfielder whose main role is to PLAY DEEP or SHIELD the defenders, i.e. whose main duties are defensive.

**Defensive wall**

see WALL.

**Deficit**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
The number of goals or points that a team is behind. Collocations Make up the +

**Deflection**

A SHOT AT GOAL hitting a player that is in the way and so changing route, often making it harder to SAVE and so causing a goal.

**Deliberate hand ball**

Most HAND BALLs just involve the ball accidentally hitting someone on the hand or lower arm, but players sometimes try to use their hands or arms to CONTROL the ball. See HAND OF GOD for a famous example.

**Demotion**

The same as RELEGATION. The opposite of PROMOTION. Being forced to go down to a lower DIVISION because you finished the SEASON.

**Derby**

A match between sides who play in grounds that are close to each other, for example in the same or neighbouring towns.

**Diamond – See MIDFIELD DIAMOND**

**Direct free kick**

A FREE KICK that will count as a goal if it goes into the NET without touching any other players. The opposite of INDIRECT FREE KICK.

**Dirty match**

A match that has many FOULs and so probably many CARDs given in it.

**Dirty team**

A team that FOULs the other team a lot, or even aims to injure people.

**Disallowed goal**

The time when the ball goes INTO THE NET but the referee says it was not a goal, for example because a player was OFFSIDE.

**Disciplinary record**

How many YELLOW CARDs and RED CARDs a player has got, recently or over their career.

**Dissent**

Arguing too much with the referee, for example after a CARD is given. This can lead to a RED CARD or other punishment.
Dive
A player pretending that they have been FOULed and falling over so that they can get a FREE KICK, PENALTY or even a BOOKING for a player on the other team. This is an offense and will lead to a CARD for the attacking player if the REFEREE decides that it is a DIVE rather than a FOUL

Diving header
A header of a LOW CROSS, meaning that the player’s body is nearly horizontal when they make contact with the ball and that they usually land flat on the ground

Division champions
The team at the top of the TABLE at the end of the SEASON. The division champions of the top division, e.g. the English PREMIERSHIP, are LEAGUE CHAMPIONS, and the division champions of lower divisions are usually PROMOTED

Division
Usually 12 to 16 teams who play each other twice during a SEASON to see which team will be DIVISION CHAMPIONS, which teams will get a PROMOTION and which teams will get a RELEGATION, for example the English PREMIERSHIP

Domestic double
Winning two different competitions in your own country, e.g. the FA CUP and the LEAGUE in the same season

Domestic football season
The part of the year when teams play in competitions in their own country, often with tours to other countries beforehand and with European and other international finals afterwards

Domestic
Things in your own country, contrasting with international, European etc

Draw
(1) equal scores at the end of a match (2) picking which teams will play against which in a championship

Dreaded vote of confidence
A chairman saying that he has complete confidence in the manager or coach, “dreaded” because it is almost always followed by being fired

Dressing room
The place where the players get changed before and after a match. Also CHANGING ROOMS and LOCKER ROOM
**Dribble**

Controlling the ball with your feet as you run

**Drop back**

Players playing for a while closer to their own goal than usual, e.g. to defend against an attacking move or to DEFEND A LEAD

**Dummy**

Pretending you are going to move one way so that you can GO PAST by moving in the other direction, or the same with kicking the ball. Also FEINT

**Early bath**

An amusing way of saying a RED CARD, because you will go back to the LOCKER ROOM before the other players

**Elimination**

Losing a match and going out of a KNOCKOUT COMPETITION, or losing a match and so not being able to get enough points to PROGRESS to the NEXT STAGE

**Engine room**

Similar to a PLAYMAKER, but often used about a player who has that impact due to running and hard work

**Equaliser**

A goal which makes the scores EVEN, for example going from 2-1 to 2-2

**Even**

Both teams having the same score during a match, e.g. being 2 ALL (2-2) at HALF TIME. Often confused with a DRAW, which is the score at the end of the match being equal

**Executive box**

A luxurious area in which the chairman of the club, rich businessmen etc can watch the match and socialise in comfort

**Exposed at the back**

Problems in defence, usually because of players being too close to the OPPOSITION goal, but also possibly due to injuries to the first choice DEFENDERS

**Expulsion**

see RED CARD

**Extra time**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Play continuing after the REGULATION TIME of 90 minutes because the scores are EVEN and so the winner is not yet decided. GOLDEN GOAL is a particular kind of extra time.

**FA (The)**

The (English) Football Association, the English member of FIFA, in charge of all divisions below the PREMIERSHIP, and the NATIONAL SIDE

**FA Charity Shield**

See CHARITY SHIELD

**FA Cup**

The most prestigious CUP COMPETITION in England. Unlike the LEAGUE CUP, NON-LEAGUE SIDES can also play in this competition

**Fan**

A supporter of a particular club. Although fan comes from the word FANATIC, their modern meanings are very different.

**Fanatic**

Someone who is too obsessed with a particular team, an extreme FAN

**Fanzine**

A magazine (usually more like a newsletter) written by and published by fans, often critical of the club management and sold by people in the street outside the stadium before a game

**Far post**

The post that is furthest away from the person taking a SHOT at goal

**Favourite**

The team that most people think will win

**Feint**

See DUMMY

**FIFA**

The International Federation of Association Football (French: Fédération Internationale de Football Association), in charge of international football such as the World Cup. Pronounced as it was one word, like “feefer”

**Final**

The last match of a CUP COMPETITION, deciding who the champion is
**Finishing**

SHOOTing, usually used to talk about how well a player does so

**Firm**

A slang way of referring to a gang of football hooligans

**First half**

The first 45 minutes of match (plus INJURY TIME), followed by a break

**First leg**

When which team wins will be decided after two matches, usually HOME and AWAY (e.g. the Champions’ League SEMI FINALS), the first of the two matches which is played is the first leg

**First team**

Another way to say SENIOR TEAM

**First touch**

1. Being able to quickly control the ball when it comes to you, e.g. being to PASS it without needing to TRAP it first
2. The first time a player kicks or heads the ball after coming into the match, e.g. “After coming on as a SUBSTITUTE, Owen scored the EQUALISER with his first touch (of the ball)”

**Five a side**

A form of football with only 10 players in total on the pitch, which is usually smaller than a REGULATION PITCH

**Fixture**

A MATCH

**Fixture list**

A list of all the games that a team will play during a season and which ones will be AT HOME or AWAY

**Flag**

See CORNER FLAG

**Flag post**

The (traditionally wooden) post which marks the corner and has a fabric flag on it

**Flair player**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
A player who is very skilful, for example being able to DRIBBLE, GO PAST MEN or do the BICYCLE kick. Often used to suggest that the player isn’t so reliable or won’t do boring things like DEFEND.

Flank
Another way to say WING.

Flat back four
The defenders playing in (more or less) a straight line. The opposite of the SWEEPER system.

Flick
Like a DEFLECTION in that the ball isn’t deflected much from its original route, but deliberate and usually with the foot or head.

