

# School sports in the us and the uk

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Do you know which sports are played in school in America and Great Britain?  
Let's start with a list. Check the right boxes if you think the sports are played mainly in one country or in the

other. If they're played about the same in both countries – check both boxes! Do you know which sports are played in school in America and Great Britain?

Soccer	UK	US	Hockey	UK	US	Rowing	UK	US	Cricket	UK	US
Football	UK	US	Rugby	UK	US	Squash	UK	US	Baseball	UK	US
Lacrosse	UK	US	Basketball	UK	US	Tennis	UK	US	Gymnastics	UK	US
Orienteering	UK	US	Track and field	UK	US	Volleiball	UK	US	Cross-country running	UK	US
Boxing	UK	US	Curling	UK	US	Ice hochey	UK	US	Soccer	UK	US

Actually, only cricket and football (American football that is not the European variety, which should really be called “soccer”), are almost exclusively British and American respectively, although you won't find many U.K. lacrosse teams or U.S. rugby teams either. Some of these sports are still male-dominated in the

adult world, but at school level these days girls are usually entitled to play in their own teams in all sports, with one exception. You probably guessed it, but there are already plenty of girls who are keen to put the gloves on and get into the ring.

## Let's talk about...

Why usually schools don't offer “extreme sports” on their curriculum?  
Which sports less dangerous is connected with fear?  
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## The viewpoint of school authorities

Although physical exercise is an important factor in our lives, particularly when we are growing into young adults, the school sports philosophy covers wider concepts than just physical fitness. Here is the American National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) writing about sports education:

*Good sportsmanship is viewed by the NFHS as a commitment to foster ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. The ideals of sportsmanship apply equally to all activity disciplines. Individuals, regardless of their role in activities, are expected to be aware of their influence on the behavior of others and model good sportsmanship.*

This article continues to give examples of how students and teachers can demonstrate their social skills – and not just their sports skills – during a sports session. There's even a note of warning for parents watching the match:

*Realize that a ticket is a privilege to observe a contest and support high school activities, not a license to assault others and be generally obnoxious.*

This is an American view, but similar ideas are found in the U.K., where football hooliganism outside school is such a serious problem. How come? If they're taught all the ideals of good sports-

manship in school, why do some people behave so badly at soccer matches?

Outside school, sports are at the hub of a multi-billion dollar industry, so if you see school as a road towards finding a job, why not have specialized sports courses, where mathematics and literature classes are reduced to a two-hour slot once or twice a week, with sports practice and theory taking up the rest of the time?

Although some people (probably the real die-hard sports fanatics) will lick their lips at the idea, it certainly doesn't meet with the approval of the education establishment and most parents! Nonetheless, it is an unofficially recognized fact that, because of the prestige and publicity offered by a strong sports team, American universities, which, like in the UK, have a closed-number intake system, will give places to academic airheads if they can play great football (or basketball, baseball, ecc.).

In the U.K. of course, it's not allowed, but if you're a nineteen-year-old world-class rowing champion with a poor academic record, you might just find a place at either of the country's top two universities, Oxford and Cambridge, where this noble sport has been practiced for centuries. Here's a snip from the prospectus for the American Franciscan University:

*...we can be thankful that since our University does not offer sports scholarships we need not fear that our fellow students in the desks behind us are passing their courses by the grace of their speed on the football field or their batting average, while the rest of us wrestle with Aristotle in the library until 11 o'clock every night...."*

### Let's talk about...

There are three sports mentioned in the text above, but just one is used as a metaphor. What's the sport?  
Can you think of some examples of good sportsmanship in the sports you know?

## Taking sport to extremes

Schools don't usually offer "extreme sports" on their curriculum, even though they have become very popular. Extreme sports include skysurfing and bungee jumping, but also snowboarding and mountain biking can be classified as "extreme" in certain conditions. The following are a few soundbites from extreme sports fanatics:

- Second place is the first LOSER!
- We take these risks not to escape LIFE, but to prevent LIFE FROM ESCAPING US!

– A man is only as big as the dreams he dares to live!

– Some guy climbed up a water tower to spraypaint something and then fell 60 feet to his death. What was he spraypainting? "NO FEAR".

