What did Elizabethans do for fun (leisure)
As always, it depended on your status what you could do.

**Sport for the nobility and upper classes**

- Hunting on horseback, with hounds
  - Men & Women

- Hawking
  - Men & Women

- Fishing
  - Men & Women

- Fencing
  - Men

- Real tennis
  - Men
Some sports were played by men of all classes, although not together (of course):

Wrestling

Lowers classes would wrestle for bets

Swimming
Football
Lower classes
Very violent – men were killed during matches

**You could:**
- Pick up the ball and run with it
- Have as many players as you wanted
- You could trip up the other players
- Have any sized pitch

Very often, the pitches would be streets, or the countryside if the match was between two villages
Baiting
All classes, often large amounts of money betted on the outcome

The bears teeth were broken so it couldn't bite the dogs, but the bears still often won by pinning the dogs under their claws. This was so popular, they built arenas for all to come and watch.

They also used bulls and this was a fight to the death, again using dogs against the chained bulls, often the dogs would be thrown high into the air by the bulls horns.

Cock-fighting
All classes
Again, large bets were placed on the outcome of the cock-fighting and again, arenas were built to house these events.

Not everyone enjoyed these sports - Puritans opposed them, but more so because they were held on a Sunday.
Literature
There was lots of new literature in Elizabethan England, history was very popular as well as the accounts of Drake’s voyages of discovery. The Canterbury Tales were also very popular.

Most well educated people wrote and read poetry and plays and the theatre was undergoing a revolution.

What has helped with this new pastime?

Theatre
All classes

- Developed due to Protestantism, which influenced much of Elizabethan life. Mystery plays had been common, bringing the stories of the Bible to life, but Protestants believed this was a way for the Catholics to control interpretations so they were banned, replaced by non-religious plays instead.
- Comedies were also very popular, Elizabethan sense of humour was rude and vulgar). Demand for the theatre grew rapidly and the nobility established theatres around the country
- Puritans hated the theatre, saying it encouraged idleness, spread disease and create unrest, they were the “work of the devil”.
- Elizabeth got worried about the spread of religious or political messages so she introduced censorship in 1572, all acting companies needed a licence and had to present scripts to the government before they were performed
Due to the demand, and money to be made, purpose built theatres were built, mainly in London.

- Only men were allowed to act, women’s parts were taken by boys
- Sometimes there were queues of 2000 people
- Poor people could pay 1p to stand in the pit in front of the stage
- The most important seats were directly above the stage, not the best view, but it was more important to be seen sitting there by the rest of the audience
- It was a great day out, with food and drink, cheering, booing. Entrance fees were cheap too!
- The first theatre to be built was in 1576, called ”The Theatre”, then in 1577 came ”The Curtain” and then “The Rose” in 1587

Music & Dancing

All classes

- Elizabethans were passionate about their music, although instruments were expensive so usually only found in noble’s homes, the poor had fiddles and bagpipes.
- The rich would employ a musician to play during meals (only men could be paid). Lower classes got their music at fairs, markets, church, taverns and barber’s shops.
- New music was being composed to accompany the theatres
- Dancing brought men and women together, although not classes

“There were new schools… English ships – sailed to new lands, and brought back… the sense of an expanded world. In churches, halls, palaces and country houses, new music delighted the ear. You could not be alive in Elizabethan England and not feel that it was a young country full of capacity to reinvent itself”
Exam Question:

• Describe two features of theatres in Elizabethan London [4]

Or

• Describe two features of leisure for the upper classes in Elizabethan England [4]
Homework:

• Create a guide to Elizabethan leisure using this ppt on the website

• It should be well organised making it clear which class had access to which event

• What forms of entertainment were there

• Positives of it

• Negatives of it