

English plus sports in the USA

There are many providers of English plus sports programmes in the USA, directed at both adults and children. BETHAN NORRIS takes a look at some of the options.

Many of the language schools in the USA that offer English plus sports programmes attest to the fact that taking part in a sporting activity can be beneficial to language learning for both adults and children.

In the case of children, undertaking team sports with English-speaking children can mean that non-native English speakers have to use their new language skills in order to play effectively as a team. Addam Shand from World Sports Camp, based in Easthampton, MA, says that they first started offering sports camps for US and international children 29 years ago. "My father and mother came up with the concept of providing sports to children in the USA, but at the same time having an international population of children," he says. "In order to make the most for the chil-

dren from around the world, they decided that it would be best to offer English courses as well. Parents from around the world love the concept and we have been doing it ever since."

Shand says that they currently offer four sports courses: basketball, soccer, tennis and golf and students can choose which sports they want to participate in. "Each camper can develop his or her skills to whatever level they choose," says Shand. "Our head professional coaches are very skilled in their sport and are knowledgeable regarding skill level training." The camps currently attract students from 76 countries and about 35 per cent of all participants are from outside the USA.

Another well-established English plus sports programme in the USA is Julian Krinsky Camps and Programs located in Pennsylvania, which started to combine sports with formal English instruction 18 years ago. Sarah Ohanesian at the school says that the sports programme helps students gain confidence that in turn helps their language learning. "Our combination English/sports courses are without a doubt more popular than the general English courses," she says. "Since all our pros train the students exclusively in English, students have the opportunity to acquire the language while playing the sports they love."

At the San Francisco branch of International Language Schools of Canada (ILSC), Nadine Baladi claims that the school has a range of less "run-of-the-mill" language courses, one of which is English plus yoga. She claims that practising yoga can help with learning English and benefit students by teaching them to let go. "As a spiritual, personal and emotional type of activity, yoga fits well with English because learning a language is also a very personal journey of discovery, a very personal experience," says Baladi. "Yoga teaches the ability to take risks and be imperfect and this is a most valuable skill to have when learning to speak."

As a specialist course, Baladi says that few students and agents choose the school solely on the strength of their English plus yoga course but "once with us they just can't resist". The course was first launched in 2002 and has been marketed internationally since 2003. The popularity of English plus yoga also spans many nationalities, as Baladi points out. Top nationalities are Korean and Japanese students and she adds, "We do have some Taiwanese, Brazilians, Mexicans and Europeans – Swiss and Germans – who join the class as well. This month we even have Thai and a Saudi student."

Shand and Ohanesian note that the majority of their summer camp international students come from Western Europe and Shand puts this down to the fact that the school calendars in these world regions match up so that US and Western European students are on their long summer holidays at the same time. "As well, the mindset of parents from these countries is similar in regards to sending children to summer camps such as ours in the USA. It is a tradition for them, similar to that in the USA," says Shand.

Ohanesian adds, however, that the popularity of their courses has been spreading to different nationalities of late. "At the programme's inception, the students were primarily Western European. Today however, we have students from Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, South America and North America."

When it comes to marketing English plus sports courses overseas, providers report that study advisors play a key role. "Our primary resource is agents around the world," says Shand. "We are always looking for new agents and expanding our population. That being said, we will never allow one language, outside of English to dominate our international population. As well, former camper parents and agent fairs are a good resource for us."



Selection of programmes available

Location	Name of school	English plus sports courses offered	Minimum age of student	Minimum length of course in weeks
Boston, MA	Boston School of Modern Languages	g, sk, t	12	2
Boston, MA	Curry College	b, g, s, so, t, v	14	2
Easthampton, MA	World Sports Camp	b, g, s, t	8	2
Irvine, CA	University of California	b, s	18	4
Philadelphia, PA	Julian Krinsky School of English	b, g, s, t	10	2
San Francisco, CA	ILSC San Francisco	y	16	4
Santa Barbara, CA	Edukick	s	-	-
Temecula, CA	California School of English	b, ba, g, s, v	10	1
various	FLS International	g, o, su, t	12	2

b basketball ba baseball g golf o outdoor adventure s soccer sk skiing so softball su surfing t tennis v volleyball y yoga - information not supplied