Floodlights
Lights that mean play can continue when it would otherwise be too dark.

Fluke
A lucky goal or save, for example the ball going off your bottom INTO THE NET.

Follow a team
Support a particular SIDE.

Football kit
See KIT.

Football pitch
See PITCH.

Footie
An informal British way of saying football, more popular in the UK than the expression “SOCCER” since Brits realised that Americans always use “soccer” (“football” in the USA meaning American football).

Formation
How the players are arranged on the pitch, e.g. FOUR FOUR TWO.

Forward
A more official way of saying STRIKER.

Four four two
A FORMATION with four DEFENDERS, four MIDFIELDERS and two STRIKERS.

**Fourth official**

A referee who watches the match on TV and can be asked to look at SLOW MOTION REPLAYs to make a difficult decision, e.g. whether the ball CROSSed THE LINE

**Free kick**

Similar to a PENALTY, but with the ball further from the goal. Collocations Awarded a +, Take a +, INDIRECT FREE KICK, DIRECT FREE KICK

**Free transfer**

A player moving from one team to another without the new club needing to pay TRANSFER FEES, for example as a BOSMAN TRANSFER at the end of their contract

**Friendly**

A match that is just for practice or charity. The opposite of a COMPETITIVE MATCH

**From 12 yards**

From the PENALTY SPOT (12 yards is the distance from the goal to the penalty spot).

**Full backs**

Wider defensive players, in contrast to CENTRAL DEFENDERS

**Full international**

A match with NATIONAL SIDE that is COMPETITIVE, i.e. not a FRIENDLY. This expression is often used to show that a player has reached the top level of the game, e.g. “Roberts never expected to play his first full international at the age of 34”

**Fumble**

The GOALKEEPER not catching the ball properly, often leading to a goal

**Gaffer**

A slang way of saying “boss”, often used for a MANAGER

**Game in hand (a)**

When two or more teams are equal on points but one team has played one fewer match and so might have more points when they have played that game, they are said to have a game in hand

**Game of two halves (a)**

A clichéd expression to say that games often change in the SECOND HALF, for example because of something the COACH has said, a change in tactics, or a SUBSTITUTION

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Game
See MATCH

Gamesmanship
UNSPORTSMANLIKE behaviour

Gazza
The nickname for PAUL GASGOIGNE, a creative but troubled former England player

Get
Start to work well as a team, similar to form a good RAPPORT

Get on the scoresheet
A player who hasn’t scored yet scoring their first goal, usually used about one match but sometimes for a whole season

Get the nod
Be chosen to play in a match, as if the players were standing in a line and the manager was choosing them one by one by nodding his head to indicate a player or say yes

Giant killers
A team that has BEATen a team from much higher in the LEAGUE, e.g. a NON LEAGUE TEAM beating a team in the PREMIERSHIP and ELIMINATING them from the FA CUP

Gifted players
Often “Naturally gifted players”. Very skilful and creative players. Often used about people who waste their talent.

Give the ball away
For example, PASSing the ball to a player from the other team, being too easy to TACKLE or losing the ball while trying to DRIBBLE. A very negative expression, more so than LOSE THE BALL

Go down
Be RELEGATED

Go in front
Take the lead, for example go from 1-1 to 2-1

Go past someone
DRIBBLE the ball around someone so that you end up closer to their goal than they are
**Go the right way**

A GOALKEEPER guessing which way a SHOT will go and so diving in the right direction. Often used for PENALTIES.

**Go the wrong way**

The opposite of GO THE RIGHT WAY

**Go top**

Reach first place in the DIVISION during the SEASON

**Go up**

Be PROMOTED

**Goal**

(1) The rectangular opening consisting of a horizontal CROSSBAR supported by two BARs, usually with a net behind. (2) Kicking the ball into the goal of the other team

**Goal area**

Official name for the SIX YARD BOX

**Goal celebrations**

The way in which players show their enjoyment at having scored a goal, e.g. dancing, embracing or pulling your shirt over your head. These are often individual to certain players or decided on before the goal is scored, but some goal celebrations such as over-long ones can be an offense

**Goal difference**

When two teams have an equal number of points in a league, which one is further up the TABLE is decided by which has a better total from adding up all the goals they have scored and then taking away all the goals scored against them, e.g. “Chelsea and Birmingham have the same number of points, but Birmingham are FAVOURITES to win the LEAGUE due to a much better goal difference of +22”

**Goal fest**

A game with lots of goals, e.g. 6-4. The opposite of a NO SCORE DRAW

**Goal hanger**

An insulting term for a player who rarely goes back into their OWN HALF but instead stays very close to the OPPOSITION goal, mainly used in schoolboy football as they would often be OFFSIDE in professional football

**Goal kick**
A DEAD BALL situation in which the goalkeeper is allowed to kick the ball from the spot without being tackled, usually due to the ball going behind the GOAL LINE off a player from the other team, but also sometimes in place of a FREE KICK

**Goal line**

The line that goes through the GOAL and to the two corners, often mentioned when it is controversial whether the ball went into the GOAL or was SAVED.

**Goalie**

An common informal way to say GOALKEEPER.

**Goalkeeper**

A player who is allowed to use their hands to save the ball from going into the goal. They have to wear a different shirt from the other players, and usually wear gloves.

**Goalless draw**

See NO SCORE DRAW.

**Goalmouth**

The area very near the goal, especially right in front of it, and so an easy place to SCORE from.

**Goalpost**

A longer but less common way of saying the (traditionally wooden) POST at the side of the goal.

**Golden boot**

The reward for the most goals scored by one player in a season, e.g. in the Champions’ League.

**Golden generation**

Used to describe lots of great players who just happen to be born in the same country at more or less the same time, perhaps shown by winning a YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP, e.g. “Now that the Portuguese Golden Generation is aging, this is perhaps their last chance to win the World Cup.”

**Golden goal**

A kind of EXTRA TIME where the match only continues until the next goal, at which time the team that scored it wins, with the other team having no chance to score an EQUALISER.

**Ground**

A more common way to say stadium.

**Group match**

A game in the early stages of a competition that finishes with a KNOCKOUT STAGE for the final etc but has teams playing in a mini-league at the beginning, like the World Cup. E.g. “England
thought they were joint FAVOURITES to win the European Cup, but now it seems they will be lucky to win any of their group matches”

**Group of death**

A group in which has no clear FAVOURITEs and so all the teams have a good chance of getting enough points to go through to the next round and therefore the task is very difficult for them

**Group stages**

In a competition that finishes with a KNOCKOUT stage, the earlier stages in which several teams play each other in a mini league format to see which teams get enough points to progress to the next stage (usually the top two teams)

**Gunners (the)**

Nickname for English side Arsenal, as “arsenal” means a place where guns are stored

**Hacking**

(1) Kicking at other players’ legs, often used for someone who is trying to get the ball but is so unskilful that they often FOUL people, but also for deliberate fouls (2) Kicking at the ball in a more hopeful than skilful way.

