

Cappelen Damm Agency *Spring 2025*



In *Why Can't the Referee Score Goals?* children learn the answers to both big and small questions about sports. Why do sumo wrestlers wear diapers? Why are tennis balls yellow? How do you shoot a bow and arrow without any arms? And what is the most dangerous sport in the world?

Why Can't the Referee Score Goals? is informative and easy to grasp with fun illustrations. It is the perfect book to start a conversation about the world of sports, with children aged six to nine years.

Why Can't the Referee Score Goals?

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Birgit Skarstein & Susanne Kaluza / Leonard Furuberg (ill.)

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by Birgit Skarstein and Susanne Kaluza

Sample translation by Victoria Stø Gerger

1. How many different sports are there really?

That depends on what you include! In the Olympic Games, which is the largest sporting event in the world, there are competitors across 40 different sports. But this only includes a fraction of all the sports in the world – in fact, there are more than 8,000 sports in existence! There are sports performed in the air, such as skydiving, paragliding and kiting, and sports that take place in water, such as scuba-diving, diving, and rowing. There are also sports that take place on land, such as climbing, archery and biking, as well as in the snow, like slalom skiing and snowboarding. Others you can play on a computer, like gaming or competitive programming.

4. When did people start playing football?

Humans have played around by kicking a ball for thousands of years, but exactly when we began playing what we know today as football no one knows! Some believe football was invented in China two thousand years ago. The soldiers there used to play a game call “Tsu Chu”, which means “kicking the ball”. Others claim that football was played by the ancient Greeks and Romans. The indigenous population of Central America have also long practiced sports where a ball is kicked, thrown, or served into a goal. But football as we know it today was first introduced in 1863. Back then the English lawyer Ebenezer Morley suggested creating a football association to agree on the rules for the game. That’s also when it became forbidden to carry the balls using your hands while playing.

5. Why aren't dodgeballs heavy?

Because the aim of dodgeball is to have fun, not crush your friend's nose.

10. Why don't ski jumpers fall right down?

Have you ever stood at the top of a ski jump and looked down? It's really high up! So why don't the ski jumpers fall right down and injure themselves when they head off down the hill? Well, because science helps them! First the jumpers zoom down the hill to achieve a high speed. This speed helps them shoot out from the jumping edge and into the air. When they're in the air, the jumpers do something clever: They spread their skis out to the sides and at the same time lean slightly forward. This way they get loads of air under their skis and their body, similar to how an airplane is held up by the air.

The skis the ski jumpers use are also extra wide and long, almost like wings. When the skis are held flat against the wind, they help keep the jumper up in the air for longer. Last, but not least – they always build ski jumps on a downhill. When the ski jumpers land, they therefore keep gliding downwards. This helps make the landing a bit softer. If the jumpers jumped straight down and landed on a flat ground, they would break their legs. Because it's not the fall that hurts the most, but rather the abrupt landing! Now you may understand better why some people refer to ski jumping as flying in the sky?

Psst: Girls have been jumping on skis just as long as boys, but in the olden days many believed ski jumping was extra dangerous for girls. The first Norwegian girl participating in a ski race, was 16-year-old Ingrid Vestby. She took part in a competition all the way back in January of 1863! Even though Ingrid and many other girls loved jumping, they were not allowed to take part in the official competitions for many years. Instead, they had to find other ways to participate like jumping during the breaks in the boys' competitions! It wasn't until 2014 that girls were finally allowed to compete in ski jumping in the Olympics, when German Carina Vogt became the first ever female Olympic ski jumping champion, jumping over 100 meters!

14. Is chess really a sport?

Yes, it is! That's been decided by the international Olympic committee. Just like bandy, high jump or other sports, you need to practice lots to get good at chess. You need to think strategically and plan several moves ahead. Similar to other sports chess also has set rules. Endurance is also essential if you're going to last for all the hours a game of chess may last for. The world's longest game of chess lasted more than 20 hours!

15. Who invented the Olympic Games?

The ancient Greeks! The first ever Olympic Games were held in the city of Olympus in Greece 776 years BC. Only men were allowed to compete and only men were allowed to be spectators. But we know that some women found that unfair and tried to sneak into the audience anyway. Sneaking in as a competitor was harder since everyone participating had to be naked!

The Olympians competed amongst other things in the sports of javelin throw, running, long jump, wrestling and horse-riding. The games were held every four years for almost 1200 years. As time progressed Greece became a part of the Roman Empire and the Roman emperor banned the Greeks from continuing their Olympic games. The Olympic Games were in fact also a celebration of the Greek god Zeus. In the year 393, the emperor had become Christian and therefore banned the celebration of anything non-Christian.

Much later, towards the end of the 17th century, Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin got the idea about re-introducing the Olympic Games. He wanted to gather people from all over the world to a peaceful competition. This idea turned into the first modern Olympic Games being held in 1896 in Athens, Greece. Women were however still not allowed to compete. Pierre called the idea of women participating in the Games “unpractical, uninteresting and ugly”. Luckily, he wasn’t allowed to make all decisions by himself! As soon as four years later at the Parisian Olympic Games, 22 women were amongst the 997 competitors. 124 years later, during the Olympics in Paris in 2024, the number of female competitors for the first time equaled the number of male ones.

Psst! Pierre also drew the five rings that have become the symbol of the Olympics. The rings represent the five continents of the world which come together to compete in the Games: Africa, Asia, America, Australia, and Europe.

Psst! Did you know that the first winter Olympics were held in 1924? In the winter Olympics the participants compete in winter sports such as cross-country skiing, mogul skiing and sledding. That means the Olympics are actually held more often than every four years. There are four years between each summer Olympics, and four years between each winter Olympics, but since they alternate that means we get to experience the Olympic Games every two years!

