

# The Mini Page

**Next Week:**  
Father's Day

Issue 23, 2026

Founded by Betty Debnam

## Playing for the Cup



photo by Tasnim News Agency

This year's FIFA World Cup is extra special because it's taking place in North America! Between June 11 and July 19, 11 U.S. cities, along with three cities in Mexico and two in Canada, will host soccer teams from all over the world as they compete for the championship title.

U.S. host cities are:

- |             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Atlanta     | Miami               |
| Boston      | New York/New Jersey |
| Dallas      | Philadelphia        |
| Houston     | San Francisco       |
| Kansas City | Seattle             |
| Los Angeles |                     |

Mexican host cities are Guadalajara, Mexico City and Monterrey. Canadian hosts are Toronto and Vancouver.

### What is FIFA?

FIFA (FEE-fah) is a French acronym for the International Federation of Association Football. (In the U.S., we call this game soccer.) It is the organization in charge of the World Cup and other international soccer tournaments.



### Getting organized

FIFA organizes members into six confederations, or groups. Each confederation hosts a tournament to determine which teams qualify for the FIFA World Cup. The countries hosting the matches qualify automatically.

This will be the first tournament with 48 teams, an expansion from 32.

The World Cup has two stages, or parts:

**group play and knockout play.** In group play, each team plays the other three teams in its assigned group. If a team wins, it receives three points; a **draw**, or a tie, is awarded one point. The two teams with the most points in each group advance to the knockout stage, where a loss means elimination.

## 2026 FIFA World Cup Groups

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Group A</b><br>Mexico<br>South Africa<br>South Korea<br>Czech Republic | <b>Group B</b><br>Canada<br>Bosnia and Herzegovina<br>Qatar<br>Switzerland | <b>Group C</b><br>Brazil<br>Morocco<br>Haiti<br>Scotland    |
| <b>Group D</b><br>United States<br>Paraguay<br>Australia<br>Turkey        | <b>Group E</b><br>Germany<br>Curaçao<br>Ivory Coast<br>Ecuador             | <b>Group F</b><br>Netherlands<br>Japan<br>Sweden<br>Tunisia |
| <b>Group G</b><br>Belgium<br>Egypt<br>Iran<br>New Zealand                 | <b>Group H</b><br>Spain<br>Cape Verde<br>Saudi Arabia<br>Uruguay           | <b>Group I</b><br>France<br>Senegal<br>Iraq<br>Norway       |
| <b>Group J</b><br>Argentina<br>Algeria<br>Austria<br>Jordan               | <b>Group K</b><br>Portugal<br>DR Congo<br>Uzbekistan<br>Colombia           | <b>Group L</b><br>England<br>Croatia<br>Ghana<br>Panama     |

## Meet the Mascots

With three host countries, FIFA World Cup has introduced three mascots: Maple the moose from Canada, Zayu the jaguar from Mexico, and Clutch the bald eagle from the United States.



Maple, Zayu and Clutch

Maple is a goalkeeper and loves music and art. Zayu is a striker who loves Mexican culture, including dance and food. Clutch, a midfielder, loves adventure and is a leader on his team.



photo by PhotoplaneKid

Estadio Azteca in Mexico City can accommodate more than 87,000 spectators.

BC Place in Vancouver, British Columbia, is home to soccer and rugby teams. It can hold more than 54,000 people.



photo by DXR

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [fifa.fans/4taE0nr](http://fifa.fans/4taE0nr)

### At the library:

- "FIFA World Cup 2026 Kids' Handbook" by Alex Rice

## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of the FIFA World Cup are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