Fear is obviously an important element in extreme sports, but it's also present in several less dangerous sports. Which ones? Can sports help you reduce fear? Is fear necessary? Should schools address the concept of fear in their lessons?

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## Don't get your cricket mixed up with your croquet!

This is an American view, but similar ideas are found in the U.K., where football hooliganism out. Croquet is a genteel game played on English lawns in the summer months. It was particularly popular among wealthy people in the 19th century. The players have wooden "mallets", with which they attempt to strike a small ball so that it travels through a series of iron hoops planted into the earth. It is a relaxing sport that is suitable also for the elderly.

Cricket is a traditional English game dating back to the 12th century and currently played by world nations that are, or used to be, part of the British Commonwealth (with the exception of America).

The main object of the game is to score "runs". The only team able to score runs is the "batting team". The opposing team is involved in bowling and "fielding" (trying to catch the ball off the bat). The batsman or batswoman (not a

fantasy crime fighter with a hood, but a normal person armed with a wooden bat!) defends a "wicket" which is a set of three posts that have been driven into the ground.

The "bowler" throws the ball (made of hard leather) against the wicket and tries to knock it down. If the batsman is able to hit the ball far enough without getting caught, he can run to the opposite wicket at the other end of the pitch, thus scoring one run. There are actually two batsmen or women on the pitch together: if they make one run they exchange places, so the next ball is delivered to the second batsman.

You may be thinking that cricket sounds too complicated to be exciting. Indeed, with some matches lasting three or even five days, people from non-cricket playing nations find the game incomprehensible and therefore uninteresting, but it's one of the most widely played school sports in the U.K., the West Indies, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.

### Let's talk about...

Have you ever played or ever seen a cricket match?

## Action combat sports come to school

The great new sport that has attracted hordes of adults is now played at some British schools. We're talking about paintball war games. This game is played in a wooded area of land with plenty of space and hiding places. The players split into two teams each dressed in a different colour. The modern equipment for paintball war is very sophisticated, with high-precision laser-sighted weapons costing hundreds of pounds each.

Because all the players are "armed" with paintball guns (compressed air guns that shoot plastic balls filled with paint), and because being hit by a paintball is painless but messy, all the players wear special tight-fitting overalls. They also wear large safety glasses to protect the eyes from the paintball "bullets". The teams are then given an objective such as a particular position to capture, before they disappear among the trees to await the start of the "war". If you get hit in a critical place, you're out of the game (but not dead!).

### Let's talk about...

Would you like to take part in a paintball war?

This sport turns war into an adventure game. Can you see any similarities between other sports and war?

## A trip to Japanese Undokai

This is an American view, but similar ideas are found in the U.K., where football hooliganism Here's what happens in the junior high school in the Japanese city of Yuge at Undokai, the school sports day. The school splits into two teams: Red and Blue. The two teams compete in a series of games, races and competitions to find the overall winner.

The first game they play is very far removed from a Western sport.

*This is a True/False game. Teachers, parents and students all enter the field and a rope is laid down in the middle. The school principal makes true or false statements, such as "There are 93 steps on the path to Yuge temple" or "There are more single than married teachers in the school".*

*If you think it's true you have to jump to the "maru" (true) side of the rope. If you think*

*it's false you jump to the "batsu" (false) side. When you make a mistake you must leave the field, if you get the right answer, you stay for the next question.*

In Yuge junior high school, this game is highly competitive, although the prize is just a bag of rice for the winner, with a box of tissues for the losers (to dry their tears perhaps!). It's interesting to note that even the parents are expected to compete in this oriental school.

*This is a game for the parents: seven long bamboo trunks are laid on the ground and the two teams form on either side of the field. On the pistol the two teams run onto the field and try to carry as many of the bamboo trunks as they can back to their side. It gets very competitive and it's also a tactical game. Do you spread out all your resources on various different poles or do you concentrate all your power on getting one at a time?*

### Let's talk about...

Obviously, these games are only played in school and possibly only in Yuge junior high school. Can you think of any games that are only played in the place where you live?

