

FOOTBALL VOCABULARY

BASICS

a match – two teams playing against each other in a 90-minute game of football

a pitch – the area where footballers play a match

a referee – the person who makes sure that the players follow the rules. Normally wears a black shirt and shorts, and has a whistle

a linesman (referee's assistant)– the person whose main duty it is to indicate with a flag when the ball has gone out of play, when a player is offside or when a player should take a corner

a goalkeeper – the player in goal who has to stop the ball from crossing the goal-line. The only player who is allowed to handle the ball during open play

a defender – a player who plays in the part of the football team which tries to prevent the other team from scoring goals, e.g. Kolo Touré is a defender and plays in defence for Arsenal and Ivory Coast

a midfielder – a player who plays mainly in the middle part of the pitch (or midfield), e.g. Michael Essien is a midfielder and plays in midfield for Chelsea and Ghana

an attacker – also called a forward; a player whose duty it is to score goals, e.g. Samuel Eto'o is an attacker and plays in attack for Barcelona and Cameroon

a skipper – the player who leads a team, also called the captain

a substitute – a player who sits on the bench ready to replace another team-mate on the pitch. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. the manager was not happy with his attacker and substituted him after 60 minutes

a manager – the person in charge of a team and responsible for training, new players and transfers. For example, Alex Ferguson is the manager of Manchester United

a foul – a violation of the rules. For example, if a player kicks another player it is a foul

a booking – a yellow card shown to a player by the referee for a serious foul. Two bookings or yellow cards result in a red card or sending-off

full-time – the point of the game when the referee blows the final whistle and the match is over. Normally after 90 minutes and any added injury or stoppage time

injury time – also called stoppage time, added minutes at the end of the regular playing time at half-time or full-time. Entirely at the referee's discretion and normally indicated by an official on the sideline (or touchline)

extra time – if a match has no winner at full-time, 2 x 15 minutes of extra time may be played in some competitions

offside – a player is in a position which is not allowed by the rules of the game, i.e. when an attacking player is closer to the opposing team's goal-line at the moment the ball is passed to him or her than the last defender apart from the goalkeeper

SCORING

the score – the record of goals that indicates who is winning. The final score is the result that decides who has won the match. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. the attacker scored a beautiful goal

to concede – to allow a goal in, the opposite of scoring a goal. For example, Ghana conceded only four goals in the World Cup qualifying group 2

a goal – a successful attempt at scoring achieved by putting the ball over the goal line into the goal past the goalkeeper. For example, Gyan Asamoah has scored a beautiful goal for Ghana

an own goal – a goal scored accidentally by a member of the defending team that counts in favour of the attacking team

the lead – when a team scores first it is “in the lead”, i.e. winning the match at the point of scoring. For example, Fabrice Akwa’s early goal gave Angola the lead after 72 minutes but the final score was 1-1 (one all)

an equaliser – a goal that cancels out the opposing team’s lead and leaves the match tied or drawn. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. Marouan Chamakh equalised for Morocco after 40 minutes and brought the score level

to win – a match in which a team is victorious and beats the other team. A win normally gives the winning team three points, the losing team does not get any points. More commonly used as a verb, e.g. Brazil won the World Cup in 2002

a draw – a match that ends in a tie, i.e. has no winner or loser. The teams get one point each for a draw. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. Congo drew 0-0 (nil all) with Senegal in June

a defeat – a match that is lost, the opposite of a win. For example, Sudan suffered a home defeat to Zambia in September 2002

to knock out – to eliminate another team from a competition. For example, in the last World Cup Brazil knocked out England in the quarter-finals

a penalty shoot-out – in a knock-out competition, a penalty shoot-out takes place if a match is a draw after full-time or extra-time. Five players from each team take a penalty each, and if the score is still level after that, one player from each team takes a penalty in turn, in order to decide who wins the match

a goal difference – If team A has scored four goals and team B one, the goal difference is three

a head-to-head – a way of deciding which team is ranked higher if two teams are level (or equal) on points. For example, if team A and B both have six points, but team A beat team B in the head-to-head game, team A will be ranked above team B

a play-off – an extra match to decide which of two or more teams should go through to the next round. For example, Australia beat Uruguay on penalties in a play-off to qualify for the World Cup 2006

the away-goal rule – in some competitions, e.g. the UEFA Champions’ League, a rule that rewards teams for scoring away from home over two legs (or matches). For example, in 2005 AC Milan beat PSV Eindhoven 2-0 at home (in Milan) but lost 1-3 away in Holland. So both teams had scored three goals and conceded three goals, but because AC Milan had scored a goal away from home it went through to the Champions’ League final on the away-goal rule

TYPES OF SHOT

a kick – to hit something, or somebody, with your foot. In football, the players kick the ball.

