

How to Play Quidditch at Home

A make-believe game for wizards can become a reality in your own neighborhood.

By Bill Doherty

Quidditch on the Ground

Like many Americans, Jodi Palmer attended the first Harry Potter movie, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, with her son, Cody, and his best friend, Austin Shockley, back in December 2001. After the credits rolled, Palmer and her two movie companions couldn't stop talking about how much they'd love to play Quidditch, the main sport in J.K. Rowling's wildly popular [books](#).

There was one problem though. In the film, the make-believe game is played 50 feet in the air by young wizards with flying brooms and magic balls. But that didn't deter Palmer, a grade-school gym teacher at Windermere Elementary School near Columbus, Ohio. She decided to bring the game down to earth and transform it into something that mere "muggles" (Potter-speak for nonwizards) could play.

Realizing she was on to something, Palmer posted her version on a national Web site for physical education teachers. Now gym teachers across the country are incorporating Quidditch into their curricula.

Want to bring Quidditch to the next park outing or suggest it to your kids' gym teacher? Here's what you'll need to get started -- Quidditch 101, if you will.

Prerequisites

It helps if the players have either read the Harry Potter [books](#) or seen the movies so they know the basic lingo used in Quidditch. "Other than that, you need the ability to run away from an opponent or to chase one and the ability to throw and catch -- that's it," says Palmer.

Materials Needed One foam soccer ball (quaffle); 4 to 8 solid-color foam balls, each about 8 inches in diameter (bludgers); 1 small super-bouncy ball (snitch); and 6 hula hoops (goals). The hoops need to hang about 6 feet off the ground from a soccer net crossbar, [tree](#) branch, or something similar (three at each end). Each team should wear same-color shirts.

Rules To begin the game, 8 to 10 players per team are assigned positions. If more kids want to join in the fun, additional players can easily be added. Here's what the positions do:

Chaser: Three to four per team. Chasers are offensive players similar to forwards in soccer. They try to throw the quaffle through one of the hoops to score 10 points.

Beater (or Tagger): Three to four per team. They use the bludger to tag out chasers and the seeker. The beaters are defensive players, like soccer fullbacks.

Seeker: One to two people per team (depending upon your team size), who, when the snitch is released, try to catch it to score 150 points.

Keeper: This person guards the goals and tries to block any attempt to score. Each team has one keeper.

Game Play The game begins with a chaser from each team standing in the center with the other teammates positioned around them (much like a basketball game tip-off). The beaters stand back some, protecting their goals. The quaffle is tossed into the air by the referee (that's you) and the center chasers try to tip the ball to another chaser on their team. Seekers and beaters don't touch the quaffle.

How to Play

Once the quaffle is caught by a chaser, she runs with it toward the three hula hoop goals. If she throws the quaffle through one of the opposing team's hoops, she earns 10 points for the team. Meanwhile, beaters are playing defense, attempting to stop the chasers from advancing or scoring by throwing the soft foam bludgers at them.

Once tagged with the bludger, the chaser must stop moving and try to pass the quaffle to another chaser on the same team (once she makes the pass, she can move again). If the quaffle is dropped or intercepted by a chaser on the opposing team, that team takes possession. When a goal is scored, players return to the center for a new tip-off.

At some point in the game, the referee will release the snitch. As the only players who can touch the snitch, this is where the seekers come into play. Just like in the movie, the snitch needs to move as much as possible, which is why a super-bouncy ball is needed.

If the snitch stops rolling or bouncing without being picked up, it goes back to the referee to be released again later in the game. The first seeker to catch the snitch scores 150 points for his team, the game immediately ends, and the points are tallied to determine a winner. Usually, but not always, it's the team that earned an extra 150 points by catching the snitch.

For more variations (such as using a broom to pass the quaffle), go to www.pecentral.com and enter "Quidditch" in the search field.

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