



FIFA WORLD CUP 26™ MATCH SCHEDULE Q&A

MATCH SCHEDULE

Q: Who developed the match schedule?

The match schedule is the result of a collaborative approach that has been developed with players and fans at the heart of every consideration. Various FIFA experts and other key stakeholders were involved in its design, including but not limited to:

- FIFA World Cup Division
- Competition Management
- Team Services
- TV/Broadcasting
- Ticketing & Hospitality
- Sustainability
- Medical
- Partnerships
- National team coaches and technical directors

Q: Why did you choose New York New Jersey as the FIFA World Cup 26™ final venue?

The FIFA World Cup 26 will feature 16 impressive Host Cities, all of which are fully committed to hosting an exceptional tournament. All of the stadiums will welcome top teams and players, with the tournament providing the perfect stage to showcase the distinctive stories of each Host City's diverse people and traditions.

Having thoroughly analysed various factors, FIFA decided to appoint New York New Jersey as the FIFA World Cup 26 final venue. This was not a decision against any other Host City but one in favour of New York New Jersey that was taken in the best interests of football.

Q: Why did you choose Mexico City to host the first match of the FIFA World Cup 26?

Estadio Azteca Mexico City is a fitting choice to host the first match of the FIFA World Cup 26, as it is one of the most iconic stadiums in the world and has been the setting of many memorable moments over the last half a century.

From Pelé in 1970, to Maradona in 1986, the venue has welcomed and witnessed the greats of the game, time and time again.

It is apt that the opening match of the record-breaking FIFA World Cup 26 will be staged in a venue that is already steeped in football history.

Q: What will you do to ensure player welfare?

The match schedule has been carefully developed to ensure that travel for players and fans alike will be minimised throughout the tournament.

Following the final draw, matches will be allocated to stadiums already assigned to groups, and kick-off times confirmed, enabling FIFA to optimise the conditions for players and fans, including those attending the tournament and watching across the globe. This will ensure that both players and fans have shorter journeys, particularly throughout the group stage, and provide FIFA with the best possible opportunity to schedule more matches at favourable times for global audiences.

Three full days of rest for teams will be observed for 103 of the tournament's 104 matches, ensuring recuperation for the players and better action on the pitch for the fans.

FIFA's Chief of Global Football Development, Arsène Wenger, recently commented: "Player welfare has improved dramatically in the last 20 years when you look at injury prevention, recovery work, nutrition and advances in medical technology. It is unrecognisable from what it used to be."

Q: Were there any considerations in relation to sustainability or human rights?

Sustainability, human rights and environmental protection have been integral elements of the FIFA World Cup 26 since the start of the bidding process, as reflected in the relevant evaluation report published by FIFA.

FIFA's human rights requirements for its tournaments, which were developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and with the technical support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, were implemented for the first time for a major event during the bidding process for the FIFA World Cup 26.

As part of the bidding process, host countries and Host Cities were required to commit, amongst other things, to fulfilling their obligations under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and to developing respective strategies.

As it has done for previous instalments of the FIFA World Cup™, FIFA is developing a comprehensive sustainability strategy that will cover a number of key areas, including environmental protection.

By minimising the journeys that players and fans have to make, FIFA will also be contributing to the implementation of a sustainable event.

FIFA is committed to reducing emissions by 50% by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2040 as part of a detailed FIFA Climate Strategy that lays out plans to accelerate solutions to protect our planet and our game.

Q: With the tournament starting on 11 June 2026, when does the official player release period start?

The mandatory player release period will start on 25 May 2026, following the last official club match on 24 May 2026 (exemptions may apply to the final matches of confederation club competitions until 30 May 2026, subject to FIFA approval).

At 56 days, the period from the mandatory release date to the end of the tournament will remain identical to the 2010, 2014 and 2018 editions of the FIFA World Cup.

The Men's International Match Calendar is available [here](#).



Q: What are the benefits of expanding the FIFA World Cup from 32 to 48 teams?

Since 1998, the FIFA World Cup final competition has featured 32 teams. Football has evolved in that time, and the increase from 32 to 48 participating teams for the 23rd instalment of the FIFA World Cup, which was confirmed in 2017, means more matches for football fans to enjoy and a greater global reach and impact. It is worth noting that 48 teams represents less than 25% of FIFA's 211 member associations.

There will be an unprecedented 104 matches at the FIFA World Cup 26, each blending sport, entertainment and culture to provide the total fan experience, which will bring fans closer to the action than ever before, whether watching from their sofa or in the stadium.

A similar discussion was held following FIFA's decision to expand the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ from 24 to 32 teams, but after the final whistle of last year's showpiece tournament, it was clear that FIFA had taken the right decision, given the exhilarating football that was played and the fact that, for the first time ever at a FIFA Women's World Cup finals, teams from all six confederations won a match, including four debutants.

Q: When will the Final Draw for the FIFA World Cup 26 take place to decide which teams go into which groups?

Details regarding the Final Draw for the FIFA World Cup 26 will be available in due course. At this stage, it is expected that it will take place towards the end of 2025.

Q: When will tickets be available?

Fans can pre-register for FIFA World Cup 26 ticket information at [FIFA.com/tickets](https://www.fifa.com/tickets). Pre-registration for information about hospitality packages is available at [FIFA.com/hospitality](https://www.fifa.com/hospitality).

Further details will follow in due course.