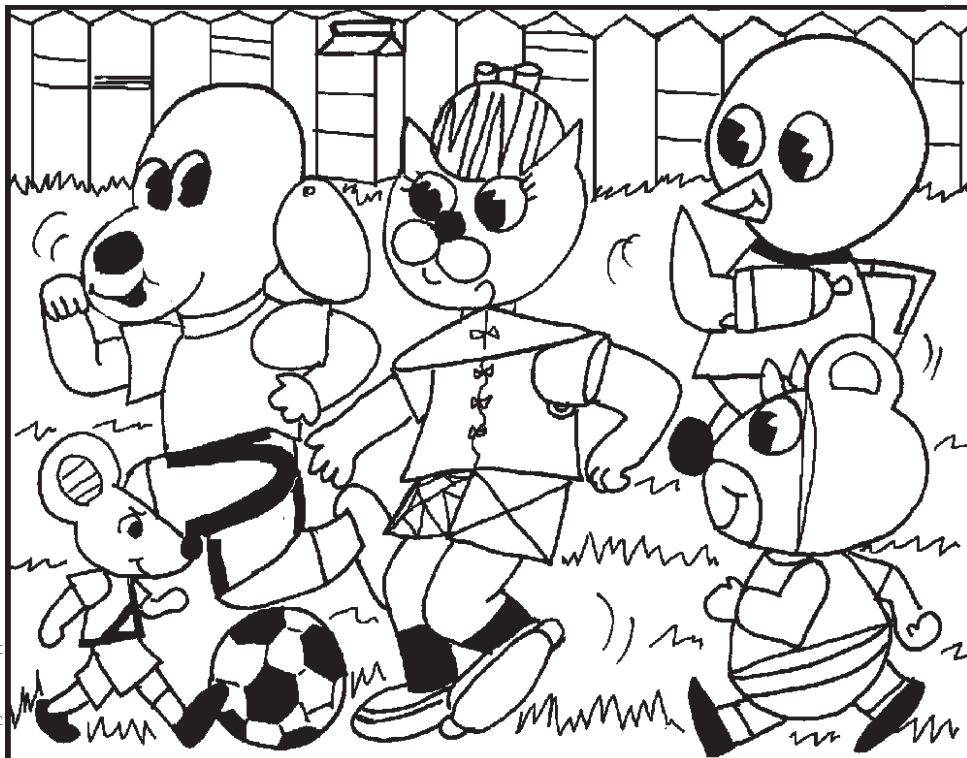


- CANADA,
- CHAMPION, CLUTCH,
- CONFEDERATION, CUP,
- FIFA, FOOTBALL, GROUP,
- HOST, KNOCKOUT,
- MAPLE, MASCOT, MEXICO,
- SOCCER, STAGE, TEAMS,
- UNITED STATES, WORLD,
- ZAYU.

Y H C T U L C M E X I C O H P  
S B P W D I G B R A H E D O C  
O T U O K C O N K A S L B S U  
C A O R Z A Y U M T R P G T P  
C P R L P T E P C A N A D A T  
E P G D E Q I N D A I M R U O  
R R U A V O L L A B T O O F C  
F G M U N I T E D S T A T E S  
M S I N V S T A G E F I F A A  
N O I T A R E D E F N O C C M

## Mini Spy Classics

Mini Spy and her friends are pretending to play in the FIFA World Cup. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



Mini Spy Classics appear in the first issue of each month.

Based on materials originally produced and/or created by Betty Debnam.

- carton of milk
- bell
- letter U
- olive
- coat hanger
- letter V
- hot dog
- kite
- word MINI
- bowl
- diamond
- number 8
- two teacups
- heart
- letter A

## Mini Jokes



**Frank:** Why can't Cinderella play soccer?

**Fiona:** Because she always runs away from the ball!

**Frances:** How do soccer players stay cool during a game?

**Fred:** They stand near the fans!

## Eco Note



A creature with a brain no larger than a sesame seed has surprised scientists by demonstrating something akin to a sense of rhythm, according to an Australian study. Bumblebees learned to recognize repeating patterns of flashes and vibrations, and could still identify the same rhythms even when the signals were faster, slower or switched from vibrations they could feel to flashes they could see. This kind of abstract pattern recognition had previously been associated with animals such as parrots, songbirds and primates.

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### For later:

Look in your local newspaper for coverage of the FIFA World Cup and for TV schedules to watch the games.

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