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CHAPTER

1

One World, One Event

It is the most-watched sporting event in the world. Billions of people tune in. Games air in every country. Fans cheer on every continent. This is the World Cup. It is the ultimate soccer championship.



The numbers are impressive. Over 3 billion fans watched in 2010. This was nearly half of all people on Earth. The same thing happened in 2014. A record was set in 2018. That year there were more online viewers than ever before. Over 1 billion people streamed clips.



FAST FACT: People even watch the World Cup in space. In 2018, astronauts streamed games from the International Space Station.





Why do so many watch? The answer may be the appeal of soccer itself. It is the world's most popular sport. Both men and women play. The rules are easy to understand. Each team wants to score goals. Players mostly use their feet. They cannot use their hands. These are the main ideas.

People may speak different languages. Still, they can share a love of soccer. Some call it a **universal** language. No other sport has spread so easily around the globe.

PLANET SOCCER

A group wanted to find out how many people played soccer. It counted players from around the world. There were about 265 million in 2006. That was 4 percent of the world population at the time. There are reasons the sport is so popular. Soccer does not require special equipment. All players need is a ball to kick. They can play anywhere, in any weather. Players can be any size too. It is their agility that matters.



