

English and sports in the UK

By teaming language tuition with sports activities and training, students get to have two types of holiday in one and can more completely get to grips with their new language. We profile a range of such courses on offer in the UK.

The golf makes for a good English conversation topic in the evenings with the [students'] homestay hosts," says Jeremy Bull at Oxford House College in Stratford-upon-Avon, emphasising the social value of undertaking an English course that is teamed with sporting tuition, such as English and golf.

Korina Freese, Marketing Manager at Select English in London, agrees with this point. She says their English and sports programme "is a great combination and a good way to get closer to people from different nationalities". Because of the nature of sports activities, which often necessitate team integration, many schools testify that their clients use English far more than they otherwise would, and often have the opportunity to try out their language skills with native speakers.

This is the case at EAC Language Centres, which runs various programmes in the English locations of Cobham, Canterbury, Ramsgate and York. Andrew Fisher at EAC explains, "The sporting programme is often undertaken by British children and teenagers who attend UK activity camps that EAC operates at the same venues – both on a residential and day basis – which allows for excellent integration opportunities."

A range of sporting options is available for the international student keen to get physical after classroom lessons. These include tennis, football, golf and horse riding, which are widely available, as well as more unusual activities, such as diving, field hockey, basketball, and sports car tours. This latter option is offered by ETC International College in Bournemouth and is unique, according to David Jones, Principal of the college, who has a personal interest in this area. All their sports options are popular, he says, "because they give light relief from the concentration required on an intensive language course."

Another option offered by a number of schools is multi-sport, which enables students to try out a range of different activities. At EAC Language Centres, multi-sport includes quad biking, archery, canoeing, swimming, dance and table tennis, to name just some of the activities available. "Students most enjoy trying new activities for the first time," says Fisher. "Many of them have not tried archery, quad biking or watersports."

In contrast to these "taster" sessions, other courses are aimed at students who have, as Fisher explains, "definite interest and basic ability in" a particular sport and want professional coaching. One such programme is a new football-training course offered by Salisbury School of English, designed in conjunction with Salisbury City Football Club and Arsenal Football Club in London. Michael Wills at the school explains that students spend 10 afternoons in a two-week period training at the local football club as part of the club's established "football in the community" programme, which local children also attend.

They also spend one hour training with Arsenal coaches on the Saturday of the middle weekend. "On completion of this training, students will be presented with medals from the club and will be taken on a guided tour of the football stadium," relates Wills. Salisbury School's sister school in Weymouth, the Weymouth English Centre, also offers an English and watersports programme that takes place in conjunction with the Weymouth and Portland Sailing Academy, which is hosting the Olympics watersports events in 2012.

A course aimed at those with a dedicated interest in golf is the English and golf programme on offer at Pilgrims in Canterbury. Like Oxford House College, which is based near a golf course in Stratford-upon-Avon, Pilgrims set up this course upon request and because of its location near good golf clubs, says the school's Heather Jackson. "Kent has great golfing facilities and our golfing partners are very experienced coaches," she adds.

Selection of programmes available

School location	Name of school	Sports options	Min length of stay	Min. age
Bristol	Filton College	f,b,o	10 wks	16
Bournemouth	ETC International College	t,g,f,hr,o	2 wks	18
Canterbury	Pilgrims Eng. Lang. Courses	g	1 wk	18
Harrogate	Harrogate Tutorial College	t,hr	2 wks	12
Leicestershire	Multi Lingua	tba	1 wk	12
London	Internexus	s,t,g,f,hr,o	2 wks	17
London	Select English	a,f,b,sw,h,o	2 wks	13
Melton Mowbray	Students International	g,f,hr,s	2 wks	12
Salisbury	Salisbury School of English	f, ws	2 wks	13
Stratford-upon-Avon	Oxford House College	g	1 wk	16
Suffolk	Alexanders Int. School	s,t,g,f,hr,ms,o	2 wks	11
Tunbridge Wells	Cicero Lang. International	t,g,sw,o	1 wk	16
various	Concorde International	s,t,g,f,hr,o	1 wk	v
various	Discovery Sports	t,g,f,hr,b,s,r,ms,o	2 wks	9
various	EAC Language Centres	ms,t,f,g,hr,ws	2 wks	9
Weymouth	Weymouth English Centre	ws	2 wks	13

a athletics b basketball f football g golf h hockey hr horse riding ms multi-sports o other r rugby s sailing sw swimming t tennis tba to be announced v varies ws watersports

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