

10 Ready for some weird races?

Level: 

Let's think!

1. What are the weirdest sports that you can think of?
2. In which of the following competitions do you think you can take part?

PLAYLIST



READ ALONG



Five Weirdest Competitions around the World

Humans are said to have a primal instinct to compete. From baby crawling races to the Olympics, we are constantly competing with one another. While many competitions showcase the participants' athletic or mental abilities to a great extent, there are numerous bizarre contests that test other skills. Read the list below to explore these competitions. 5

1 Wife-carrying Championships

First introduced in Finland in 1992, this competition draws inspiration from a legendary robber who had a special method of training new recruits. According to the myth, gang members had to navigate a challenging course while carrying a heavy sack or a woman on their backs, developing their strength for upcoming robberies. Today, the competition follows a similar format where the male participant carries a female partner, who may not necessarily be his wife, through obstacles as quickly as possible. Over time, the championships have gained popularity and spread to other countries, including the United States and Canada. 10 15



2 World Toe-wrestling Championships



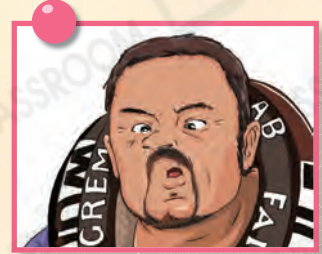
Toe-wrestling is a special sport that focuses on the tiniest parts of the feet—the toes. Similar to arm-wrestling, two competitors interlock their toes and aim to pin down each other's feet in a two-out-of-three-round contest. Both the right and left foot are used in this sport. The first championship took place in 1994 in England, with the expectation that local athletes would dominate the game. Ironically, the first winner was a Canadian named Alan 'Nasty' Nash, and he has claimed the title a staggering 17 times since then! 20 25





3 World Gurning Championships

'Gurning' refers to the act of making a strange facial expression. It is famously known as the world's ugliest sport, and the World Gurning Championships have been a long-standing tradition in rural England for centuries. The competition is believed to have originated in 1297 at the UK's oldest fair. In this unique event, contestants are required to showcase remarkable facial transformations without using any tools. Participants practise for months before their performances, honing their ability to contort their faces in bizarre and entertaining ways.



30



4 World Beard and Moustache Championships

The World Beard and Moustache Championships are a biennial event in which people from around the world compete to showcase their styled facial hair. The first competition took place in Germany in 1990.

35

Contestants can compete in seventeen categories, based on the kind of beards or moustaches they are sporting. Initially, the competition was exclusively for men. However, in 2017, women were allowed to join for the first time! They competed by creatively fashioning facial hair with craft items.

40

5 World Sauna Championships

From 1999 to 2010, Finland hosted the World Sauna Championships every August. Each participant sat in a sauna for as long as they could in order to win this heat endurance contest. However, sauna bathing can lead to severe health problems such as dehydration and burns, and can even be fatal in some cases. The competition has been suspended since 2010 after the unfortunate death of a Russian contestant.



45

~480 words

Looking into Grammar

We can use **linking words** to connect ideas.

- We often use **in general**, **on the whole** and **to a great extent** to make generalisations.

✓ While many competitions showcase the participants' athletic or mental abilities **to a great extent** ...

- We often use **however**, **nevertheless** and **on the contrary** to introduce contrasting ideas.

✓ ... exclusively for men. **However**, in 2017, women were allowed to join for the first time!

? Circle a linking word in list item 5.

Read the text and answer questions 1–11. For multiple-choice questions, choose the best answer and blacken ONE circle only. (27 marks)

1. What is the main idea of lines 3–6?

- A. the importance of competition in human nature
- B. the abundance of odd competitions
- C. the existence of strange contests alongside familiar ones
- D. the abilities that the competitions showcase

A B C D

2. Which definition of ‘course’ is closest to the meaning used in line 11?

- A. a set of classes on a particular subject
- B. a series of actions taken to deal with a particular situation
- C. an area of land or water where races are held
- D. the gradual development of something

A B C D

3. Read lines 7–15. Determine whether the following statements are True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG).

