

1 American football's most iconic event



Source: Adobe Stock/vectorfusionart

1 a Speaking

Warm-up: talking about sporting events

Get into small groups and talk about the following:

1. Which sporting events do you regularly watch and why?
2. What sports do you play / do?
3. What do you know / have you heard about American football?
4. What have you heard about the Super Bowl™?



Source: Adobe Stock/Marcus Jones

The **Super Bowl™** is the final of the US football championship. In 2025 it takes place on February 9 (second Sunday of February) in **Caesar's Superdome** in New Orleans. This year's finalists are _____ and _____. Last year's final was won by the Kansas City Chiefs, who defeated the Philadelphia Eagles. Taylor Swift watching her boyfriend Travis Kelce playing for Kansas made it the most watched show of the whole year. The winning team is given the **Vince Lombardi Trophy**. In the US the Super Bowl™ is the biggest show of the year with spectacular ads and a gigantic halftime show with Kendrick Lamar as the main act this year. Millions of people follow the "big game" at home parties, in restaurants or other public places. In recent years the Super Bowl™ has also become popular in Europe and other parts of the world.



Source: Adobe Stock/Araki Illustrations

1 b Some football vocabulary

Vocabulary



VocabBooster

1. Watch the [short video clip](#) to get familiar with some topic-related vocabulary and the rules of football. Write down a list of words.
2. Then fill in the appropriate word(s) / information in the blanks.

The nickname of a football is _____¹. The football field is _____² long. Both teams try to move the ball to the _____³. The leader of the offense is called _____⁴. The _____⁵ try to catch the ball from the quarterback. Running backs try to run past the _____⁶ of the opponent. The _____⁷ tries to catch the ball of the opponent. This is called _____⁸. If a player reaches the end zone with a ball, he scores a _____⁹ and wins six points for his team. Another way to score are _____¹⁰, when the ball is kicked. Such goals get a team three points. Before each play the teams gather closely, they _____¹¹. The _____¹² control the game and enforce the rules. The teams have several _____¹³ who train and prepare them for the games. A particularly popular part of a Super Bowl™ is the _____¹⁴ show.



Source: Adobe Stock/antto

3. Watch the clip again and check.

1 c

How it all started

Reading

Read the text about the Super Bowl™'s history. Then answer the questions below in your own words.

AE

A short history of the “big game”

The Super Bowl's origins lie in the creation of the American Football League (AFL) in 1960. Started by a group of businessmen who wanted their own pro football franchises but were frustrated by the NFL's unwillingness to expand, the AFL forged ahead as an alternative league playing a more wide-open brand of football. So began a rivalry that would help push pro football ahead of baseball as the most popular spectator sport in the country by the end of the decade.

In 1966, after several years of competition, NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle and Lamar Hunt, owner of the AFL's Kansas City Chiefs, negotiated a merger agreement in which the two leagues would formally join together in 1970. In the meantime, the AFL and NFL champions would play each other at the end of the season and Hunt suggested calling the new game the “Super Bowl.” Though both, he and Rozelle, thought a better title could be found, sportswriters started using the name in advance of the inaugural game in January 1967 and it stuck.

Though there was anticipation before Super Bowl I between the Green Bay Packers and Kansas City Chiefs, the hype did not remotely approach what we see today. The game, which was held in the Los Angeles Coliseum, did not even sell out. As Michael MacCambridge, author of a history of pro football, observed, “fans simply weren't used to traveling to neutral sites.” Yet, the game drew 65 million television viewers, the largest ever for an American sporting event at the time.

The game's popularity took off from there as the New York Jets' shocking upset of the Baltimore Colts in Super Bowl III gave the AFL credibility. After the merger, the NFL split into the American Football Conference (AFC) and the National Football Conference (NFC), and the

victors of those conferences fought it out at the end of each season. The two-week gap between the conference championship games allowed suspense to build, as the media presence grew dramatically. By 1974, the event had grown to such proportions that Norman Vincent Peale declared that if Christ were alive, “he'd be at the Super Bowl.”

As the NFC's domination of the AFC produced a series of Super Bowl routs in the 1980s, Madison Avenue stepped in to create a different kind of interest in the game. In 1984, Apple commissioned a Ridley Scott-directed commercial promoting their new Macintosh computer. The ad, based on George Orwell's dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, showed a woman tossing a sledgehammer into a gigantic TV screen of Big Brother's propaganda. Shown during Super Bowl XVIII, the commercial started a sensation and from that point forward, corporate America debuted their best ads during the game. After all, no better place to unveil them than before the biggest national television audience of the year. And ranking the spots became another part of watching the game.

