

# Homecoming explained

## What is homecoming?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *homecoming* as “a celebration at school or college, usually including a dance and a football game, when people who were students there at an earlier time can return to visit” ([dictionary.cambridge.org](http://dictionary.cambridge.org)). This is particularly true of American university culture.

## What are some American homecoming traditions?

Homecoming events at American universities are centered around a special football game that has been designated as the “homecoming game.” It is a time where many alumni return to campus to watch the game and to join current students in showing their school pride. Here are some common homecoming traditions:

### Homecoming Court

Oftentimes students will elect a “Homecoming King & Queen” as well as other representatives of the student body to the Homecoming Court. Being a member of the Homecoming Court is often a coveted position, particularly in high school. Court members are often revealed/introduced at a Pep Rally or homecoming dance.

### Pep Rally

Pep rallies are designed to bring out your school spirit and to “pep up” or encourage the football team to do their best. They are usually held in the days leading up to a big game, and typically feature a marching band (or drumline) and cheerleaders.

### Tailgate

A “tailgate” is the back part of a vehicle (usually a truck). It can also refer to parties that typically happen in the stadium parking lot just prior to the game. It is called “tailgating” because people used to lower the tailgate of their truck and hang out with friends before a game. Nowadays, tailgating has gone to a whole new level with people setting up tents, BBQ grills, tables, chairs, lots of food & drink, and sometimes even a TV or two.

### Half Time Show

In between the first and second halves of the game is what is known as “half time”--an intermission where the teams go back to their respective locker rooms and re-group for the second half of the game. During half time, marching bands, cheerleaders, and dance squads usually perform. The half time show at a homecoming game is usually extra special.