**Hairdryer treatment (the)**

A COACH shouting at his team at HALF TIME if they are losing, used because you can imagine the air from their shouting mouth being like a hairdryer going over your face

**Half time**

The 15 minute break after the first (approximately) 45 minutes of play

**Half volley**

Kicking the ball after it has just hit the ground and so hasn’t really had time to bounce, making it look similar to a VOLLEY and similarly difficult to kick well

**Hammer the ball home**

Kick the ball very hard and score a goal

**Hammers – Nickname for the English side West Ham**

**Hand ball**

A FOUL in which the ball hits the hand or lower parts of the arm. Collocations deliberate +, intentional +

**Hand of God**
The goal which Maradona scored against England in the World Cup by lifting his hand above his head, named after his famously false statement after the match that it was the head of Maradona but the hand of God

**Handling outside the area**

A GOALKEEPER using his hands outside the area near the goal where he is allowed to, leading to a FREE KICK for the other side

**Hat trick**

Three goals by the same player in the same match

**Head in – Score a goal with your head**

**Header**

Using your head to control the ball, e.g. in trying to score a goal. Typical mistake heading shoot x

**Heart**

Often used to talk about a team who don’t have excellent skills but still win or DRAW through determination, good teamwork, hard work etc.

**Heavyweights**

Rich, successful, big and/or historic sides. The opposite of MINNOWS. From boxing, as if a flyweight boxer was asked to step into the ring with a much bigger and heavier fighter.

**Holding midfielder**

Another way to say DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

**Home advantage**

Being more than usually likely to win a match due to playing at your HOME GROUND

**Home defeat**

Losing a match at your own stadium

**Home fans**

SUPPORTERs of the team who is playing at their own stadium

**Home ground**

The stadium of your team

**Home grown players**
(1) Players who came up from the YOUTH TEAM rather than being bought from other teams (2) Players from the country they are playing in, the opposite of foreign players

Home leg

A match at your own stadium whose score will be added to a match in your opponent’s stadium to decide who wins.

Home nations

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as the UK is the “home of football”

Home strip

The football KIT that a team usually uses and is famous for, e.g. black and white stripes for Newcastle

Home team

The team who are playing in their own stadium

Hooligan

A “football FAN” whose main aim is violence

Host a championship

Have a competition in your country, city or stadium, e.g. “South Africa is hosting the 2010 World Cup”

Howler

A really bad piece of play, for example a FUMBLE by the GOALKEEPER or missing a SITTER

Hugging the touchline

Playing very WIDE

Impact sub

See SUPERSUB

In form

Having a particularly productive period. Often used for STRIKERS who have been scoring a lot of goals recently.

In front

“Two goals in front” is the same as “A LEAD of two goals”, e.g. 4-2

Indirect free kick

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
A FREE KICK which must hit another player before it goes into the net in order to count as a goal. Usually a lesser punishment than a DIRECT FREE KICK

**Injury time**

If the match has to stop while injured players get back up, are treated or are STRETCHERED OFF, the time this takes will be added onto the end of the FIRST HALF or the end of the match, meaning that an average match is actually 93 minutes rather than 90 minutes

**Intercept**

Take the ball which someone from the other team was trying to PASS to their own player

**Interval**

A less common way to talk about the HALF TIME BREAK, only usually used by journalists

**Into the net**

Into the goal

**Jab**

Kicking the ball without moving your foot very much

**Jersey**

A football shirt

**Keep the ball in play**

Stop the ball going over the white TOUCHLINE at the side of the PITCH and so not need to stop play for a THROW IN, GOAL KICK or CORNER KICK

**Keeper**

The normal informal way to say GOALKEEPER

**Kick off**

The start of the match, in which the team who won the COIN TOSS can kick the ball first from the CENTRE SPOT

**Kick off time**

The time the match will start, traditionally 3 o’clock in the afternoon

**Kick**

Use your foot to hit the ball

**Kingpins**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
A player who controls the game, usually a MIDFIELDER

**Kit**

Also “Football kit”. The normal word for the clothes that footballers wear.

**Knock**

A slight injury from colliding with another player

**Knock the ball down**

Head the ball down to the ground so you or another player from your team can kick it, usually so that they can SHOOT

**Knockout competition**

A championship in which the team which loses is out of the competition and doesn’t have another chance to play. The opposite of a LEAGUE

**Knockout round**

The part of a competition in which the team who loses is out and doesn’t have another chance to play, e.g. the SEMI-FINALS. The opposite of a GROUP ROUND

**Kop (the)**

The nickname for some stands that are built on a slope, most famously the liveliest STAND at Liverpool’s GROUND Anfield

**Last ditch tackle**

A TACKLE which will cause the attacking player to be in front of goal with only the GOALKEEPER to beat if it fails

**Last gasp goal**

A goal in the last few moments of the match, often used for an EQUALISER or a goal that gets the team points that they absolutely must get, for example to avoid RELEGATION. The literal meaning of “last gasp” is your last breath of air before you die

**Late tackle**

Trying to TACKLE a player after they have already SHOT or PASSed the ball to someone else, and therefore knocking into them rather than the ball. An offense, often leading to a CARD

**Lead**

(1) How many goals a team is ahead during the game, e.g. if the score is 3-1 the HOME TEAM has a lead of two goals (2) How many points a team is ahead in the DIVISION

**League champions**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
The top team of the whole LEAGUE (meaning the top team in the top DIVISION) at the end of the season. Usually the most prestigious title in the country

**Leave the goal wide open**

A GOALKEEPER standing in a position that makes it easy to score, for example being too close to one POST

**Left-footed**

(1) Finding it easier to kick with your left foot, similar to being left-handed but not always going together with that (2) Using your left foot to SHOOT, usually used about a right footed player using their WEAKER FOOT

**Leveller**

A goal which makes the scores EVEN, e.g. going from 2-1 to 2-2. An informal way to say EQUALISER

**Lift the trophy**

(1) Hold the TROPHY above your head to show it to the fans (2) Win the competition

**Linesman**

The traditional name for the two ASSISTANT REFEREES who run up and down outside the SIDELINES, rather than around on the pitch like the REFEREES. Linesmen often decide if a player is OFFSIDE or if the ball has gone OUT OF PLAY

**Linked with**

“Steven Gerard has been linked with Real Madrid” means that there are rumours about him joining that club

**Loan**

Letting one of your players play for another club, sometimes because you hope to sell them later and sometimes to give them practice

**Locker room**

Another way to say CHANGING ROOM or DRESSING ROOM

**Lockout match**

A match in which no FANs are allowed, for example because there was problems with violence or racist CHANTing in the last match

**Lone striker**

A FORMATION in which only one player stays close to the OPPOSITION goal

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
**Long ball game**

A traditional British tactic in which the ball is kicked high along the length of the pitch to be headed, rather than passed through the MIDFIELD.

**Looping cross**

A CROSS which goes high, therefore going over DEFENDERS. The opposite of a LOW CROSS.

**Lose on penalties**

Be EVEN after EXTRA TIME, but then score fewer penalties than the other side and so lose the game. England have done this more at the World Cup than any other team ever.

