

Audioscript

Listening comprehension

For items 1–10 listen to a man talking about the sport of elephant polo and decide whether the statements 1–10 are TRUE according to the text you hear (A), or FALSE (B), or the information on the statement is NOT STATED in the text (C). You will hear the text twice. You have 20 seconds to look through the statements.

(pause 20 seconds)

Now we begin

Of course, polo is normally played on horses, and it's a very fast game. Well, we don't claim that elephant polo is the fastest game in the world, but we always maintain it's the biggest. The elephants do actually enjoy polo. Definitely. It's a lot of fun for them because they're social animals, and a polo tournament is a week when dozens of elephants meet up, many from the same family, like a reunion. And of course they get fed extremely well - better than in their normal life. They use up a lot of energy and get through masses of sugar cane, especially at half-time.

The players sit on elephants and hit a white wooden ball, using a long bamboo stick that has a polo mallet head on the end of it. The pitch is about three-quarters the length of a football pitch, and the goals are the same width as football goals. There's a basic saddle and the players are strapped onto the elephants.

We've never had a serious accident. A mahout - an elephant handler - sits behind each player and guides the elephant. Sometimes the mahouts have their own games, guiding the elephant and hitting the ball as well. That takes incredible skill.

During a game, if the ball hits an elephant, that's fine. Their legs are quite thick and they do get in the way. Quite often they will kick the ball so they can run after it. They're not allowed to pick up the ball with their trunks, though they sometimes try. That would be a free hit to the other side.

There are four elephants per team in a tournament, plus the referee's elephant - that's nine on the pitch at any one time. We usually have sixteen animals available on any given day, in four teams. There are two halves, called chukkas, in a game of elephant polo, the same as in normal polo. We play ten minutes of actual play. Whenever the whistle blows, the clock stops. A novice team might score one or two goals, if they're lucky, while an advanced team might score about ten.

The polo rules are that a man can only hold the stick with his right arm, even if he is left-handed. Women can use both hands. Using the stick is hard work, because it's long and the head is heavy. By the end of the game, your arm will be aching. But it's an easy game to pick up with a little practice.

During the game, you chase after the ball on your elephant, going quite quickly, and you can easily miss it, though the elephant will often help you out with his foot. The elephants usually supply the entertainment. They might decide to lie down across the goal for fun but that's an absolute no-no.

Ultimately it's about elephants charging up and down the pitch, scoring great goals themselves and having a lot of fun. If the elephants didn't enjoy it, or if there was any form of misbehaving, they would be removed from the game - sent off, if you like. It's not worth risking an elephant with an attitude problem.

You get all sorts. You get big elephants that are a bit older and wiser, and we use a lot of small ones that can be exceptionally quick. We try to remove what you might call the elephant factor by swapping elephants and mahouts with the other team at half-time. If you've got elephants that don't normally live together, there can be some tension. The sport always uses Indian elephants. The problem with African ones is that their ears get in the way. And they're much taller.

You have 20 seconds to check your answers. (*pause 20 seconds*)

Now listen to the text again. (*text repeated*)

This is the end of the listening comprehension task.