

Unit 8 Participating in Sports

Theme: sports

Language functions: Talking about sports, sports interests, and keeping fit

Objectives: Students shall be able to talk about sports they like and give each other instructions on how to keep fit.

Warm-up

Procedures: Students work in pairs, with one reading the instructions and the other performing the exercises. Switch roles and repeat the process, ensuring that both students have the opportunity to lead and participate in the exercises.

Activity 1

1. Conversations

In the first conversation, Yang Hong encourages her friend Liu Ying to start exercising regularly even though Liu Ying feels too weak and burnt-out. Yang Hong argues that consistent exercise will help Liu Ying become stronger and more energetic. In the second conversation, Yang Hong and Zhou Ming discuss their favorite sports and plans to compete in the upcoming school sports event. While Yang Hong loves competitive basketball, Zhou Ming prefers more individual sports like swimming, jogging, and badminton. Finally, they decide to try the high jump and 100-meter dash events respectively. The text explores different perspectives on sports participation and the benefits of regular exercise.

First, guide students to review how to persuade others to do something by offering the benefits of doing it and go over the expressions for talking about physical exercises in the Language Bank. Then, draw students' attention to how the speakers talk about their favorite sports and also some common sports in English that are listed in the Language Bank.

2. Group work

- **Focus:** This task enables students to expand their sports-related vocabulary by brainstorming and categorizing different types of sports and activities. Students will first generate an extensive list of sports they know, using the examples in the Language Bank as a reference. They will then classify their list into sections such as individual vs. team sports, water sports, ball games, etc. Finally, students will examine how different verbs are used to talk about sports in English—namely “play,” “do,” or “go” followed by the sport’s name. This develops their awareness of collocations between verbs and nouns related to sports.

● **Procedures:**

- 1) Divide students into groups of four.
- 2) In groups, have students brainstorm as many different sports and activities as they can, referring to the Language Bank for examples if needed.
- 3) Using their list, have groups categorize the sports by answering the following questions:
 - What sports do people play individually?
 - What sports do people play in teams?
 - What are water sports?
 - What are ball games?
 - What sports require people to wear special clothing/gear?
- 4) Have groups analyze how different verbs are used when talking about sports :
 - Categorize sports under “Play,” “Do,” or “Go” based on which verb collocates with each sport.
 - Add additional sports to the categories if needed.
- 5) Have groups share their categorized lists with the class.

Suggested Answers:

Play	Do	Go
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- baseball- basketball- football- tennis- volleyball- badminton- soccer- cricket- golf- table tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- gymnastics- yoga- judo- karate- ballet- boxing- fencing- wrestling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- swimming- diving- surfing- windsurfing- snorkeling- skiing- snowboarding- skating- cycling- hiking- running- climbing- sailing- rowing- fishing- hunting

There are some noticeable patterns in the collocations between verbs and sports:

- “Play” is used with team sports that involve balls, goals, or rackets. Many traditional sports like baseball, basketball, tennis, etc. take “play.”
- “Do” is used with individual sports that focus on techniques, forms, or non-equipment-based movements. Gymnastics, martial arts, dance, and combat sports generally take “do.”

—“Go” is used with activities where the verb indicates movement or travel. Outdoor recreation sports, water sports, snow sports, and endurance sports usually take “go.”

3. Role-play

- **Focus:** This task allows students to practice talking about the benefits of sports. To advise their partners who don’t work out regularly, students must use persuasive language to emphasize the positive physical and mental impacts of regular exercise.

- **Procedures:**

Students in each pair will take turns to play the role of A and B and follow the description of the roles. Remind students to use the related expressions that have been introduced. Wrap up by discussing what persuasive language students used and how they kept the conversation going.

Sample Dialogue

Student A: Hi, I really need your advice. I’ve been feeling so tired lately and I just don’t have any energy. I usually spend my time relaxing on the couch, watching TV shows or playing video games after school. What do you think I should do?

Student B: Hey, I’m sorry to hear you’ve been feeling low energy. I think I know something that can help—start exercising! I know it can be hard to motivate yourself at first, but working out gives you more energy once you get into a routine.

Student A: Working out? I don’t know, that sounds difficult. I’ve never really been into sports.

Student B: You don’t have to do hardcore workouts if you don’t want to. Just going for a walk or a jog a few times a week will make a big difference. Exercise releases endorphins that boost your mood too. It’s really good for your mental health.

Student A: I guess that’s true, being cooped up inside so much can’t be good for me. You really think that getting some exercise can improve my energy that much?

Student B: Absolutely! I used to feel tired all the time before I started playing basketball and going to the gym. Just try it out for a couple weeks and I bet you’ll feel a big difference.

Student A: Alright, you’ve convinced me! Some light exercise does sound doable. And having more energy would be great. Let’s come up with a plan to get me moving more! I appreciate the advice.

Activity 2

1. Conversation

This dialogue is about Tim, an American, and Steve, a recent immigrant to the US, discussing popular American sports. It serves as an informative and engaging way to explore concepts and language related to popular US sports.