**Lose the dressing room**

Lose the confidence of the players or start to have a bad relationship with them. Used about a manager, usually to explain why he is being sacked.

**Low cross**

A CROSS which stays close to the ground, for example for a DIVING HEADER or VOLLEY.

**Low shot**

A SHOT which stays close to the ground, often meaning that the GOALKEEPER has to dive far to their right or left to reach it.

**Magic sponge (the)**

When players were in pain, a trainer used to come out with a bucket of water and a sponge. Amazingly, this often lead to the player getting up and starting to play again, hence “magic”

**Magic spray**

A modern version of the MAGIC SPONGE.

**Majority of possession**

Your players having the ball more than the other team. See POSSESSION.

**Man on**

Shouted to tell someone that they are in danger of being tackled.

**Man short (a)**

Playing with ten men, because one player received a RED CARD.

**Man to man marking**

A system in which each defender is given one attacking player from the other team that they have to stay close to. The opposite of ZONAL MARKING.
Manager

Traditionally, someone who is in charge of picking a team, deciding on tactics, and buying and selling players, one level higher in management than a COACH.

Marking

Staying close to an attacking player to make sure they can’t get the ball or can’t PASS or SHOOT if they have it

Match fit

Fit and healthy enough to play in a COMPETITIVE GAME. Often used negatively for a player who was injured and has recovered but hasn’t trained enough to be able to play effectively.

Match of the Day

Traditionally the most popular English football show on TV

Match winner

The goal that meant that your team won the match, e.g. the goal that took the score from 2-2 to 3-2. Collocations Be responsible for the +. Also “match winning goal”

Midfield anchor

Another way to say DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER

Midfield diamond

A formation in which the four MIDFIELD players play with two side by side and the other two on their own in front and behind

Midfielder

A player who plays near the centre of the pitch, between the DEFENDERs and the STRIKERs

Mid-table

Not near the top or bottom of the DIVISION

Mid-table obscurity

A team that is always in the middle of the DIVISION, e.g. because they often draw, and are therefore never in the dramatic situation of being likely to be PROMOTED to a higher division or RELEGATED to a lower one

Minnow

A small or weak team, named after a small fish that is common in British ponds

Misdirect a pass

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
See MISPLACE A PASS

*Misplace a pass*

PASS the ball to the wrong place, e.g. to an OPPOSING player or to somewhere the player it is meant for can’t possibly run to

*Mistimed tackle*

Trying to tackle someone before or after they have the ball, usually leading to a FOUL. Usually means a LATE TACKLE

*MOTD*

Short written form of MATCH OF THE DAY

*Movement off the ball*

Moving around even when someone else has the ball, e.g. MOVING INTO SPACE so that someone can pass the ball to you

*Moving into space*

Running into a place on the pitch where there are no OPPOSITION players, making it easy to pass the ball to you

*National side*

A common expression for the NATIONAL TEAM. The opposite of CLUB SIDE

*National stadium*

The usual venue for CUP FINALS, INTERNATIONAL MATCHES etc, e.g. WEMBLEY in the UK

*National team*

The team that represents the whole country, e.g. the teams that compete in the WORLD CUP

*Near post*

The post nearest to the person who is going to SHOOT, PASS, take a CORNER or take a FREE KICK

*Net*

The mesh that is almost always put behind the goal, connected to the CROSSBAR and POSTs then connected to the ground in some way behind. Often used to talk about scoring a goal, e.g. “in the BACK OF THE NET”

*Netting*
The material that the NET at the back of the goal is made from. Often mentioned to say that a CROSS hit the side of the goal, meaning that “hit the netting” which is bad thing, is very different from “GO INTO THE BACKOF THE NET”, which is a goal

**Neutral venue**

A stadium that is not the HOME GROUND of either side, used because there has been crowd violence or because the political situation makes it impossible to play in one of the home grounds

**Neutralize**

Make sure that a threatening team or player is actually not a danger, e.g. by good MAN TO MAN MARKING or by using the right FORMATION

**Next round (the)**

The part of the championship that you will progress to if you win a match, e.g. the SEMI-FINALS if you win the QUARTER FINALs

**Nigging fouls**

Very small fouls, which are more likely to annoy than to lead to a YELLOW CARD

**Nigging injury**

An injury that is never very painful and doesn’t completely stop you from playing, but means you can never play to your best

**Nil**

The normal British way to say “zero”, as in “two nil” for 2-0

**Nippy –** Able to run quickly

**No score draw**

The final score being 0-0. Sometimes jokingly called a “no score bore”

**Non-league side**

In England, teams which are lower than the Second Division and so cannot play in the LEAGUE CUP until they are PROMOTED

**Nutmeg**

Kick the ball through the legs of a player

**Obstruction**

Deliberately standing somewhere to stop a player from running where they need to go. An offense, likely to lead to a FREE KICK

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Odds

How likely you are to win a match, e.g. “The odds are against SPURS winning the next match in their league campaign”. From betting.

Off his line

Used to explain that a goalkeeper is far from his own goal, making it easy for a STRIKER to CHIP the ball over his head. Collocations Caught +, Standing +

Off target

Not towards the goal, so that it wouldn’t go in even if the goalkeeper wasn’t there. CollocationsShots +, + shot, +0 attempt

Off the ball

While the other player doesn’t have the ball, for example SHIRT TUGGING just to annoy another player or to stop them RUNNING INTO SPACE

Official supporters’ club

A SUPPORTERS’ CLUB organised by the football club

Officials

The REFEREE and LINESMEN

Offside rule

The rule that aims to stop GOAL HANGING by forcing players to receive the ball further towards their own goal than the opposing side’s defenders. Not understanding the offside rule is often stated as proof of women not really appreciating football.

Offside trap

Defenders running forward to force the opposing striker into an OFFSIDE position and so making sure the game is stopped and they get POSSESSION. If this tactic goes wrong it usually leaves the striker only needing to beat the GOALKEEPER to score.

On a yellow card

Having to be careful not to FOUL anyone etc. because you already have a YELLOW CARD (in that match or a previous match) and so will have to miss the rest of that match and/ or the next match if you get another yellow card

On paper

“It’s a good team on paper” means that theoretically it should be a good team (but often that it isn’t actually that good, for example because the players don’t get on with each other)

On target
Likely to lead to a goal if no one gets in the way, i.e. going towards the goal

**On the bench**

A SUBSTITUTE who does not play from the beginning of the game but might later. Collocations Starting +, Stuck +. See BENCHWARMER.