## Sports and water

One of the most famous sporting events in the UK is the Oxford-Cambridge boat race, a yearly challenge between the two most prestigious universities in the country. The boats are coxed eights of the highest technological excellence. Here's the blurb from the race organizers who are seeking sponsors:

*The Boat Race is one of the most popular events in the British sporting calendar and attracts a massive crowd of over 250,000 to the banks of the River Thames between Putney and Mortlake.*

*Over the last five years, the live BBC television audience for the Boat Race has averaged over six million, making it one of the top five live televised annual British sporting events (along with the Grand National, the FA Cup Final, Wimbledon finals and the British Grand Prix). The BBC recently signed a new contract to cover the event through to 2004. The event also has a huge international following with a potential viewing audience of 400 million in around 160 countries.*

*The 145th Oxford and Cambridge University Boat Race took place at 3.30 p.m. on Saturday 3rd April 1999. The race course is four and a quarter miles long, with pubs, bars and rowing clubs dotted along the towpath and embankment for spectators to visit.*

With a "potential viewing audience of 400 million" you can imagine the amount of sponsorship cash that an event like this can attract.

## Rowing quiz

In a sculling boat, each crew member has two oars, while each member has only one in a rowing boat. A coxswain or "cox" is the person who sits in the stern, shouting instructions to the crew and steering the boat. Boats with coxes are "coxed" and those without are "coxless". Now read this passage on boat speeds and then answer the questions.

*The speed of a rowing boat depends very much on the strength of the crew. However, a coxed boat is generally slower than the coxless equivalent and sculled boats are faster than rowing boats with the same number of crew members. A coxless pair will usually leave a coxed four looking sluggish off the start, but will be overtaken at some later stage. The same is true for coxless fours and eights. Although the number of blades (oars) is the same, a sculling boat will generally be slower than the equivalent rowing boat. This is true at the start and throughout the whole race.*

If the crews are of equal strength, who should win these races?

*coxed four vs. coxless four: 500 yards  
quadruple coxed sculler (four crew) vs. coxed eight: 2 miles  
coxless pair vs. coxed four: 500 yards  
double coxless sculler (two crew) vs. coxless four: 2 miles*

### Let's talk about...

Is sponsorship always a good thing for sports?  
Do you think school sports should be sponsored?



## School sports questionnaire

### 1) What is the most important aspect of sport at school?

Arrange these ideas into what you consider to be the right order of importance.

- Teaching kids to be competitive and ambitious.
- Developing aerobic capacity and building muscles.
- Teaching teamwork and social skills.
- Teaching fair play.
- Training young athletes so that some will be able to continue to play sport professionally.
- A form of release for frustration and excess energy, enabling kids to concentrate better in their academic work.
- Providing a scenario in which less academically gifted kids can excel.
- Sports education helps kids overcome fear.

### 2) Test your international school sports knowledge

- 1) The teams have long wooden sticks with leather and cord nets at one end. What's the sport called?
- 2) If you tried to play without plenty of body armour, you'd end up in hospital very quickly! What's the sport?
- 3) School matches may only last all afternoon, but a single international championship match may last five days! What's the sport?
- 4) One member of the team is always very lightweight because he or she has no physical work to do. What's the sport?
- 5) They have goals, but there's no ball. What's the sport?
- 6) Concentration and accuracy are more important than muscle power or stamina in this activity – the player doesn't even move! What's the sport?

### 3) Put a cross in each of the boxes that applies to the sport in the left hand column

Rugby	Contact sport	Dangerous sport	Field sport	Big-business sport	Endurance sport	Team sport
Rowing						
Archery						
Baseball						
High jump						
Football						
Boxing						
Tennis						
Cricket						
Skiing						

## Vocabulary

**Airheads** = with nothing in their head except air (facetious)

**Batting average** = average number of points accumulated by the player with the bat in the baseball match

**Behavior** = behaviour (US spelling)

**Blurb** = a written description, usually with some commercial message

**Coxed eight** = a boat with eight oarsmen and a pilot

**Fellow students** = other students at the university

**Foster** = promote

**Grand National** = Britain's most popular horse race

**Hub** = centre (of a wheel)

**Intake** = admission

**Obnoxious** = badly behaved

**On the pistol** = when the starting pistol is fired

**Sluggish** = slow-moving like a slug

**Snip** = extract

**Soundbite** = a quote, often without context

**Stern** = rear part of a boat

**Towpath** = the path runs alongside a river or watercourse, originally used by horses pulling (towing) boats

**Two-hour slot** = a lesson period lasting two hours