**Kids Sports: Soccer (Football)**

The sport of soccer (called football in most of the world) is considered to be the world’s most popular sport. In soccer there are two teams of eleven players. Soccer is played on a large grass field with a goal at each end. The object of the game is to get the soccer ball into the opposing team's goal. The key to soccer is that, with the exception of the goalie, players cannot touch the ball with their hands, they can only kick, knee, or head the ball to advance it or score a goal.

Soccer is played at all levels throughout the world from small kids leagues to professional and international teams. Perhaps the most famous soccer tournament is the World Cup. Held every four years, the World Cup is a soccer competition among countries and is one of the most watched events in the world.

One of the reasons soccer is so popular is that it really only takes a ball and a flat open area to play. Kids throughout the world will make up fields and goals just about anywhere and start playing the game. The game is also fun and competitive.

Soccer is a great form of exercise as there is lots of running for good distances. The sport is also a good test of dexterity and a great way to learn balance.

Many people consider soccer at its highest level to be so beautiful as to be practically an art form. The skill at which great players and great soccer teams work the ball, strategize, and flow as one can be an awesome thing to watch.

**Kids Sports: Soccer Equipment**

**The Soccer Ball**

The soccer ball is spherical (round) and made of leather. For FIFA soccer, the ball must have a circumference of 27 to 28 inches and weigh between 14 and 16 ounces. However, there are other sizes that are used for different ages of kid's competition.

•Size 3 - this is generally the smallest ball and is used for players under 8 years old. Its circumference is 23-24 inches.

•Size 4 - Used for players 8 to 12 years old. It has a 25 to 26 inch circumference.

•Size 5 - This is the standard sized ball (27 - 28 inches) and is usually used for players older than 12.

**Uniforms and Kit**

The uniforms for soccer players consist of a jersey and shorts. Players on the same team wear the same colored uniforms generally with a number and name on the back of the jersey. The goalkeepers wear a uniquely colored jersey so they will stand out to referees during play.

When you take everything that soccer players wear together, it's called the "kit". The kit includes the jersey, shorts, socks, cleats and shoes, and shin guards. Goalkeepers often wear gloves as well.

**Shin Guards**

Shin guards, or shin pads, are required. They help protect the front of the leg, or shin, from getting injured and bruised. Shin guards must fit under the socks. Goalies and forwards generally have the lightest weight shin guards while midfielders and, especially, defensemen wear heavier, sturdier shin guards.

Try to get shin guards that are comfortable and don't hinder your running too much, but at the same time offer good protection. Even if they seem really uncomfortable at first, you will get used to them after a while, and when you get kicked in the shin really hard, you will be glad you have them!

**Other Equipment Rules**

Players are responsible for wearing equipment that will not endanger themselves or other players. This includes wearing jewelry or sharp spikes on the shoes.

**Fun Facts**

•Adidas has supplied the World Cup ball since 1970. Each ball has a unique design and name. The 2010 World Cup ball was the Jabulani.

•Shin guards were invented in 1874 by Samuel Widdowson, a player for Nottingham Forest.

•Professional soccer jerseys often have the logo of team sponsors right on the jersey. This advertising makes lots of money for the team.

•The exact specifications for the ball are defined in Law 2 of the Laws of the Game.

**More Kids Soccer Links:**

[**http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/goalkeeper\_rules.php**](http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/goalkeeper_rules.php)

[**http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/rules\_fouls.php**](http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/rules_fouls.php)

[**http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/dribbling.php**](http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/dribbling.php)

[**http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/shooting.php**](http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/shooting.php)

[**http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/passing\_the\_ball.php**](http://www.ducksters.com/sports/soccer/passing_the_ball.php)