**On the break**

Scoring on the break means scoring while most of the players are in the other half of the pitch, for example because the other team has had most of the POSSESSION and done most of the attacking

**One touch football**

A style of play in which players very quickly PASS the ball

**Open play – The opposite of a SET PIECE**

**Open talks**

Start negotiating with a player or team about purchasing someone

**Opener**

see OPENING GOAL

**Opening goal**

The first goal of the match, making the score 1-0 or 0-1

**Opposition (the)**

The most common way to talk about the team that you are playing against

**Other side (the)**

Another way to say the OPPOSITION

**Out and out striker**

Someone who purely has the role of scoring goals, rather than TRACKING BACK for defence or SETTING UP GOALS for others

**Outfield players**

Every player but the GOALKEEPER

**Outnumbered**

There being more players from the other side on the PITCH or in a particular area of the pitch, e.g. near your goal
**Out-of-position**
Not where you should be on the PITCH

**Outside of the foot**
The right side of your right foot or the left side of your left foot. Using the outside of your foot is often seen a sign of skill

**Over two legs**
Two matches, HOME and AWAY

**Own goal**
The ball accidentally going into your goal off one of your own players, e.g. a failed BACKPASS

**Own half**
The half of the PITCH nearest to your goal

**Park the bus (in front of the goal)**
Pull all the players back to defend, usually to DEFEND A LEAD

**Partnership**
Two players who play close to each other, e.g. two CENTRAL MIDFIELDERs

**Pass**
Kicking the ball from one player to another player on the same side.

**Passing game**
A style of play in which PASSing is the most important element, the opposite of LONG BALL

**Penalty (kick)**
Being able to try to score a goal in your own time from the PENALTY SPOT. This is used to decide which team wins if the score is EVEN at the end of EXTRA TIME, or is used as a punishment, for example for a FOUL inside the AREA. Collocations Be awarded a +, Take a +, Concede +

**Penalty arc**
The official (but rarely used) name for the D

**Penalty box**
The area near the goal in which the GOALKEEPER may use his hands and a FOUL will result in a PENALTY KICK

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Penalty shoot out

Penalties at the end of EXTRA TIME to decide which team will win

Penalty spot

The spot 12 yards from the goal from which PENALTY KICKS are always taken

Physical

A physical team or physical match is one in which there is a lot of reliance on physical force. Often a euphemism for lots of FOULs

Pint-sized

Small, like an old-fashioned British milk bottle. Used to describe players, especially STRIKERs

Pitch invasion

The FANs rushing onto the PITCH, for example to celebrate winning the match or to protest against a decision by the REFEREE. This can result in the club being fined, or even the match being ABANDONED

Pitch

The usual word for the area that football is played on. NB, “Football pitch” but “Tennis court” and “Basketball court”. “Football GROUND” means the stadium, not just the pitch

Pivotal moment

A moment that changed the whole game, e.g. a goal which gave a team confidence, a RED CARD or an injury.

Play deep

Playing closer to your own goal than is usual for that player or position, e.g. a STRIKER playing behind another striker to help them

Play on

A signal from the REFEREE that the players shouldn’t stop to take a FREE KICK but instead keep on playing, usually because they have the ball and are in a good position and so just as likely to SCORE as they would be if they were given a free kick

Playing for a draw

Aiming to defend to keep the scores EVEN rather than taking a risk in order to win the game, usually because one point is enough for you, perhaps because you won the FIRST LEG or because you have a good LEAD in your DIVISION

Playing wide

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
See WIDE

**Playmaker**
A more common expression for **KINGPIN**

**Playoff**
A special match to decide something that hasn’t been decided by the normal matches, e.g. which of the teams between third and sixth position in the division will be **PROMOTED**

**PLC**
Public Limited Company. A British company that anyone can buy the shares of, similar to an American corporation. Many English **PREMIERSHIP** clubs are PLCs and so need to worry about keeping their share price high and being taken over.

**Pools**
A way of betting on football results, similar to a lottery

**Position**

(1) Where you play on the pitch, usually decided as part of a **FORMATION**
(2) The name for the position where you play, e.g. **LEFT BACK**

**Possession**

(1) Having the ball
(2) How much of the match your team had the ball, often given as a percentage, e.g. “Although Italy had 70% possession, they still could only manage a DRAW”. Collocations

Lose +, **MAJORITY OF POSSESSION**

**Post**
The two poles at the edges of the goal that hold up the **CROSSBAR**, traditionally made from wood. Collocations Rebound off the +, In off the +, NEAR POST, FAR POST

**Post-match analysis**
The time after the MATCH when the **COMMENTATORs** and **PUNDITs** talk about the match they have just seen

**Professional foul**
A deliberate **FOUL** that is difficult for the **REFEREE** to spot or is meant to injure an important player on the other side

**Progress (v)**
Go on to the **NEXT ROUND**

**Promoted**
Allowed to go up to a higher DIVISION, for example by being the top team in your division or winning the PLAYOFFs

Promotion

See PROMOTED

Pub side

A team that represents a particular pub in a local league, often a SUNDAY LEAGUE, and which usually consists of regular customers. Used as an insulting way of talking about a bad professional football side

Pull the ball back

A PASS or CROSS which goes somewhat backwards

Pundit

A football expert, e.g. someone who analyses the match at HALF TIME rather than speaking all the way through like a COMMENTATOR

Purple patch

Another way to say IN FORM, usually used about STRIKERS

Put it away

Score a goal

Qualifying rounds

Matches that you have to play to get into a championship, for example playing other teams in your region for a chance to go to the WORLD CUP FINALS.

Quarter finals

The stage before the SEMI FINALS, where eight teams play a match (or often two TIEs) to decide which four teams go forward to the NEXT ROUND

Rankings

A chart showing which teams are most likely to win a championship, often used to make sure that all the best teams are not put in one GROUP

Rapport

How well players or a whole team understand each other, e.g. being able to ANTICIPATE each other’s moves. Often used about an important PARTNERSHIP

Read a pass

Know where and when a PASS is going to end up

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
**Real**

Pronounced like “rey-al”, this is the usual way of referring to Real Madrid in English-speaking countries. In Spain, Real Madrid is simply “Madrid” (Atletico Madrid being “Atletico”), while “Real” is short for Real Sociedad.

**Red card**

The ultimate punishment, meaning that a player has to leave the PITCH for the rest of the game and usually also miss future games

**Red Devils**

Idiotic nickname for Manchester United and the Korean NATIONAL SIDE

**Reduced to ten men**

Playing with only ten people in your team after a RED CARD, usually making it difficult to win the game

**Ref**

A common short form for REFEREE

**Reflex shot**

A SHOT kicked with no time to consciously plan what you are doing, e.g. a VOLLEY

**Reflex save**

A save made without any time to plan, e.g. the GOALKEEPER diving in the wrong direction during a PENALTY but sticking his leg up to save the ball

**Regional championship**

A competition between the best sides of the same continent or region, for example the European CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**Regular first-team place**

Usually being picked to play in the SENIOR TEAM, the aim for most players

**Regular season**

The dates that most teams will have to play games, e.g. between September and April or May in most European countries. The dates for PLAYOFFs, the CHAMPIONS LEAGUE final, WORLD CUP etc are before or after this, so are said to fall outside the regular season

**Regulation ball**

A ball that has been certified by FIFA for use in official matches, and therefore good practice to play with when the regulations are changed or if you want to play professional football
**Regulation pitch**

A PITCH whose size is within the limits set by FIFA, and so good practice for top level football. Similar to “Olympic size swimming pool” in swimming

**Regulation time**

90 minutes, to which INJURY TIME is added to decide on the actual length of the match

**Relegation**

Being forced to go down to a lower DIVISION, e.g. due to being the bottom team at the end of the SEASON or losing the PLAYOFFs

**Relegation battle**

(1) Have to make a great effort not to be RELEGATED (2) A match with another team who might also be RELEGATED, i.e. a SIX POINTER

**Relegation zone**

The places in the TABLE which will mean being RELEGATED to a lower DIVISION or having to go through PLAYOFFs to STAY UP, e.g. the last four teams out of a 16 team division

**Replay**

(1) Showing a part of the match again on TV (2) Playing the same match again, for example because the original match had to be ABANDONED

**Reserve team**

See RESERVES

**Reserves**

A team of players who aren’t able to enter the SENIOR TEAM due to not being IN FORM etc, who often play against reserves from other clubs for practice, sometimes in a dedicated league.

