

**Foot races: A Virginia Indian pastime
A home-based lesson plan**

Historical Background

Early Virginia Indians played a variety of games including wrestling, footraces, and a variety of ball games. Which games were played varied based on a person's age and gender. Some were similar to games we play today like football, soccer, and lacrosse.

One game that was played by men involved kicking a small leather ball with the top of the foot. The player that kicked the ball the furthest won. Another ball game was played by women and children. This game was played with sticks and a small leather ball. Teams tried to hit the ball between two trees to score a goal, while the other team tried to prevent them from scoring. No tackling or tripping was allowed, unlike the English version, called "bandy," which was an early form of hockey. Men played a rougher version of the stickball game that is similar to lacrosse.



Photo Credit: http://telegnome.com/native_american_games_exc.html

The Jamestown colonists witnessed the men and boys of the Powhatan tribe playing wrestling, footraces, and a game that was similar to football. During a footrace, the winner was the person or team to reach a tree first. Sometimes, a prize was hung from the tree. The first person or team to reach the tree won the prize.



Photo Credit: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives

Activity: Footraces

Supplies:

- No supplies are necessary for this game

Instructions:

1. Decide if you want to do an individual or team footrace. If you decide to do a team footrace, break into equal size teams.
2. Decide where the finish line will be. For example, “we will race to that tree and whichever team gets there first is the winner.”
3. Ready, set, go! It’s race time.