

Sports Vocabulary

Topic vocabulary for the IELTS exam

* **Important**

- Do not try and learn this list of sports vocabulary.
- Identify the vocabulary you find useful for answering practise questions about sport & fitness.
- Record these in your vocabulary notebook and practise using them regularly.

Set 1: Key definitions

sport – an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another following rules

- Jamie always struggled with his school work but was excellent at **sports**.

extreme sport – a sport that is exciting but also dangerous such as skydiving

- Esther became interested in **extreme sports** when she tried bungee jump on a trip to New Zealand.

fitness – the condition of being physically fit and healthy

- I'm trying to improve my **fitness** by walking to work each day.

Set 2: Fitness

to keep fit – to keep the body in good physical condition by exercising regularly

- I do several things to **keep fit** but dancing is the one I enjoy the most.

fitness fanatic – to be obsessed with keeping fit

- Dylan is a real **fitness fanatic** and goes to the gym every day.

to exercise – to do an activity requiring physical effort, generally in order to improve health and fitness

- I make sure that I **exercise** every single day even if it's only taking the dog for a walk.

strenuous exercise – exercise that needs a lot of physical effort.

- I used to hate **strenuous exercise** until I took up running to lose weight and now really enjoy it.

to get into shape – to become fit

- Jae Hwa was so determined to **get into shape** that she started cycling to work.

to take up (a sport) – to start playing a sport.

- I have always wanted to **take up** archery and am going to join the new club that has just started in my area.

to warm up – to prepare for strenuous activity by doing gentle exercise first

- We always **warm up** before we start our workout session in the gym.

to cool down – to end a session of strenuous activity with gentle exercises to allow the heart rate to come down and the body return to a near resting state.

- It's important to **cool down** after exercising hard as this helps to prevent injury.



to be out of condition – to be not physical fit (unfit)

- My friend is so **out of condition** that she gets out of breath walking up the stairs.

training – to work hard at physical exercise and skills in order to be fitter and better at a sport

- I often don't feel like **training** but I know I have to if I want to win more races.

to train hard – to train with a lot of effort and passion

- The team **trained hard** before the match and beat the other team easily.

fitness programme – a planned timetable of activities to help someone improve their health and physical condition

- Following a **fitness programme** at my local gym helped me to stay motivated as I got back into shape after having a baby.

aerobic fitness – having strong heart and lungs and being able to carry out sustained exercise such as jogging, swimming or cycling

- In order to be a competitive rower, you need a high level of **aerobic fitness**.

to work out – to exercise, usually in a gym.

- Dhruv **worked out** at the gym three evenings a week.

a workout – a session of exercises, usually in a gym.

- Cressida found that a **workout** at the gym helped her de-stress after a hard day at work.

to bulk up – to make your body bigger and heavier, especially by gaining more muscle

- He felt so much stronger since he started working out with weights and his body was really beginning to **bulk up**.

boot camp – a short, intensive, and rigorous course of training

- William couldn't believe he'd agreed to go along to the **boot camp** with his friend. He didn't even like exercising.

Set 3: Sports facilities

sports facilities – places and buildings used for sporting activities such as swimming pools and running tracks

- There are excellent **sports facilities** at my university which is one reason why I chose it.

stadium – a large building, with tiers of seats for spectators, where people watch sports events such as football matches or athletics

- The **stadium** was buzzing with excitement as the two teams came out onto the pitch for the start of the match.

fitness centre – a place where people go to do physical exercise; usually has a gym, weights equipment and rooms for exercise classes

- I can't wait for the new **fitness centre** to open as they're advertising some great exercise classes.

sports centre – a building where people can do a range of different sports

- We have a great **sports centre** in our town which offers everything from martial arts training to indoor bowls.



gym – a large hall or room with special equipment for doing physical exercises

- If it's raining when I want to go running, I run on the treadmill in the **gym** instead.

an athletics track – a sporting facility with a track for running and areas for other sports such as high jump, long jump and javelin throwing

- Each summer we have a big competition for all the schools in our area down at the local **athletics track**.

pitch – a surface on which a particular sport is played, such as a football pitch or baseball pitch, that is marked out with lines