**Restart**

Start a match again which has been paused due to things like bad weather, the SPOTLIGHTS going off, or a PITCH INVASION

**Result**

(1) The final score (2) Winning, e.g. “We didn’t play very well, but we were just happy to get a result”

**Right wing**

Playing on the right edge of the pitch (from your own perspective), near the TOUCHLINE

**Robbed**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
The expression “We were robbed” is often used to say that bad refereeing decisions were the only reason we didn’t win a match.

**Rock-solid**

Used to describe a DEFENSE that it is impossible to get the ball past, like trying to get through a rock wall.

**Round robin play**

Where every team plays every other team.

**Runners up medal**

An award for the RUNNERS UP.

**Runners**

up – The second placed team in a DIVISION or the losing team in a FINAL.

**Running off the ball**

See OFF THE BALL.

**Save**

Stop the ball from entering your goal. Mainly used to talk about what the GOALKEEPER tries to do.

**Score (a goal)**

Put the ball into the OPPOSITION goal.

**Scoring opportunity**

A chance to SCORE.

**Scout**

A member of staff whose job it is to find new players for the club, for example by watching matches in lower divisions and trying to spot good players (especially young ones) to buy.

**Scraped into**

Only get just enough points to do things, e.g. only be above the team below by GOAL DIFFERENCE, like a boat scraping over the rocks at the bottom of the sea or a bus scraping its roof as it goes under a low bridge.

**Seagulls (the)**

The nickname for the excellent but surprisingly little known English side Brighton and Hove Albion.

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Season
Similar to an academic year for a university, e.g. “The 2008-2009 season ran from late August 2008 to May 2009”.

Season ticket
A ticket with which you can see all the HOME GAMES of your club, usually with one designated seat number

Second half
The second period of 45 minutes of the game after the fifteen minute HALF TIME break.

Secure the services of
Have a player join your team, e.g. by buying them from another club

See out his contract
Play with one club for the year or two until your contract period comes to an end rather than TRANSFERring to another club, either to retire when your contract comes to an end or to go to another club on a BOSMAN (free) transfer and so increase your wages

Semi finals
The matches that are played after the QUARTER FINALS to decide which two teams out of four will be in the FINAL

Sending off
A RED CARD

Senior team
The top team within one club, the opposite of the YOUTH TEAM or RESERVE TEAM

Set play
A FREE KICK, THROW IN or PENALTY

Set up (a goal)
Pass the ball so that it is in a position where someone else on your team can score

Severance package
The money that a team has to pay a manager who is still under contract to fire him

Shielding the defence
A MIDFIELDER helping to defend
Shimmy
Moving your hips in order to GO AROUND a player or as a FEINT

Shin pads
Protection for the bone at the front of your leg below the knee, worn under the socks

Shirt sponsors
Companies who pay for their company name to be printed on the team’s shirts

Shirt tugging
Pulling at a player’s shirt to restrict their ability to move. A minor offense.

Shoot
Kick the ball towards the goal to try and get the goal in it and therefore score

Shoot out
see PENALTY SHOOT OUT

Shot
The noun of SHOOT

Shots off target
The number of attempts at scoring goals by one team or player that wouldn’t have gone in even if the other team hadn’t been there

Shots on target
The number of goals that a player or team would have scored if the defending team had not got in the way

Showmanship
Using particularly difficult techniques like a BICYCLE KICK to entertain the crowd or show off

Side
A team, e.g. “The MANAGER says he is finally happy with the side he has put together for this season”

Sign a player
Have a player join your team, e.g. by buying them from another club

Signing
on fee – The money that a player gets when they TRANSFER from one team to another

**Signings**

New players, often bought from other clubs

**Silky skills**

Usually used to talk about skilful and apparently effortless PASSing and DRIBBLing

**Silverware**

A way to say TROPHIES, only usually used by journalists

**Sit back**

(1) Relax (2) Stop attacking, like a person relaxing into a sofa

**Sitter**

An incredibly easy shot, as if the ball is sitting there waiting for you to kick and score whenever you feel like it. Often used to say that someone should have scored an easy goal but missed it.

**Six pointer**

A match where you are playing against your closest rival and therefore a win (3 points) for you is also like taking another 3 points off them by stopping them winning and getting those points

**Six yard box**

The smaller of the two boxes around the goal

**Skinhead**

A fashion style with very short hair and often tattoos, tight jeans and Doctor Marten boots, associated with hooligans and extreme right wing groups

**Skipper**

An informal way of saying CAPTAIN

**Sliding tackle**

Trying to take the ball off someone by slipping along the ground towards them, easiest to do when the PITCH is wet but often leading to dangerous play

**Slot it in**

Score a goal, usually meaning due to accuracy rather than power, and maybe meaning from short range

**Soccer**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Short for “Association Football”, in contrast to “Rugby Football”. Used by American to contrast with American Football, which they call “football”. Generally avoided by Brits nowadays, as they hate sounding like Americans and so prefer the term FOOTIE

**Soccer field**

American English for FOOTBALL PITCH

**Solo effort**

A SOLO GOAL or close attempt

**Solo goal**

Scoring a goal without much help just before that time, for example GOING PAST several players rather than just HEADING in a CROSS

**Special One (the)**

The nickname for Real Madrid manager Jose Mourinho

**Spectacle**

Excitement and skill, the things that make a football match good to watch

**Sponsors**

Advertisers whose money goes to the team, e.g. SHIRT SPONSORS

**Sportsmanlike**

see UNSPORTSMANLIKE

**Spot kick**

A fairly common way of saying PENALTY KICK

**Spurs**

The nickname for English side Tottenham Hotspurs, from the last syllable of their name. The original meaning of “spurs” is the spiked things that horse riders wear on their shoes.

**Squad**

The players on a team

**Square**

Straight across the pitch, not towards either goal

**Stamp**
Step on a player who is on the ground, usually meaning deliberately and quite hard, and so often a RED CARD offense

**Stand**

One section of the stadium, e.g. one side of the rectangle. Often the four stands have different names. See KOP for an example.

