

## Saratoga Library English Conversation Club

### The 2026 World Cup

### July 2, 2026

Have you been watching any of the World Cup soccer games this summer? Who are you cheering for? The 2026 FIFA World Cup is a 39-day event running from June 11 to July 19, 2026, making it the longest in history. The host countries for this World Cup are in North America: Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Today we will read about the World Cup and how the rounds of the tournament are organized. First, review the following vocabulary and then practice the dialog.

**Vocabulary Preview:** Read these words and match them to their meanings.

1. qualification (kwol-uh-fi- <b>kay</b> -shuhn)	a) a type of tournament in which all the teams play each other at least once. The teams are then ranked based on who wins the most games in total.
2. bid (bid)	b) the demonstration of one's ability to compete or do a job
3. revenue ( <b>rev</b> -uhn-yoo)	c) to compete against another person or team; (noun) competition
4. zone (zohn)	d) money earned
5. round-robin (round <b>rob</b> -in)	e) an offer or proposal
6. to face-off ( <b>fays</b> -awf)	f) a copy of an item that is made to look like the original
7. elimination (ih-lim-uh- <b>ney</b> -shuhn)	g) (1) something that is the final, last, furthest, or maximum ending in a process or series; (2) the best or highest
8. depict ( <b>dih</b> -pikt)	h) removal from a competition
9. replica ( <b>rep</b> -li-kuh)	i) a specific area or a region with a distinctive feature or quality
10. ultimate ( <b>uhl</b> -tuh-mit)	j) to make something look a certain way

ANSWERS: 1 – b; 2 - e; 3 – d; 4 – i; 5 – a; 6 - c; 7 – h; 8 – j; 9 – f; 10 - g

#### Dialog Practice with Vocabulary Words

**Kelly:** Have you been watching the World Cup games? I just watched the **face-off** between Spain and Cape Verde.

**Jaime:** That was the **ultimate** surprise match. Cape Verde played incredibly well in their **qualification** matches last year. That's how they earned their first-ever ticket to the FIFA World Cup.

**Andi:** I like that the World Cup is a **round robin** tournament because all the teams in a group get to play each other.

**Kelly:** Yes, and it's fun to see what is going on in all the fan **zones** in each host city.

**Jaime:** Yes, I heard the **revenue** of many of the eateries is going way up. There are so many fans.

**Andi:** The **elimination** matches start soon. Each **face-off** will be intense.

#### Warm-Up Questions

1. Did you play soccer (football) when you were young?
2. What does FIFA stand for?
3. Does your home country usually qualify for the World Cup? Why or why not?
4. Who is your favorite player?

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#### FIFA WORLD CUP

Federation Internationale de Football Association



FIFA World Cup Trophy, FIFA World Museum, Zürich, Switzerland by Ank Kumar

The FIFA World Cup is an international football (soccer) competition that takes place every four years. The competition lasts approximately one month. There are currently six FIFA continental **zones**: Africa, Asia, North and Central America and Caribbean, South America, Oceania, and Europe.

In the three years before a World Cup series, countries compete in **qualification** matches. The host nation, which changes each year, qualifies automatically. This year the FIFA World Cup is jointly hosted by three nations: Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

This marks the first time in tournament history that the event is shared across three host countries. All three countries automatically qualified to play in the World Cup this year. Since 2002, FIFA has used a voting system to determine the host nation.

A team of executives review each **bid** to determine if a nation has the infrastructure to support the most watched sporting event in the world.

The winning **bid** is announced at least six years before the event. Hundreds of millions of people watch the World Cup, and a country can bring in billions of dollars of **revenue** from all the games.

For this World Cup Series, there are two main rounds of matches that take place in the host nations. The first round is called the group stage. This part of the competition is a **round-robin** tournament, and points are awarded for wins and ties.

The group stage for this year's World Cup includes 48 countries split into 12 groups as shown in Table 1. The four teams in each group compete for a spot in the playoffs. Every team in a group plays every other team in that same group exactly once. The group stage of the World Cup concluded on Saturday, June 27.

**Table 1: The 12 Groups for the First Stage of the 2026 World Cup**

**Group A:** Mexico, South Africa, Korea Republic, Czechia

**Group B:** Canada, Switzerland, Qatar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Group C:** Brazil, Morocco, Haiti, Scotland

**Group D:** United States, Australia, Paraguay, Türkiye

**Group E:** Germany, Curaçao, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador

**Group F:** Netherlands, Japan, Tunisia, Sweden

**Group G:** Belgium, Egypt, Iran, New Zealand

**Group H:** Spain, Cabo Verde, Saudi Arabia, Uruguay

**Group I:** France, Norway, Senegal, Iraq

**Group J:** Argentina, Austria, Algeria, Jordan

**Group K:** Colombia, Portugal, Congo DR, Uzbekistan

**Group L:** England, Croatia, Ghana, Panama

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Exactly 32 teams advance to the **elimination** stage after the group stage. This is the largest knockout round in tournament history, expanded from the 16 teams that used to advance in past World Cups.

#### Who Made the Cut for the Knockout Round this Year?

The top two teams from all 12 groups qualify for the knockout round. That is 24 teams. Then the eight third-place teams with the highest point totals also advance to fill the remaining spots. Table 1 shows the top two teams of each group in **bold** text.

The eight third-place teams that also advance are underlined. The Knockout Round runs from June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 3<sup>rd</sup>. In this round, teams **face-off** against each other in **elimination** matches. The losers are **eliminated** from the series.

#### The Remaining Tournament Schedule

The winners from each game in the knockout round keep moving forward on a pre-determined path that is called a **fixed bracket** or bracket map. The matches for the next rounds are already decided and locked in place. The names of the teams that win are filled in the bracket.

You can view the full daily match locations and pairings on the [FIFA World Cup Bracket Page](#). Table 2 shows the remaining rounds of the tournament and how many teams will play. At the end of this handout, there is a chart from the *Seattle Times* showing all the fixed brackets.

**Table 2. Remaining Rounds of the 2026 World Cup Series and the Dates They Will Be Played**

Round	Dates	Number of Teams Remaining
Round of 16	July 4 – July 7	16 teams
Quarterfinals	July 9 – July 11	8 teams
Semifinals	July 14 – July 15	4 teams
Third-Place Match	July 18	2 semifinal losers play for 3 <sup>rd</sup> place
World Cup Final	July 19	Final 2 teams

The very first match of the 2026 World Cup was on June 11<sup>th</sup> in Mexico City. The final match will be on July 19<sup>th</sup> in New Jersey. A total of 104 matches will be played. Next week we will read stories about the experiences fans from all over the world are having in the US while they cheer their teams on.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Are you watching any of the World Cup matches? If so, which ones?
2. What teams are surprises for you?
3. Did you watch the USA play Bosnia-Herzegovina on July 1<sup>st</sup>?
4. Do you think the World Cup Series is a good idea to learn about other countries and people?
5. What have you learned about the different teams participating in the Series?
6. Did you know about Cape Verde (Cabo Verde) before they played in draw with Spain?

#### References

- *FIFA.com*
- *World Cup*, Copyright 2020, Red River Press Inc. For use by Ellii members only.
- *Seattle Times* ([FIFA Men's World Cup, round of 32: Download and print your bracket | The Seattle Times](#))

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