

6. GRAMMER EXERCISES

6.1 SPORTS WORDS

1. He went to play at the golf _____ .
 - a) track
 - b) court
 - c) course
2. She goes to the pool to swim _____ .
 - a) rounds
 - b) courses
 - c) laps
3. The Olympics are _____ every four years.
 - a) held
 - b) made
 - c) taken
4. She lost the match because a string broke in her _____ .
 - a) club
 - b) racket
 - c) stick
5. Some athletes are _____ because of drug testing.
 - a) lost
 - b) disqualified
 - c) reserved
6. Soccer is played on a _____ .
 - a) course
 - b) track
 - c) field
7. If you don't warm up properly, you could _____ a muscle.
 - a) push
 - b) hit

- c) pull
8. The race was very close. He won _____ $\frac{1}{3000}$ of a second.
a) by
b) at
c) in
9. The soccer player kicked the ball into the _____ .
a) wicket
b) basket
c) net
10. He _____ the winning basket in the last few seconds of the game.
a) won
b) scored
c) beat

6.2 SPORTS IDIOMS

Have you ever read an article in Newsweek or Time magazine? If you have, I am sure that you noticed what an important role sporting events play in the creation of idiomatic language in American English. It is quite common to read statements like, "President Clinton informed reporters that he felt his environmental program was in the home stretch and that he had hit a home run with his appointment of Mr. X as the ambassador to Y". This language can confuse speakers of English as a second language. Therefore, this feature concerns such language because of the importance it plays in everyday usage in both spoken, and written English in the United States.

Below is a fictional conversation chock full of (idiom=containing many examples of) idioms taken from sporting events. In the repeat of the conversation the idioms are highlighted and explained.

Closing a Deal

(In a typical office somewhere in New York)

Bob: Well, is Trevisos going to play ball or are we going to strike out on this deal?

Pete: The latest locker talk is that our game plan is a real contender for the contract.

Bob: Yeah, the other team has two strikes against it after they fumbled last week.

Pete: They had a great chance of scoring but I think Trevisos thought they weren't up to scratch on some of the details.

Bob: They pretty much put themselves into a no win situation by stalling for time on the figures from Smith's and Co. If we can get to home at the next meeting I think that we should be able to take the ball and run.

Pete: If our numbers are right, we should be able to call the shots from here.

Bob: We just need to jockey ourselves into position to close the deal.

Pete: Make sure that you take along your team players next week. I want to be sure that everyone is playing with a full deck and that everyone can field any question asked.

Bob: I'll take Shirley and Harry along. They are no second stringers, they can present the ballpark figures and then I will bring it on home.

Pete: Great, good luck with the pitch!

It seems almost impossible to understand if you don't understand sports idioms! However, these and other idioms are common in daily usage. It is well worth your time to learn these idioms, especially if you work or live with Americans. Now, let me help you with the above passage. Each idiom is explained in its sports context, and in its idiomatic usage in everyday language.

Bob: Well, is Trevisos **going to play ball** (*baseball-play a game, idiom-do business with*) or are we going to **strike out** (*baseball-go out, idiom-fail*) on this **deal** (*idiom-contract*)?

Pete: The latest **locker talk** (*general sports-talk among the players, idiom-gossip, rumors*) is that our **game plan** (*American football-plan which plays to make, idiom-plan of action*) is a real **contender** (*boxing- very possible winner, idiom-person with a good chance of success*) for the contract.

Bob: Yeah, the other team has **two strikes against it** (*baseball-one step from going out or losing, idiom-close to not succeeding*) after they **fumbled** (*American football-lose possession of the ball, idiom-make a serious mistake*) last week.

Pete: They had a great chance of **scoring** (*any sport-to make a point, idiom-to succeed*) but I think Trevisos thought they weren't **up to**

scratch (horseracing-not capable of winning, *idiom*-not having the right qualities) on some of the details.

Bob: They pretty much put themselves into a **no-win situation** (*baseball*-impossible to win, *idiom*-impossible to succeed) by **stalling for time** (*American football*-to delay the game, *idiom*-to delay information or a decision) on the figures from Smith's and Co. If we can **get to home** (*baseball*-score a run, *idiom*-complete the desired action) at the next meeting I think that we should be able to **take the ball and run** (*American football*-continue to go forward, usually a long distance, *idiom*-continue in the right direction).

Pete: If our numbers are right, we should be able to **call the shots** (*basketball*-to decide who shoots, *idiom*-to make the decisions) from here.

Bob: We just need to **jockey ourselves into position** (*horseracing*-put yourself into a good position to win the race, *idiom*-to move into position to succeed) to close the deal.

Pete: Make sure that you take along your **team players** (*general sports*-players who work together with other players, *idiom*-people who work together with other staff) next week. I want to be sure that everyone **is playing with a full deck** (*cards*-having all the necessary cards, *idiom*-having the correct mental abilities, not stupid) and that everyone **can field** (*baseball*-to stop a hit ball, *idiom*-to handle or deal with) any question asked.

Bob: I'll take Shirley and Harry along. They are no **second stringers** (*team sports*-second class members of the team, *idiom*-less important workers), they can present **the ballpark** figures (*baseball*-the place where the game is played *idiom*-general financial numbers) and then I will **bring it on home** (*baseball*-to score a run, *idiom*-to finish with success)

Pete: Great, good luck with the **pitch** (*baseball*-to throw the ball to the batter, *idiom*-to present the subject)!

6.3 WHERE DO YOU PLAY FOOTBALL?

The question above could be answered with 'pitch' or 'field' depending on whether you are talking about European football or American football. Sports take place on/in all sorts of different areas.

Decide whether the sport is played on/in the following areas. Some of the words are used more than once:

court, rink, table, course, field, ring, pitch, board, track, ring, field, pool

- American Football: _____
- European Football: _____
- Tennis: _____
- Chess: _____
- Swimming: _____
- Ping Pong: _____
- Horse Racing: _____
- Ice Hockey: _____
- Boxing: _____
- Volleyball: _____
- Athletics: _____
- Motor Racing: _____
- Cricket: _____
- Baseball: _____
- Racketball: _____
- Squash: _____
- Ice Skating: _____
- Golf: _____