- Victor felt nervous as he waited with his team to go out onto the **pitch** for the first big match of the season.

court – a surface where you play sports such as tennis, badminton and squash

- Shelley was playing an excellent opponent who made her run from one side of the tennis **court** to the other throughout the match.

swimming pool – an area of water, often in a building, created for swimming in

- My mum took me to the **swimming pool** every Saturday morning when I was a child.

changing room – a room in a sports building or school where people can change their clothes before exercise

- The **changing room** smelt awful with all the sweaty bodies in there after the football match.

locker room – a changing room where people can leave their clothes in a small lockable cupboards

- Matilda put in a complaint as many of the lockers in the **locker room** were broken.

Set 4: People in sport

athlete – a person who is very good at sports or physical exercise, especially one who competes in organised events

- Kofi trained hard for many years to become one of the top **athletes** in his country.

coach – an expert who trains someone learning or improving a skill

- The **coach** made them focus on their tackling skills as this was a weakness in their game.

trainer – similar to a coach but often relates more to the fitness side of training

- Janine has been concerned about working with the new **trainer** but her performance improved considerably after just one month.

personal trainer – a coach or trainer who works with someone on a one-to-one basis

- If you find it hard to stay motivated when working out on your own, I recommend hiring a **personal trainer**.

competitor – someone who takes part in a sports competition

- There were nearly 100 **competitors** in the cycle race, so Megan was delighted to come tenth.

referee – a person who is in charge of a sports game and who makes certain that the rules are followed

- It's hard being a **referee** as not everyone agrees with your decisions.



umpire – a referee in sports such as tennis and cricket

- The **umpire** ruled that the ball was out of court.

goalkeeper – the player whose job it is to stop the ball going into the goal in games such as soccer and hockey

- Our **goalkeeper** was the star of the match after saving two goals in the penalty shootout.

Set 5: Sporting achievements

a personal best – to get a better score or achieve a faster time in your sport than you've ever done before

- Although Hicham didn't win the 400m, he achieved a **personal best** of 45.38 seconds so was delighted with his performance.

to set a record – to achieve the best result in a particular sport

- I knew my jump was a good one but I couldn't believe it when I learnt I'd **set a** new long jump **record** for my college.

to break a record – to do something that is better, faster, etc. than anything that has been done before

- The crowd in the stadium went wild when Usain Bolt **broke the** 200m **record** yet again.

prize – a reward that you get for being successful in a sports competition

- Fahmi didn't compete for the **prize** money but because she loved playing tennis.

Set 6: Sports & fitness activities

athletics – the sport of competing in track and field events, including running races and various competitions in jumping and throwing

running

hurdles

javelin

pole vault

long jump

high jump

discus

shot put

Racket sports:

tennis

badminton

squash

Ball sports:

football

American football

basketball

baseball

volleyball

cricket

rugby

golf

hockey

Winter sports:

skiing

snowboarding

ice skating

Water sports:

swimming

diving

water polo

rowing

kayaking

canoeing

sailing

surfing

jet skiing

water skiing

wind surfing

scuba diving

rafting



Other sports & fitness activities:

aerobics – vigorous exercise that strengthens the heart & lungs

gymnastics – exercises on bars, beam, floor, rings & vaulting horse

martial arts – fighting sports that make both your body and mind stronger such as karate

marathon – a running race of 42.195 kilometres

walking

jogging

cross-country

running

triathlon

cycling

mountain biking

climbing

weightlifting

weight

training

yoga

dancing

boxing

fencing

table tennis

shooting

archery

horse riding

horse racing

motor-racing

motorcycle-racing

Set 7: Other sports vocabulary

equipment – the items necessary to work out or do a sport

- My gym is going to install some new **equipment** as some of it is old and worn out.

kit – special clothing and equipment that you use when you take part in a particular activity, especially a sport

- Mandy was furious when her son decided to give up playing football just after she'd bought him some new **kit**.

membership – the state of belonging to a group, a club or organisation

- Like many people, I take out a gym **membership** every New Year but have usually stopped going by February.