While viewership for the World Series and NBA Finals is highly dependent on whether large-market teams or major stars participate or not, the Super Bowl's ratings are almost unaffected by these factors. The NFL's revenue-sharing arrangement allows small-market teams to remain competitive and even become national brands.

With the rise of cable TV, the internet, and other entertainment options, the country rarely pauses to watch or follow the same event, except in cases of national tragedy. When the 2025 Super Bowl kicks off on February 9, virtually the entire nation will be watching, producing a collective experience rare in today's niche culture world.



pro:
professional
franchise:
Lizenz

rout: Schlappe

merger:
Vereinigung

to debut: to first
show

To count Super
Bowls, Roman
numerals are
used.

Source: Adobe Stock/NINJA FACTORY

Source: www.oah.org/tah/extras/the-history-of-the-super-bowl/

1. Why were there two associations in the 1960s?
2. What happened to the two associations in the 1970s?
3. What do we learn about the name “Super Bowl™?”
4. Why were the first games not sold out?
5. How is professional football in the US organised now? (have a look at task 1 h)
6. What was a real sensation in the mid-1980s?
7. How is the Super Bowl™ of the NFL different from other finals like the one of the NBA?

1 d

Language in use

AE

venue: Ort, Platz
to shell out: to spend, to pay
to command a premium: to demand a higher price
to trot out: to introduce, to present

to amplify: to make bigger
resonance: impact

sliver (here): a few seconds

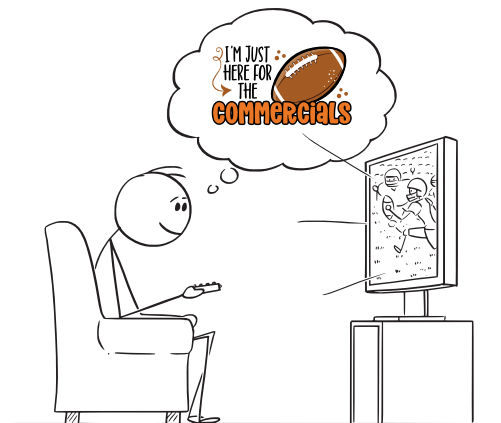
The biggest day for advertising

Read the text about Super Bowl™ commercials. Some words are missing. Use the words in brackets to form the missing word for each gap (1–14). Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

Why are Super Bowl™ ads so expensive?

The Super Bowl™ marks the year’s biggest day for advertising, with top brands paying millions to get their messages in front of a television audience that (0) ___ **(rely)** attracts more than 100 million viewers. Over the years, the cost of a 30-second (1) ___ **(advertise)** has soared, making the Super Bowl™ the (2) ___ **(costly)** advertising venue on TV. Because the “big game” is one of the few events that draws an audience of this size, companies are willing to shell out millions to promote their brands during the NFL showcase. Super Bowl™ ads command a premium because the game is (3) ___ **(type)** the most-watched media event of the year. That gives brands a chance to reach more (4) ___ **(consume)** at one time than anywhere else, and many companies use the (5) ___ **(opportune)** to trot out new (6) ___ **(produce)** or introduce a new slogan.

There’s another reason why brands are so willing to pay up: about 3 in 4 people say they are (7) ___ **(actual)** excited to watch the ads during the Super Bowl™. Families and friends normally watch the game together, and often talk about the spots as well as the game itself – a (8) ___ **(discuss)** that can carry over at work the next day, experts say. “This shared experience can amplify the (9) ___ **(emotion)** resonance of adverts, making them more memorable and (10) ___ **(effect)**. When viewers watch the Super Bowl™, they are not just passive (11) ___ **(receive)** of content – they are engaged in a (12) ___ **(common)** event,” said Jura Liaukonyte, a professor of (13) ___ **(market)** in Cornell University’s SC Johnson College of Business, in an email. With a massive audience of viewers who are glued to the Super Bowl™ (14) ___ **(commerce)**, brands are willing to pay up to secure a sliver of airtime.



Source: www.cbsnews.com/news/how-much-super-bowl-commercial-cost-2024/

Source: Adobe Stock / Zdenek Sasek, Zsuzsanna

Write your answers here:

0	reliably	5	10
1		6	11
2		7	12
3		8	13
4		9	14

Test format
Word formation

Snap Shot

1 e Memorable Super Bowl™ commercials

Speaking



1. Go to the internet or a streaming platform and find the best / most memorable Super Bowl™ ads. Watch some. Analyse them and present your favourite ad to your partner.
2. Go to the website of adweek.com, brand-innovators.com or superbowl-ads.com and scroll down the ad trackers. Make a list of products or services that will be advertised.
3. Discuss potential motives of the companies to spend so much money (about 7 million dollars for 30 seconds) for their product / service.

