

Basketball

WORKSHEET A

What is the most popular sport in the world? Most people would probably say soccer, because of the many millions who play it and the even larger number who watch it on television. There are some, however, who say the correct answer is basketball – not because of its TV audience, which is certainly smaller than that for soccer, but because the number of people who regularly play the game might be higher (at least 300 million, according to most estimates). In China, for example, which has a population of 1.3 billion, more people play basketball than soccer, and it is becoming more popular all the time. Basketball has existed for less time than some of the world's other major sports. It was invented in the early 1890s by a Canadian, James Naismith, working at a college in the state of Massachusetts in the United States. Wanting to create a game that could be played indoors during the long winters but would also be active enough to keep people in shape, he had the idea of two teams of players trying to throw a ball into a basket that was above their heads.

Early basketball looked different from the game today: for example, the basket didn't have a hole in the bottom, so every time a player threw the ball in, someone had to go up to get it out again! Another difference is dribbling, which is when a player in modern basketball bounces the ball off the floor while moving across the court: it didn't exist in early basketball because the balls didn't bounce well enough.

One thing that hasn't changed, though, is the height of the baskets: James Naismith put the first one 10 feet (3.05 meters) off the floor, and that's where they've stayed.

The biggest international TV audiences in modern basketball are for games in the National Basketball Association (NBA) in North America, a league of 30 teams (29 from the United States and one from Canada), including famous names such as the Chicago Bulls, Boston Celtics, and Los Angeles Lakers. Most of the players in the NBA are American, but there are also some foreign stars such as Yao Ming from China and Dirk Nowitzki from Germany.

The United States has usually been the strongest team in international basketball competitions. In the last Olympic Games, in Beijing in 2008, the US men's and women's teams both won gold medals – the men beat Spain in the final, and the women beat Australia.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the gaps.

1. A **p** _ _ _ _ _ (adjective) thing, place, or activity is one that many people like.
2. A **c** _ _ _ _ (noun) is an area marked with lines where some sports (e.g., basketball or tennis) are played.
3. **_ t _ _** (noun): someone very famous and popular (e.g., an actor or sports player).
4. An **_ _ _ _ _ ce** (noun) is a group of people who watch or listen to something (e.g., a movie or a sports game).
5. **B** _ _ _ _ _ (verb): to hit the surface of something and then move away (e.g., a ball moving through the air, hitting the ground, then moving through the air again).
6. **_ _ _ m** (noun): a group of people who play a sport or a game against another group.
7. **_ _ _ _ l** (noun): a small flat piece of metal, often circular, that you might get for winning a competition.
8. **_ _ d _ _ _ s** (adverb): inside a building (e.g., a house).

Exercise 2

Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), or if the text doesn't determine (D).

1. Basketball was invented after tennis.
2. The height of the baskets in basketball has changed many times.
3. More people watch basketball on TV than soccer.
4. There are some players in the NBA who are not American or Canadian.
5. Basketball was invented before 1900.
6. Australia was in the men's basketball final in the 2008 Olympic Games.
7. The best team in the NBA is the Los Angeles Lakers.
8. The baskets in early basketball were different from those in modern basketball.

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 3

Team A

Using the information in the text on Worksheet A, make questions using the words in the boxes. Use only one box for each question, and don't repeat any questions. When you have prepared the questions, Team B will have to answer them as part of a quiz.

Where	all the time	Dirk Nowitzki	most of the players
How many	Boston	strongest	dribbling

Team B

Using the information in the text on Worksheet A, make questions using the words in the boxes. Use only one box for each question, and don't repeat any questions. When you have prepared the questions, Team A will have to answer them as part of a quiz.

Where	NBA	height	not have
How many	Chicago	beat	league