17. Why can't the referee score goals?

The reason the referee doesn't take part in the game and cannot score goals is because he or she has another important job: to ensure the game is played fairly. If the referee were to play, it would be much harder to notice when someone breaks a rule. Imagine what the game would look like if none of the players followed the rules, and everyone just ran

around with the ball in their hands or kicked their opponents instead of the ball! The referee is also not allowed to cheer for either team, but must treat everyone the same.

18. Why do sumo wrestlers wear a diaper?

It's not a diaper, but a *mawashi*! Sumo wrestling is an ancient Japanese form of wrestling and the garment the wrestlers wear is called a mawashi. It is a nine-meter-long piece of silk which they have to wrap around themselves like some sort of underpants. The wrestlers are naked apart from this little piece of silk.

Originally this was intended to prove that the wrestlers didn't conceal any weapons. It's not particularly easy to hide a sword in a tiny mawashi!

Psst! Professional sumo wrestlers must follow many strict rules during the game but also outside the game. They are for example not allowed to cut their hair, but rather have long hair they can put into a small bun on the top of their head, to look like a samurai warrior. Sumo wrestlers are also not allowed to drive a car!

21. Can you do sports in space?

Of course, you can! In February of 1971 two astronauts were the first to do sports on the moon. Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell were on a mission on the spaceship Apollo 14 when they decided to create a mini "Moon-Olympics". Edgar used a part of a solar cell panel for javelin throws. Alan had brought extra golf balls with him from Earth and played the first ever round of moon golf! This was probably extra fun since the gravity on the moon is much weaker than on Earth. Everything you throw or hit on the moon can therefore travel extra far!

31. Why can't boys and girls play on the same team?

They can! Sailing, e-sports, ultimate frisbee and horse riding are just a few of the sports where both genders play on the same team. Mixed teams are becoming more common, also in the Olympics. In sports like tennis, badminton, archery and curling one boy and one girl can play together as a team. That's called 'mixed double'.

In other sports it's more common to have separate teams for boys and girls. A reason for this is because it was most common back in the day. Many sports actually used to be forbidden for girls! Even a super popular sport like football didn't allow for girls to play on English football fields until 1971. Those in charge decided that football wasn't suitable for girls.

Another reason is that girls and boys grow at different speeds. When they're children, girls are often taller than the boys, but the boys become quicker and stronger than many girls when they become young adults. That's why it's common to make separate teams for boys and girls, so that you're more likely to play with others who are more or less the same strength or speed as you.

Psst! How strong or fast you are isn't the only thing that makes you good at sports. Ada Hegerberg is an example of a player who knows exactly where to position herself and how to kick the ball to get it in the goal. She's smart and thinks tactically while playing. Even though many boys are stronger than girls, we can still learn lots by playing together.

33. Are there any sports where anyone can play together, whether they have a disability or not?

Yes! There are many sports where everyone can take part, regardless of disability.

In e-sports there are for example many top competitors with varying levels of physical functionality. RockyNoHands is one of the best Fornite-players in the world. He was paralyzed from the neck down after a diving accident and uses a special mouth-controller to play. There are many other sports where the level of your physical fitness doesn't matter so much.

For example, in shooting and darts, the most important skill is to stay calm and hit the bull's eye.

In chess it doesn't matter how strong you are, but how good you are at thinking. In goalball all the players are blind or blind-folded. They use a ball filled with bells, so they can hear where it is. In other sports, like sailing, the boats and the equipment can be adapted for anyone. The sailor Bjørnar Erikstad was born with his fingers attached to his shoulders. He sails by using his teeth and beats his able-bodied competitors by sailing smart and tactically.

37. How do rowers know where they're going when they row facing backwards?

Rowers don't have eyes in the back of their heads, so they have several tricks to stay on the right course. They look for set points on land, such as trees or buildings. In competitions the paths are often marked with buoys in the water that the rowers can use to ensure they're going the right way. Once you've become an experienced rower you'll also get good at knowing where you are depending on how the boat moves in the water, so you won't need to turn around to see where you're going. Instead, you'll use all your energy to row as fast as possible to the finish point!

38. How can you do archery without arms?

You use other parts of your body! Those who can't use their arms often become extremely good at using other body parts, such as their feet or mouth. They can for instance hold the bow with their feet and pull the string with their toes or use their mouth to pull the string and aim.

American athlete Matt Stutzmann, who calls himself The Armless Archer, was born without arms and uses his mouth and legs to achieve most things. He won gold in archery at the 2024 Paris Paralympics and holds several world records. Do you want to know what Matt did to win gold? He understood that the most important part was staying calm, so that he could aim even when people were loudly cheering around him. So, what do you think he did? He started skydiving! Matt trained for the Paralympics by throwing himself off a plane with a parachute. He then shot with a bow and arrow once he was on the ground. This way he could train himself to get calm enough to shoot perfectly, even with a pounding heart!

40. Why are sports important?

Sports aren't important, but they are valuable. There are many other things that are more important than sports, like everyone having access to clean water, enough food, and a safe place to live. Nonetheless, sports hold great value.

When you do sports, you become stronger, healthier, and happier. Sports are also a great way to meet new friends and to work as a team to reach a goal. Regardless of where you come from you can play or cheer for the same team. While doing sports we learn not to give up even when things are difficult. Even if you find school difficult, you can be successful on the basketball court, and even if you're in a wheelchair you can become a world champion rower. Sports show us a world where everyone is allowed to take part!

44. What do I do if I lose?

Congratulate the winner and try again next time! Everyone loses sometimes, even world champions! It's normal to feel disappointed, but try to also be curious: What did the winner do well? What can you do differently next time? If you use the loss to try to improve, you might be the one to win next time!