

How to Make an 'African' Football

All across Africa children play football. Wherever they are; on grass pitches or on dirty patches of ground, and mostly in bare feet. Many of them cannot afford leather footballs and in some areas they, so they make their own. How? They use banana leaves, strips of cloth, rubber, and pieces of fabric. Although, the most common material used is plastic.

There are lots of different ways to make plastic bag footballs and some African children are experts in their own designs. The following instructions show you how to make a fairly simple version –and feel free to improvise! It is also a great way to recycle and make good use out of things that would otherwise be thrown away.

For these children it is a delight to make their own footballs. Often they need to help the family look after their animals and younger siblings. When they have free time though this is how they like to spend their time.

YOU TOO CAN MAKE ONE and see what it's like to play with an 'African' football.



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To make your own 'African' football you will need:

20-30 plastic bags – 2 newspapers – 16 metres of string or twine

This is how to make it:



Get your plastic bags ready. Save a good one for the last bag.



Scrunch up some newspaper for the centre of your ball.



Place the paper in the first bag.



Shape the bag around the paper and then twist the small ball you've made.



Now that you have twisted the ball, hold the twisted bag and use the rest of the bag to cover the ball again by turning the bag over the ball the other way. If you have a large bag you may be able to do this twist and turn process again.



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Tie this off neatly and try not to make a bulge in your ball.



Keep placing the ball in more bags, twisting, turning and tying.



Keep the ball round and make sure the knots are distributed evenly on the ball.



When you are happy with the size of your ball, put the last bag on.



Using the string or twine, tie onto the final knot on the bag. Wrap this string fairly tightly around the ball a few times. Then turn the ball 90 degrees and wrap the string around this part of the ball.





Now wrap the string in-between at 45 degrees and so on



Wrap the string around as much as you like, or weave the string in and out.



Turn the ball on its side and wrap string around the middle. You can weave this in and out of the other string to make your ball stronger.

Tie off the last piece of string.



Now your ball is finished!

The more time you spend making it, the longer it will last. It is best to weave the wool in and out as much as possible to keep the ball in shape.

This is a basic design, for a more intricate design see Matthieu's ball below.



Other ways to use this resource:

- Get pupils thinking about the different games that they can play using the balls.
- Try making other shaped balls, such as rugby balls.
- Think about things to make out of recycled materials.
- Hold a football or netball tournament with each team representing a different African country
- Raise money for African Revival in a tournament so that more African children are able to get a better education and escape the poverty trap.
- Link your football making to the Olympics and create an African themed mini-Olympics using recycled materials



The proud creator of an 'African' football at an internally displaced peoples camp in northern Uganda



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