to shoot – to kick the ball towards the net at one end of the pitch (the goal) in an attempt to score a goal

the kick-off – the first kick of the game when two players from the same team in the centre circle play the ball and start the match. Also the first kick after half-time or after a goal has been scored

a goal-kick – a kick taken from the 6-yard line by the defending team after the ball has been put over the goal-line (or byline) by the attacking team

a free-kick – the kick awarded to a team by the referee after a foul has been committed against it

a penalty – a free shot at goal from 12 yards (11 metres or the penalty spot) awarded by the referee to a team after a foul has been committed in the penalty area

a corner – a kick from the corner flag awarded to the attacking team when the ball has crossed the goal-line (or byline) after last being touched by a player of the defending team

a throw-in – a throw is taken from the sideline (or touchline) after the ball has gone out of play. The only time a player can handle the ball without committing a foul

a pass – a kick of the ball from one player to another. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. the defender passed the ball to the midfielder

a cross – a pass from the side of the pitch into the penalty area in an attempt to find an attacker and score a goal. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. the defender crossed the ball into the penalty area

a one-two – a passing move in which player 1 passes the football to player 2, who immediately passes it back to player 1

a header – the “shot” that occurs when a player touches and guides the ball with his or her head. For example, El Hadji Djouf scored with a fine header. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. the defender headed the ball back to the goalkeeper

a backheel – a kick where the ball is hit with the heel (or the back) of the foot. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. Nwankwo Kanu back-heeled the ball to Thierry Henry

to volley – to kick a moving ball from the air before it hits the ground. Can also be used as a noun, e.g. Jay Jay Okocha’s beautifully-struck volley beat the goalkeeper at the near post

a clearance – a defensive kick that is intended to put the ball out of danger, e.g. Peter Odemwingie’s clearance went out of play for a throw-in

READING THE PRESS

one-touch football – an often admiring reference to a style of football in which a team can pass the ball quickly from one player to another without the need to control it with more than one touch

the long-ball game – an often disapproving reference to a style of football in which a team prefers to play long balls in the hope that an attacking player will get them, flick them on or score

keep possession – to be able to keep the ball and prevent the opposing team from touching it. The opposite of “lose possession” or “give the ball away”

they are dangerous on the counter-attack – referring to a team that can switch quickly from defence to attack and score goals in that way

put eleven men behind the ball – referring to a team that defends with all the players and is not very interested in scoring goals. For example, many visiting teams put eleven men behind the ball and are happy with a 0-0 draw when they play Real Madrid at the Bernabéu stadium

send the keeper the wrong way – refers to the way in which a player can fool the goalkeeper and pretend to shoot at one side of the goal while the ball goes in another direction. This expression is used often during penalties

a clinical finish – referring to a well-placed, controlled shot from a scoring position that ends in a goal. For example, Tunisia’s Hatem Trabelsi controlled the pass and scored with a clinical finish

his/her first touch let him/her down – this means a player was unable to control the ball (or pass) with his or her first touch and as a result lost precious time or even possession

a dead-ball situation – a time when the ball is not moving, e.g. at free-kicks and corners. Teams can practise dead-ball situations and develop routines for dealing successfully with them

they are strong in the air – referring to a team that has a lot of (tall) players who can head the ball very well. As a result, they are strong in the air, may prefer the long-ball game, and score a lot of goals with headers while not conceding any or many headed goals themselves

they have a big physical presence – referring to a team that has a lot of big and physically strong players and, as a result, prefers a very robust style of play. For example, Bolton Wanderers have a big physical presence and are a difficult team to beat in the Premiership

the goalkeeper is quick off his/her line – referring to a goalkeeper who is fast and makes quick (and normally correct) decisions as to when to leave the goal in order to prevent an attacking player from reaching a pass or cross

that shot stung the goalkeeper's palms – referring to a shot on goal that is so hard that the goalkeeper might well have felt pain when he/she stopped it with his/her hands

a prolific goal scorer – referring to a player, normally a striker, who scores or has scored a lot of goals. For example, Henrik Larsson is a prolific goal scorer for Sweden

the foul earned him/her a suspension – referring to a foul that is punished by a yellow or red card and results in the player being banned from playing in the next game(s). For example, the two-footed tackle earned the defender a suspension and he will miss the next game

TALKING WITH FRIENDS

put it in the back of the net – to score a goal, e.g. Nigeria and Middlesbrough striker Aiyegbeni Yakubu controlled the cross and calmly put it in the back of the net

man on! – shout during a football match to warn a team-mate that a player of the other team is right behind. Often a call to pass the ball quickly

a nutmeg – a trick or technique in which a player passes the ball through an opponent's legs and then collects it from the other side. Can also be used as a verb, e.g. the attacker nutmegged the defender

bang it in the mixer! – a shout to encourage a player to play a long ball into the penalty area (i.e. the "mixer") in the hope that an attacking player will get on the end of it and score

we was robbed – an expression to signal that a defeat was unjust, possibly due to an injustice committed by somebody else. For example, we was robbed by the ref (the referee). Note this is not standard English but a set expression people use when talking about sports

s/he's got a sweet left foot – referring to a player who is very skilful at kicking the ball with her/his left foot (the majority of footballers play with their right foot)

s/he pulled off a great save – referring to a very strong, quick or acrobatic stop of a shot by the goalkeeper

they hit the woodwork – the crossbar or the post of the goal. This expression means a team kicked the ball against the crossbar or post and was very unlucky not to score

they got stuck in – referring to a team whose players showed a lot of determination and fought very hard during a match

s/he ran the defence ragged – referring to an attacking player who made the defence work very hard and made the defenders look uncomfortable or unprofessional

s/he's got a lot of pace – this player is very fast

the goalkeeper made a howler – this means the goalkeeper made a very basic mistake (and probably let in a goal)

to switch play – to change direction of play and pass the ball from one side of the pitch to the other. For example, she switched play from left to right wing (the left-hand side of the pitch to the right-hand-side)

s/he made a nuisance of herself/himself – referring to a player, normally a striker, who fought very hard and used his physical presence to put the defenders under pressure and forced them to make mistakes

it's a game of two halves – an expression referring to the fact that a football match can change unexpectedly over 90 minutes, and especially between the first half and second half of the match