**Starting appearance**

Playing from the beginning of a match, usually one better than being ON THE BENCH at the beginning of the game

**Starting line up**

The players who will be on the PITCH from the first moment of the game.

**Stay up**

Not be RELEGATED, usually used because it was assumed you would GO DOWN

**Stoppage time**

A more official way to say the INJURY TIME that is played at the end of a half of the match

**Stoppages**

Times when play is unexpectedly interrupted, e.g. waiting for injured players to get off the pitch or get up and start playing again

**Stopper**

A way of saying GOALKEEPER. Much less common than GOALIE and only usually used by journalists.

**Straight to the arms of**

A SHOT that is very easy to catch by the GOALKEEPER, without them even needing to move their body

**Stretchered off**

Taken off the pitch on a kind of portable bed, usually because of a bad injury but also possibly just due to CRAMP

**Stretches**

Exercises that players do to make their muscles flexible before they start playing

**Striker**

An attacking player who plays near the opposition goal and whose main role is to score goals
Strip
Another way to say football KIT

Studs
Things that stick out of the bottom of the sole of a FOOTBALL BOOT, stopping players slipping but also sometimes causing injuries during TACKLEs

Studs up
TACKLING or trying to TRAP the ball with the sole of your boot pointing towards another player, leading to a great danger of injuring another player and therefore likely to lead to a CARD

Sub
Short for SUBSTITUTE

Substitute
A player who starts the game ON THE BENCH and maybe exchanges positions with a tired or injured player during the match

Summer signings
Players bought during the time when there are no championships in Europe, the most popular time for such deals

Summer tours
European club sides visiting Asia, America etc to raise money and get match fit before the beginning of the new season (usually in late August or September)

Sunday league
An amateur competition that is run on Sundays, for example one in which PUB SIDes play against each other. Often used as a simile to talk about bad play by professional teams

Super sub
A player who is ON THE BENCH but because they are likely to surprise the other team when they COME ON rather than because they aren’t good enough to be the manager’s first choice

Supply line
(1) PASSes and CROSSes towards the STRIKERs (2) A player who provides those passes and crosses

Supporter
A more official way of saying a FAN

Supporters’ club

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
A group of FANs who exchange information about the club, travel to AWAY MATCHes together etc

**Suspension**

The time when a player cannot play for a team, for example because they got a RED CARD or several YELLOW CARDS, e.g. “Davids is serving a two month suspension for a positive drugs test”

**Swan song**

The final match or competition of a player, usually one who has had a distinguished history.

**Sweeper**

A CENTRAL DEFENDER with more flexibility to move backwards and forwards than other central defenders

**Switch flanks**

Move from the RIGHT WING to the LEFT WING, or the other way round

**Table football**

A pub game with plastic players that can be twisted around to “kick” a small ball into two wooden goals

**Tackle**

Take the ball off another player, usually by kicking the ball that they are trying to DRIBBLE

**Tackling back**

Taking the ball off a player who just took it off you

**Take the field**

Come onto the PITCH, either at the start of a game or as a SUBSTITUTE

**Tame shot**

A SHOT with little force or kicked near to the GOALKEEPER. Similar to WEAK SHOT, but usually used to criticize the goalkeeper, e.g. “A tame shot by Rooney somehow went between the goalkeeper’s legs and into the NET”

**Tap it in**

Score a goal with a gentle SHOT

**Tapping a player**
Illegal approaches to a player who is under contract with another club, as AGENTS and other clubs have to ask the present club’s permission before talking to their players. The expression comes from the idea of tapping someone on the shoulder.

**Target man**

A OUT AND OUT STRIKER whose only job is to wait for other players to pass the ball to them and then score

**Target**

See ON TARGET

**Team sheet**

The list of the STARTING LINEUP and SUBSTITUTES, often released as late as possible to stop the other team knowing exactly which players they will be playing against

**Tempo**

The speed at which the game is played

**Ten men**

See REDUCED TO TEN MEN

**Tenure**

How long a MANAGER or COACH stays in one job

**Terraces**

Places in the stadium where there are no seats and so the fans have to stand. Often used to suggest more enthusiastic supporters. There are no terraces in ALL SEATER stadiums

**The top flight of...**

The highest level, e.g. “The PREMIERSHIP is the top flight of English football”. Often used in sentences wondering how good a player is, e.g. “Smith was the top scorer in the 2nd division last year, but there are doubts whether he has the skills to be successful in the top flight”

**There's only one...**

A popular football CHANT, meaning that the player is unique (usually genuine, but sometimes sarcastically)

**Thrash**

BEAT by a large margin, e.g. 6-0. The literal meaning of thrash is also similar to beat, as in “The headmaster thrashed the boy for ten minutes for daring to call him by his first name”

**Thread the ball**
Pass the ball between two opposing players, similar to putting a thread into the hole in a needle

Three lions
The coat of arms on the England football shirt

Through on goal
Past the last DEFENDER

Throw a match
Deliberately lose a match, for example because you have bet against yourself or because you want the team you are playing against to get the points and so defeat another team that you want to be ELIMINATED. A very serious offense that could lead to a team being RELEGATED

Throw in
Returning the ball to play by throwing it from the TOUCHLINE, usually because the ball has gone off the pitch after hitting a player from the other team, but sometimes also in place of a FREE KICK. The only time when a player other than the goalkeeper is allowed to use their hands in play.

Tie
(1) A DRAW (2) A match, e.g. “A home tie” or “A difficult tie”

Time added on
How long the match will be played after the REGULATION TIME of 90 minutes, mainly due to play being stopped due to injuries during the match

Time wasting
A team who is IN THE LEAD or PLAYING FOR A DRAW taking a long time to take GOAL KICKs etc so the other team cannot score. A BOOKABLE OFFENSE that could lead to a YELLOW CARD

Top four finish
Between first and fourth place in the league at the end of the season. Important in leagues where the top four teams have a chance of being PROMOTED or can enter the CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Top half of the table
For example, the top 6 teams in a DIVISION of 12 teams. Used to show that they could be promoted, could have a TOP FOUR FINISH, or are in little danger of being RELEGATED

Top the group
The team with the most points from a GROUP STAGE, usually meaning that they can play a second placed team from another group in the first KNOCKOUT STAGE. Not the same as GO TOP, which can mean temporarily
**Toss**

When the referee flips a coin to decide which sides of the pitch each team plays in during the FIRST HALF and which team KICKs OFF. Also (but less commonly) COIN TOSS

**Touchline** –

(1) The white line that goes all around the edge of the pitch, showing where the ball has to stay inside if it is not to be a THROW IN, CORNER (KICK) or GOAL KICK (2) Often used to mean the area where the coach sits during the game, e.g. “Instructions came from the touchline to switch positions”

**Toyota Cup**

The traditional name for the match (and now championship) in which the REGIONAL CHAMPIONs play against each other to decide which the best CLUB SIDE in the world is. This is always a team from Europe or Latin America, being an unimportant TROPHY for the former and the most important one for the latter

**Tracking back**

Forwards coming back towards their own goal to help to defend when the other team is attacking