2. Pair work

- **Focus:** The task is designed to have students practice exchanging information, ideas and opinions about sports.

● **Procedures:**

Divide students in pairs. Ask each pair to go through the questions and elicit answers from their partner. They may choose to focus on some questions given in the textbook that they are interested in. After pair work, the teacher could ask some volunteers to share some impressive answers they got from the conversations.

3. **Fun time**

Focus: Through this exercise, students will familiarize themselves with prevalent sports-related English idioms, and will also improve the application of these idioms in daily conversation.

● **Procedures:**

1. Explain to students that many common English idioms are derived from sports terminology. Provide some examples, such as “jump through hoops,” “full-court press,” or “par for the course.”
2. Divide the students into groups of four and then ask students to discuss in groups and identify the sport associated with the highlighted idiom.
3. Then the whole class work together to look them up and try to find more situations the idioms can be used.
4. Wrap up by emphasizing how sports have influenced everyday English expressions and the importance of recognizing these idioms.

● **Suggested Answers:**

- 1) If you want to succeed in this business, you have to **keep your eyes on the ball**.
- Sport: baseball
- Meaning: to stay focused on your goal
- 2) I'll **touch base** with John on this question and let you know what he thinks.
- Sport: baseball
- Meaning: to get contact and communicate with someone
- 3) She probably won't go along with the rest of us on this. She usually **swims against the current**.
- Sport: swimming
- Meaning: go against the prevailing opinion
- 4) He **made quite a splash** with that speech.
- Sport: general sports
- Meaning: to get a lot of attention
- 5) We shouldn't spread gossip about him. That is hitting **below the belt**.
- Sport: boxing
- Meaning: unfair or unethical
- 6) I've done my part of this project. Now **the ball's in your court**.
- Sport: tennis
- Meaning: It's your responsibility now.
- 7) I'm not sure if I passed the test, but at least I **gave it my best shot**.

- Sport: general sports
- Meaning: to have tried your hardest
- 8) It's my first week on the job, so the manager is **showing me the ropes**.
- Sport: boxing
- Meaning: teaching me the basics

Below are 4 additional examples of sports idioms:

- 1) After losing the first three games, the team was **against the ropes** before coming back to win the championship.
 - Sport: Boxing
 - Meaning: in a very difficult situation
- 2) I've been practicing my tennis serve for months—I hope all this training pays off when I **step up to the plate** this weekend.
 - Sport: Baseball
 - Meaning: to take action when an important opportunity comes
- 3) She really **knocked it out of the park** with her business presentation to the executives yesterday.
 - Sport: Baseball
 - Meaning: to achieve outstanding success
- 4) Let's **pass the ball to** Amanda and get her thoughts on this project proposal.
 - Sport: Basketball/Football
 - Meaning: to give someone a turn to contribute

Activity 3

1. Seven days without exercise makes one weak

The two passages in this activity discuss the health benefits of two common forms of exercise—walking and cycling. The first one focuses on walking, describing it as an easy, safe, and inexpensive way to improve cardiovascular health, muscle strength, stress levels, and more. It highlights how walking exercises the whole body while having a low risk of injury compared to other activities. The second one then shifts to cycling, noting its advantages for the elderly and overweight by reducing impact on joints. Cycling is said to be good for the heart and provides enjoyment through sightseeing. Overall, these two passages aim to promote regular exercise, with a specific emphasis on encouraging walking and cycling as they contribute to physical and mental health.

2. Mini-speech

- **Focus:** The focus of this task is to deliver a short, engaging speech highlighting the most notable qualities of students' favorite sport. The speech should capture distinctive attributes that make the sport enjoyable and beneficial. Details may include required skills, health perks, recreational value, social aspects, or personal gains.
- **Procedures:**

1. Divide students in groups of four. Give students two or three minutes to prepare for the speech.
2. Each group member gives his/her speech in the group and the group members vote for the best one to present in front of the whole class.
3. If time allows, have a brief Q&A or discussion about sports that were presented.

Sample Speech

For as long as I can remember, soccer has held a special place in my heart. From the moment I first learned how to dribble a ball in kindergarten to playing striker on my high school team, soccer has always given me a thrill.

What makes soccer so great? Well for starters, it's non-stop action. The clock never stops and the players are constantly moving—running up and down the field, passing the ball, blocking shots. There's always excitement as players sprint to steal the ball or take it down the field to score. The pacing keeps you engaged the whole game.

I also love the teamwork in soccer. With just a goalie, defenders, midfielders, and strikers, it's amazing how 11 players work together and rely on each other's skills. When a winger crosses the ball to the striker who heads it into the goal, you see the beauty of teamwork.

And of course, the joy of scoring a goal after driving down the field with perfect passes is indescribable. The roaring fans, the team hugging you in celebration—it's a feeling of accomplishment like no other.

Soccer has taught me so much about discipline, effort and being part of a team. I can't imagine life without playing and watching this incredible sport. That's why soccer will always be my number one.