	T	F	NG
(i) The contest requires men to carry a heavy sack and a woman.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(ii) Each pair of competitors has to be a married couple.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(iii) Winners of the competition are mostly from Finland.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(iv) The competition has now become a worldwide one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. What does ‘the game’ (line 22) refer to?

5. State ONE reason why the writer uses the word ‘Ironically’ (line 22). Fill in each blank with ONE word.

The first championship was not won by a / an (i) _____ person, and the writer considers this an (ii) _____ outcome.



6. Why is gurning considered as ‘the world’s ugliest sport’ (line 28)?

6 What do people do while gurning that can be considered as ugly?

7. Which of the following is NOT true about the World Gurning Championships?

- A. Props are not allowed during the contest.
- B. Contestants spend months preparing themselves for it.
- C. It has been held for many centuries.
- D. The person with the ugliest face wins the competition.

A B C D

8. Based on the information in lines 34–41, complete the table by writing NO MORE THAN TWO words to fill in each blank. Make sure your answers are grammatically correct.

World Beard and Moustache Championships	
Frequency	every (i) _____
Who can participate	- People of both (ii) _____ - People with fancy (iii) _____
Place of origin	(iv) _____
Interesting facts	- Participants are divided into 17 categories according to the (v) _____ of hair they have. - Women compete by using different materials to (vi) _____ beards or moustaches.



9. According to lines 42–48, why is sauna bathing dangerous?

9 Which phrase indicates a cause-and-effect relationship?

10. Below is a summary of lines 42–48. In three of the lines, there is ONE mistake. If you find a mistake, underline it and write the correct word in the space on the right. If there is NO mistake, put a tick (✓) in the space. The first one has been done for you.

e.g. World Sauna Championships were first held in <u>western</u> Europe.	northern
(i) It was a competition held every winter to see who	
(ii) could endure the heat of the sauna the slowest.	
(iii) However, it has been cancelled since 2010 after a	
(iv) participant from Russia was hurt.	

11. Put a tick (✓) in the box that matches the ability needed in each competition. You can only put ONE tick for each competition.

	Creativity	Endurance	Strength
(i) Wife-carrying Championships			
(ii) Toe-wrestling Championships			
(iii) Gurning Championships			
(iv) Beard and Moustache Championships			
(v) Sauna Championships			

Vocabulary

GLOSSARY



A. Complete the speech below with the given words. Make sure your answers are grammatically correct.

Adjective: athletic bizarre entertaining long-standing staggering

Adverb: creatively

Noun: inspiration obstacle

Verb: navigate showcase

My father: a gifted athlete

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, before I accept the Athlete of the Year award, I must first thank my father. He has been my greatest source of (1) _____ and support. Through his example, he (2) _____ the skills as well as the attitude that make an exceptional athlete.

My father's ability to overcome various (3) _____ has taught me many invaluable life lessons. It is his 'never give up' attitude that led him to win the title for five years in a row, becoming a / an (4) _____ champion. Everyone is surprised by his success, but no one has broken his (5) _____ record yet.

It is not only his (6) _____ achievements that make my father special to me. His quick thinking also amazes me. One time, before an important race, the bottom of one of his shoes fell off. There was no time to find another shoe that fit his foot, so he (8) _____ combined baking soda and milk together to make a glue. It was a / an (9) _____ way to fix the shoe, but it proved to be effective. He now tells this (10) _____ story as a joke at parties.

My dad's example has allowed me to (11) _____ through the difficult path to become a professional athlete. So, thank you, Dad! This award is yours as much as it's mine.

B. Look at the captions. Write the correct names in the spaces provided.

Additional weirdest competitions around the world

bed racing

cheese rolling

chilli pepper eating

extreme ironing

mountain unicycling

ostrich racing

running of the bulls

underwater pumpkin carving

1. _____



You straighten clothes at an unusual location.

2. _____



You chase after a dairy product.

3. _____



You race while pushing a piece of furniture.

4. _____



You cut shapes and patterns into a vegetable.

5. _____



You race away from angry animals.

6. _____



You try to eat as much spicy food as you can.

7. _____



You race by riding a bird.

8. _____



You ride a vehicle with one wheel in a difficult environment.

Writing

A weird but interesting race

Can you design an unconventional race that can attract people worldwide? Free your imagination and write an article of about 180 words.