1 f Kendrick Lamar – the 2025 featured performer of the halftime show

Lead-in

Get into small groups and talk about the following:

1. What do you know about Kendrick Lamar?
2. Do you listen to his music? Why / why not?
3. How popular is Kendrick Lamar in Europe?
4. Why do you think musicians feel honoured to perform at the Super Bowl™?



Source: Wikimedia Commons/
Batiste Safont

1 g Super Bowl™ halftime shows

Listening

Track 1



You are going to listen to a short interview about how the musical act for the halftime show is picked. First, you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then listen to the recording twice. While listening, answer the questions (1–6) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

0	Why was Kendrick Lamar picked for the Super Bowl™?	he has star power
1	What does Kendrick Lamar not have?	
2	How can the host cities influence the decision who will perform?	
3	Who is a prominent member of the NFL board?	
4	Who was the headline act in the previous year?	
5	What does Kendrick see as his mission?	
6	What other link does the expert see between Kendrick and New Orleans?	

Source: www.npr.org/2024/09/11/nx-s1-5107601/insight-into-how-the-headliner-for-the-super-bowl-halftime-show-is-chosen

Test format
Note form

1 h How the NFL works (an activity for dedicated fans and experts)

Follow-up



1. Look at the table of the NFL and its two conferences. The teams are represented by their logos. The winning team of each conference plays in the Super Bowl™. Try to identify as many teams and their respective cities as possible.
2. Get into small groups and find the names of at least four teams from each conference. The nfl.com website will help you.
3. Do some research on this year's finalists.



Source: Adobe Stock/Semper Fidelis

1 i

Reading

Patrick Mahomes – a quarterback superstar

Read the text about quarterback Patrick Mahomes. Complete the sentences (1–6) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

BE

One of the greatest quarterbacks of all time

Patrick Mahomes (born September 17, 1995, Tyler, Texas) is an American football quarterback who is one of the premier players in the National Football League (NFL). In his second season as a professional (2018), he was named the NFL's most valuable player (MVP), and he later led the Kansas City Chiefs to victory in



end of the 2017 season, however, Mahomes became the starter. In 2018 he more than lived up to the hype, passing for 5,097 yards and 50 touchdowns and thus becoming the second player in NFL history to throw for 5,000 or more yards and at least 50 touchdowns in a single season.

Super Bowls LIV (2020), LVII (2023), and LVIII (2024); he was named MVP of all three games.

Off the field, Mahomes proved to be an engaged social justice advocate. In 2020, in the wake of the killing of Black American George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, he joined a group of other prominent Black football players in making a video that challenged the NFL to condemn racism. Mahomes also threw his support to basketball icon LeBron James's "More Than a Vote", an effort to combat voter suppression and increase voter registration. In 2019, Mahomes established the "15 and the Mahomies" non-profit foundation, which was dedicated to improving the lives of children in underserved communities. In addition, he became part owner of both Major League Baseball's Kansas City Royals and Major League Soccer's Sporting Kansas City. *Time* magazine listed Mahomes among the "100 Most Influential People of 2020". In 2022 he married his high-school sweetheart and longtime partner, Brittany Matthews. The couple has three children.

Mahomes grew up mostly in Texas, with his white mother after she and his Black father separated when their son was six years old. His father, Pat Mahomes, was a professional baseball pitcher. As a child, the younger Mahomes often accompanied his father to the ballpark. He was a gifted athlete even in boyhood and starred in three sports at his high school: he stood out as a basketball player and excelled at an even higher level in baseball and football.

Even before his senior year, Mahomes entered the 2017 NFL draft, in which the Kansas City Chiefs selected him in the first round. The Chiefs had sky-high expectations for him (General Manager Brett Veach called him "one of the best players I've ever seen"). But, as backup for starting quarterback Alex Smith, Mahomes played little during his rookie season. When Smith left the Chiefs at the

in the wake of:
als Folge von

pitcher: Werfer/
in
ballpark: Base-
ballstadium

underserved:
untersorgt
draft: Auswahl
von Sportler/
innen aus den
Colleges durch
Profiteams

rookie: Neuling

35

40

45

50

55

60

**Test format
Note form**

0	Mahomes spent almost all of his childhood ...	in Texas
1	His interest in sports was aroused ... (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
2	At high school, Mahomes ... (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
3	Even before graduating Mahomes ...	
4	His first season was not successful because he ...	
5	His greatest achievement in the following season was ... (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
6	Apart from sports, Mahomes supports ... (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	

Source: Wikimedia Commons/Jeffrey Beall

Source: www.britannica.com/biography/Patrick-Mahomes

1 j Should top athletes speak out?