3. Role-play

- **Focus:** The focus of this role-play is to demonstrate persuasive communication strategies and build empathy. The goal is to achieve a mutual understanding between both parties, not necessarily a uniform agreement.
- **Procedures:**
 1. Divide students into pairs and explain the role-play scenario—Student A as a caring grandchild and Student B as a reluctant grandparent. Give students a few minutes to get into their character.

2. Student A should start by showing concern for their grandparent's health and recommending walking or cycling as gentle exercise options. Student B can express hesitancy about trying exercise at their age and current condition.
3. Student A should listen carefully, acknowledge concerns, and continue giving their suggestions. Student B can raise objections but also show some openness to the advice as the conversation progresses.
4. After sufficient dialogue, call an end to the role-play. Have students switch roles and repeat the scenario so they play both grandchild and grandparent.
5. Bring the class back together for a discussion about what persuasion techniques worked well and what they learned about empathetic communication.

Tips

Here are some tips on gentle persuasion:

- Listen to fully understand the other person's perspective. Don't interrupt or immediately counter their objections.
- Ask thoughtful questions to learn about their concerns and hesitations. Seek to comprehend their viewpoint.
- Find common ground and points of agreement to build trust and rapport.
- Offer step-by-step advice that seems easily manageable, as opposed to suggesting radical changes to their lifestyle.
- Use collaborative tone like "we could try this..." rather than demanding language.
- Be prepared to compromise rather than rigidly adhering to and pushing for your own solution.
- Successful persuasion necessitates patience and empathy. Begin from their current viewpoint and work towards fostering a mutual understanding.

Supplementary Activity

1. Be a good sport

This text discusses the importance of losing gracefully and demonstrating good sportsmanship. It acknowledges that losing can be disappointing but argues that throwing a fit or accusing opponents of cheating is not the right response. This text offers perspective on handling loss maturely in competitive activities and why good sportsmanship makes someone a desirable teammate. The goal is to encourage positive values and conduct on and off the playing field.

2. Pair work

- **Focus:** The focus of this task is to summarize the main ideas of the text and relate them to students' own experiences. Students can gain perspectives by listening to each other's anecdotes and insights around these themes.

- **Procedures:**

Divide students into pairs. Students in each pair take turns to retell the passage in their own words and share their answers to the questions. Then the teacher could invite a few pairs to share any insights from their discussions.

3. Group work

- **Focus:** The focus of this task is for students to synthesize their understanding of good and bad sportsmanship by applying it to real-world examples.

- **Procedures:**

1. Divide students into groups of five or six. Explain that groups will select a professional athlete and prepare a presentation demonstrating their sportsmanship.

2. Give students a few minutes to brainstorm their presentation content. Students should introduce the athlete and the sport he/she plays; describe at least two examples of behaviors that demonstrate good or bad sportsmanship by that athlete; draw connections to advice from the passage.

3. Then, invite a few groups to present their speech in front of the class.

4. Finally, have students evaluate their presentation and reflect on what they have learned from this activity.

4. Mini-speech

- **Focus:** The focus of this task is for students to exhibit their understanding of sportsmanship and Chinese sporting culture by delivering an informative speech. After reviewing pictures of popular Chinese sports in the textbook, students will select one to introduce to an audience of foreign friends. They will describe how the sport is played, its popularity and importance in China, reasons for its significance, and share any personal connections.

- **Procedures:**

1. Explain to students that they will each select one sport and deliver a short informative speech about it. Remind students that their audience is foreigners who may be unfamiliar with Chinese sports.
2. Give students a few minutes to select a sport, conduct any needed research, and prepare for their speech. Encourage them to outline their speech and practice delivery. They should cover four recommended points in their speech:
 - How the sport is played
 - Its popularity/importance in China
 - Why it's popular/important
 - Personal experiences/anecdotes
3. Invite a few volunteers to present their mini-speech to the class.
4. Optionally, have classmates give feedback on aspects they found informative or interesting. After each speech, offer constructive feedback for improvement.

Sample Speech

Tai chi is a traditional Chinese martial art that has developed into a popular form of exercise and meditation. It involves slow, focused body movements sequenced together into routines. Tai chi emphasizes concentration, balance, and alignment.

In China, tai chi is considered a key part of cultural heritage. It embodies Chinese concepts of yin and yang, *qi* energy, and health preservation. People commonly practice tai chi at dawn in groups in open parks and plazas. Its gentle, low-impact motions make it accessible for all ages and abilities.

Tai chi's growth reflects a revival of interest in traditional Chinese practices as people seek meaning and inner peace. Its meditative qualities relieve stress and promote mental wellbeing. The exercise improves flexibility, strength, and cardiovascular health. As China urbanizes rapidly, tai chi offers a way to stay connected to historical identity.

My grandfather practices tai chi every morning to stay active and centered. Though the moves seem simple, tai chi requires discipline. I joined him a few times as a child and hope to continue learning more. Beyond exercise, tai chi represents harmony between mind and body.