a home game – a sports match played in the teams own stadium

- I'm so glad my team has a **home game** this week as my car has broken down.

an away game – a sports match played in the opposing team's stadium

- I don't enjoy playing **away games** as much as home games as fewer of our own supporters are there.

supporter – someone who admires a sports team and watches them play regularly

- I've been a Manchester United **supporter** all my life and watch live games wherever I can.

a fan – someone who admires a specific person, sport or a sports team

- I'm a huge rugby **fan** and especially enjoy watching the international matches on TV.

a competition – an event or contest in which individual people or teams take part in order to establish who is best

- The coach was pleased with the way the new team was playing and entered them in the under 12's **competition**.

contest – a competition, often involving two people

- Tosin was very nervous before the **contest** as he was up against a very good boxer from Cuba.



match – a sports competition in which two people or teams compete against each other
- They were really disappointed to have lost the **match** after being ahead in the first half.

championship – a large and important competition

- She was overjoyed to be selected to run for her country in the world **championships**.

tournament – a competition for teams or single players in which a series of games is played, and the winners of each game play against each other until only one winner is left

- The school team arrived home with a large trophy after winning the regional hockey **tournament**.

regatta – a sporting event involving boats

- Gregor has only been learning to sail for six months when he took part in his first **regatta**.

versus/v – against, used to denote competing teams or players in a sports contest

- The final of the men's tennis championship was Nadal **versus** Federer.

to compete – to take part in a competition or sports event

- Jolene was so excited about **competing** in her first professional golf competition.

competitive – involving competition; wanting very much to win or be more successful than other people

- Danny was very **competitive** and trained harder than anyone else in the effort to be the best hurdler at his county.

league – a group of sports teams who take part in competitions between each other over a period of time

- If they won the next game, they would end the season top of the **league**.

to score – to get a point or goal in a game or sport

- Baz **scored** in the last minute of the match and won the game for his team.

the score – how many points an individual or team has

- The final **score** was 3-1 to the home side so there was much celebration in the town that evening.

a draw – when two competitors or teams get the same score

- When the final whistle blew the score was 34-34 so the basketball match was a **draw**.

reserve – an extra player who is ready to play if needed

- Narong was pleased to be selected as a **reserve** but really hoped he'd have a chance to play.

to drop out – to not do something that you were going to do, or to stop doing something before you have finished

- She was leading the race until she pulled a muscle and had to **drop out** in the third lap.

to pull out – to withdraw before an event or competition

- The crew had to **pull out** of the regatta after they all fell ill with a stomach bug.

injury – when part of the body is damaged or hurt

- Lena was favourite to win the golf tournament until she picked up a shoulder **injury**.

season – a period of the year when a particular sport is played

- I love it when the cricket **season** comes round each year as it means that summer has finally arrived.



a season ticket – an entry ticket for all of a team’s home games during a specific season

- For my thirtieth birthday, my family bought me a **season ticket** to watch my favourite soccer team play.

amateur – a person who engages in a pursuit, especially a sport, on an unpaid basis

- Although he only played rugby in an **amateur** team, it was his dream to turn professional one day.

professional – a person is paid for playing a sport

- **Professional** racing drivers get paid vast sums of money.

Set 8: Sports idioms

blow away the competition – to easily beat the opposing competitor or team

- I thought it was going to be a challenging race but he **blew away the competition**.

neck and neck – when two competitors are level with each other and have an equal chance of winning

- Coming down the home straight, the two front-runners were **neck and neck** until Yoshi edged ahead as they reached the finish line.

front-runner – the person or team considered most likely to win

- There were some excellent gymnasts in the competition but Nadia was definitely the **front-runner** and the one to beat.

to get second wind – to experience renewed energy after a period of fatigue

- He began to struggle in the final stages of the marathon but hearing the crowd cheer him on, he **got second wind** and finished in the top twenty.

underdog – a competitor thought to have little chance of doing well or winning

- The British skiing team were definitely the **underdogs** in the competition so everyone was shocked when they got third place.

[For IELTS-style practise questions](#)

For IELTS-style sports-related practise questions and sample answers visit:

www.ieltsjacky.com/sports-vocabulary.html