Speaking

Especially in Trump's first term, some NFL players knelt down during the national anthem to protest against racism and police violence against African Americans. Others like Mahomes support poor communities or voter registration.

Get into small groups and discuss the following:

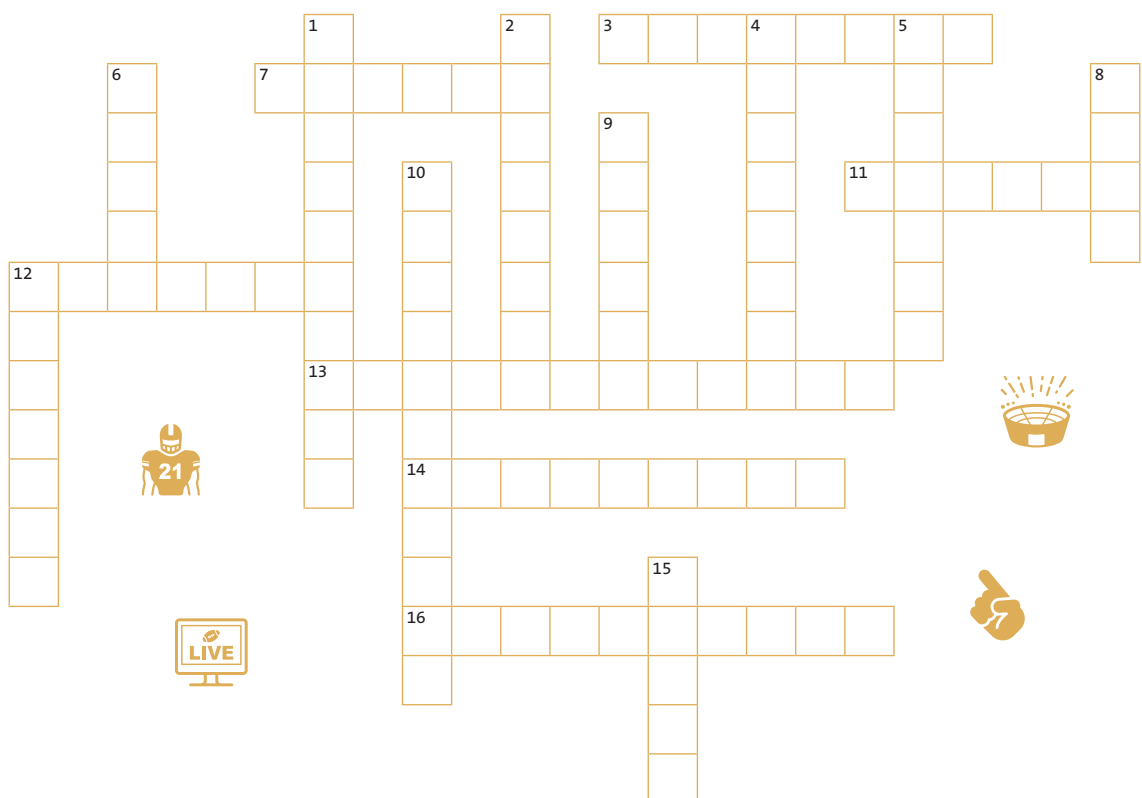
- » Should athletes use their popularity and speak out or rather concentrate on their job? Find arguments for both positions.
- » What causes should top athletes support?

1 k Revising some topic-related words

Vocabulary

Go over the new words and the VocabBooster in 1 b again and solve the crossword puzzle.

Who is the fastest?



Across

- 3 stadium used in baseball
- 7 newcomer
- 11 joining of two companies / leagues
- 12 role of Mahomes' father in baseball
- 13 act of catching the ball from the opponent
- 14 another word for impact
- 16 word used for the two leagues

Down

- 1 another word for advertisement
- 2 player who tries to take the ball from the opponent
- 4 surname of the person after whom the Super Bowl™ trophy is named
- 5 person who controls and enforces the rules
- 6 first show
- 8 measurement used in the UK and US (~ 91 cm)
- 9 to gather together before a game
- 10 most important player in football
- 12 nickname of the ball used in American football
- 15 act of recruiting the best players from college teams