**Tracksuit**

A matching pair of casual trousers and top (usually with a zip), often worn on top of the football KIT until player WARM UP

**Trainer**

Someone just under the coach in the TECHNICAL STAFF, who concentrates on teaching and practising techniques with the players

**Training ground**

Where the players practise

**Transfer**

Buying a player from another club

**Transfer fee**

The money one club has to pay another to buy a player who is still under contract

**Transfer window**

If there is a time when teams cannot buy or sell players (usual nowadays), a short time in the middle where they can do so

**Trap (the ball)**

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Stop a ball moving, for example one which was passed to you

_Trophy_

A cup etc that shows that you won a match or championship

_Trophy cabinet_

(1) The glass-fronted display cabinet that clubs show CUPs etc they have won in (2) Used as a metaphor for how many championships the club has won, e.g. “Liverpool’s trophy cabinet will be empty again this year”

_Tuck it away_

Easily score, maybe from close to the goal. Similar to SLOT IT AWAY

_Tunnel (the)_

The space just before the PITCH that players stand in lines in after coming out of the CHANGING ROOMS. This expression is often used to talk about negative things like tension (or even fights) between the two teams, or feeling nervous before a big match

_Turf_

The grass (or ARTIFICIAL TURF) on a pitch

_Turn the tables_

Put the other team into the position you were in, as if you were playing poker and you literally turned the table around so that you now had their hand of cards and they had yours.

_Turnstile_

(1) The turning piece of metal that only lets people who have shown their ticket into the GROUND (2) Used in expressions to show how many people attended the match, e.g. “10,000 people came through the turnstiles”

_Two_

footed tackle – A dangerous way of trying to get the ball off someone where both legs are aimed towards them at the same time, similar to a wrestling move. Often results in a RED CARD

_Unassailable lead_

So far ahead in goals or points that other teams can’t possibly catch up

_Unconvincing victory_

Winning the match in an unimpressive way, for example because the other team was weak and should have been beaten by more goals, or only winning because of luck

_Unintentional hand ball_
The ball hitting your hand or lower parts of your arm accidentally. This is still likely to lead to a FREE KICK, but not to a CARD

*Unsportsmanlike behaviour*

Doing something that is within the rules of the game but is still unfair, for example not telling the referee when you know the goal went in off your hand

*Unstoppable*

A shot that is so WELL PLACED or (more commonly) powerful that the GOALKEEPER has no chance of SAVING it

*Unveil*

Show a new player or manager to the media and fans, or tell them that a new person has been found, similar to taking the veil off the bride at a wedding

*Upright (the)*

An informal way to talk about the two POSTs at the edge of the goal, as they are vertical (unlike the horizontal CROSSBAR)

*Utility players*

Players who can comfortably play in several POSITIONS, sometimes used in a negative way similar to “Jack of all trades”

*Versatile*

Able to play in several positions

*Veteran*

A player with lots of experience, and perhaps quite old

*Volley*

Kicking the ball when it is still in their air and so hasn’t yet hit the ground and bounced, therefore making it more difficult to judge and control

*WAGs*

An abbreviation of “wives and girlfriends”, used to be negative about the females who used to follow the England team around but were blamed for their bad performances

*Wall*

Several defending players standing in a line between a DIRECT FREE KICK and the goal in order to make scoring more difficult

*Wanted list*
A jokey way of talking about which players a MANAGER wants to buy, similar to a poster showing criminals who the police want to arrest

**Warm up**

(1) Stretching exercises etc before a player starts playing (2) Matches before a championship to allow the team to practice playing together

**Wasted ball**

A good chance (usually to score) that is not taken advantage of, for example PASSing when you should have taken a SHOT

**Water**

Logged pitch – Rain which hasn’t disappeared from the grass yet, sometimes leading to a match being cancelled if it is very bad

**Watertight defence**

Players who don’t let goals be scored and maybe don’t let the ball through, like a dam stopping water

**Weak effort**

A very bad SHOT at goal

**Weakened team**

Not the best 11 players that the club have, for example because they are resting some of them or some of them are injured

**Weaker foot**

Your left foot if you are RIGHT FOOTED, or your right foot if you are LEFT FOOTED

**Wearing the armband**

Being captain

**Weight (of a pass)**

How much force a PASS is hit with, affecting how far and fast it travels

**Well placed**

A SHOT or PASS which is put in exactly the right position

**Wembley**

The most famous stadium in London, NATIONAL STADIUM of England and home of most important English FINALS but not the HOME GROUND of any team

Written by Alex Case for UsingEnglish.com © 2010
Whistle

(1) The small metal instrument that the REFEREE and LINESMEN use to get people’s attention and indicate things like a FOUL and KICK OFF (2) The sound of that instrument (3) Disapproving noises from the crowd, usually together with BOOs

Wide

On the right and left of the pitch, far from the centre and near the TOUCHLINE

Wide open

See LEAVE THE GOAL WIDE OPEN

Win the ball

Take POSSESSION of the ball, usually meaning TACKLing but maybe also by INTERCEPTing a PASS

Wing

The sides of the pitch, furthest away from the goal and CENTRE CIRCLE, and near the TOUCHLINE. Comes from the wings of a bird or plane stretching left and right from their body

Wingback

One of the possible POSITIONs for a DEFENDER. A variation on the FULL BACK, but with more of an attacking role

Winger

A player who spends most of their time on the edges of the pitch near the TOUCHLINE

Wing

half – Short for “wing half back”, an old fashioned expression for a DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDER who plays on the edges of the pitch

Winter break

A time around Christmas when some leagues have no matches

Woodwork –

The POSTs and CROSSBAR, because they are traditionally made from wood (unlike the net). Collocations Hit the +, Off the +

World Cup

Also “FIFA World Cup”, “Football World Cup” and WORLD CUP FINALS. A competition once every four years to decide which NATIONAL TEAM is the best in the world (not necessarily the best team in the world see TOYOTA CUP)
World Cup finals

Usually called just “World Cup”, it is officially called the World Cup Finals because the QUALIFYING ROUNDS count as earlier parts of the tournament.

World XI

A real or imaginary selection of the 11 best players at that time in the world.

Wrong flank (the)

The side of the pitch that a player doesn’t usually play on, for example because they are LEFT FOOTED, or because they have SWITCHed FLANKS during the game.

Wrong foot

Your left foot if you are right footed and your right foot if you are left footed.

Yellow card

A yellow piece of card which the referee takes out of his or her pocket to show to a player who has done something quite bad such as committing a bad FOUL or HANDBALL, but not as bad as a RED CARD offense like fighting. A yellow card often goes together with another punishment such as a FREE KICK. Two yellow cards in one match means a RED CARD, and two yellow cards over a certain period means a SUSPENSION.

Yoyo team

A team that is often goes through PROMOTION and DEMOTION, going up and down like a toy yoyo.

Zonal marking

The system by which teams defend by each player taking responsibility for a particular area of the pitch. The opposite of MAN TO MAN MARKING.