



The Olympic Games are an international sports **competition** which are held every four years in a different city. Thousands of athletes from all over the world **compete** against each other in individual and team sports. Over 1 **billion** people watch the games on TV.

The first Olympic Games were held in Greece in 776 B.C. They were called the **ancient** games and lasted until the 4th **century** A.D. The modern games began in 1896, when the Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin **revived** the games to bring peace and friendship to young people all over the world.

Today, there are summer and winter games. Up to 1994 both games were held in the same year, but now they are **staged** two years apart from each other.

Ceremonies and Symbols of the Olympics

The Olympic Games begin with the opening **ceremony**. **Athletes** from all the **participating nations** march into the stadium. Greece comes in first, because it was the first nation to hold the Olympics, and the **host nation** comes in last.

The Olympic flag is **raised**, and a chosen athlete lights the Olympic **flame**. It is a symbol of **spirit**, knowledge, and life. The fire comes from Olympia, a small town in Greece and many runners transport the flame in a **torch relay** to the **site** of the games. It burns from the opening ceremony until the end of the games.

The Olympic rings were **created** in 1913 and represent the five continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and the Americas).

All athletes must take the Olympic **oath**. One of them has to promise that all athletes will give their best and **compete** in a fair way.

After each **event**, medals are given to the first three athletes. They **receive** gold, silver and bronze medals. Their flags are raised and the **national anthem** of the winner's country is played.



Paavo Nurmi lights the flame at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics

Image: [Helsinki City Museum, CC BY 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



The International Olympic Committee (IOC)

The IOC (International Olympic Committee) is the organisation that **governs** the games. It decides which sports and **events** are held at the games. The IOC also **selects** the **host city** for the summer and winter games, at least seven years before they take place. Cities that want the games must show that

- they have enough stadiums for all events
- they have enough room for all the athletes
- they can **provide safety** for the athletes
- they can transport athletes and **spectators** from one event to another
- they can build an Olympic village where all athletes live during the games

How Athletes Take Part

Normally, each country decides for itself which sportsmen and –women are allowed to take part. **Athletes** must qualify for the games by winning or doing well in **competitions** before the Olympic Games start.

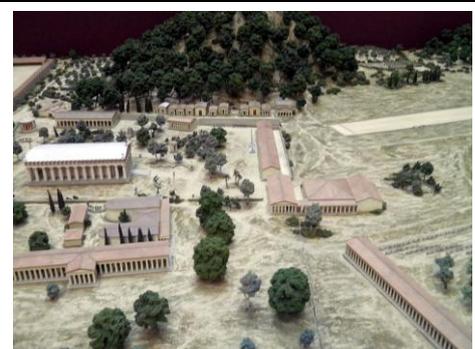
Athletes who are sent to the games by their country, must be a **citizen** of that country. For years, only **amateurs** were able to **participate** in the games, but today, most athletes are professionals, who earn their money through sport.

Most **governments** give their team money so that it can take part in the games.

The Ancient Olympic Games

The ancient Olympic Games were **celebrated** at Olympia, Greece every four years. They were held **in honor** of the god Zeus. In the early games, only Greek men were allowed to **participate**. The games **consisted of** sports like **footraces**, **wrestling**, boxing, the **pentathlon** and horse racing. The last event of the games was usually a **chariot** race.

When the Romans **conquered** Greece in 140 B.C. the games started to lose their religious meaning and in 393 the Roman emperor **banned** the event.



Model of Olympia as it looked around 100 B.C.

Image: [Carole](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#),
via Wikimedia Commons



The Modern Summer and Winter Games

The Summer Games are held during the summer season of the **host country**. They last for 16 days. Today, there are more than 270 events during the games. Over 15,000 athletes from 200 nations take part. Summer Games are held in **leap years**.

Because of the coronavirus outbreak in 2020, the Olympic Games in Tokyo were held in the following year.

The first separate Winter Games were held in Chamonix, France in 1924. They usually take place in February in the even years between the Summer Games. Today, the Winter Olympics **include** over 60 events. Athletes from more than 60 countries **participate**.

Politics and the Olympic Games

In the past, the Olympic Games have been **disturbed** by **political issues**. In 1931 the IOC chose Berlin as the **site** for the 1936 Summer Games. A few years later, Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party became the **dominant** political **force** in Germany and Hitler used the games to show Germany's power.

In 1968 two Black American runners protested against their **government** and **raised** their **fists** when the American **national anthem** was played.



Opening ceremony of the 1936 Berlin Olympics

Image: [Bundesarchiv, B 145 Bild-P017045 / Frankl, A. / CC-BY-SA 3.0, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE](#),
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In 1980 the USA—and many other countries—didn't send **athletes** to the games in Moscow because the Soviet Union had **invaded** Afghanistan a year before. **In return**, the Russians and other Communist countries **refused** to take part in the 1984 games in Los Angeles.

The worst day in Olympic history came on September 5th, 1972 during the Munich games. Eight Palestinian terrorists broke into the Olympic village and killed two Israeli athletes. 9 others were **taken hostage**. They wanted the Israeli government to **release** over 400 Arab **prisoners** in Israel. During a with German policemen, all hostages and the terrorists were killed.



The Olympic Games Today

The Olympic Games have become very successful over the past years. More and more people are able to watch them on TV and television stations are spending more money for the **rights to broadcast** the games. The IOC earns more money than ever before. With this money, they help **athletes** in poorer countries.

Drugs have become a big problem. Some athletes take drugs before and during the games in order to help their muscles grow. When they are caught, they are **disqualified** and their medals are taken away from them.

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Preview



Host Cities of the Olympic Games

	Summer Games	Winter Games
1896	Athens, Greece	
1900	Paris, France	
1904	St. Louis, USA	
1908	London, United Kingdom	
1912	Stockholm, Sweden	
1916	no Olympics - World War I	
1920	Antwerp, Belgium	
1924	Paris, France	Chamonix, France
1928	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	St. Moritz, Switzerland
1932	Los Angeles, USA	Lake Placid, USA
1936	Berlin, Germany	Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany
1940 -1944	no Olympics Games - World War II	
1948	London, United Kingdom	St. Moritz, Switzerland
1952	Helsinki, Finland	Oslo, Norway
1956	Melbourne, Australia Stockholm, Sweden	Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy
1960	Rome, Italy	Squaw Valley, USA
1964	Tokyo, Japan	Innsbruck, Austria
1968	Mexico City, Mexico	Grenoble, France
1972	Munich, Germany	Sapporo, Japan
1976	Montreal, Canada	Innsbruck, Austria
1980	Moscow, Soviet Union	Lake Placid, USA
1984	Los Angeles, USA	Sarajevo, Yugoslavia
1988	Seoul, South Korea	Calgary, Canada
1992	Barcelona, Spain	Albertville, France
1994		Lillehammer, Norway
1996	Atlanta, USA	
1998		Nagano, Japan
2000	Sydney, Australia	
2002		Salt Lake City
2004	Athens, Greece	
2006		Turin, Italy
2008	Beijing, China	
2010		Vancouver, Canada
2012	London, United Kingdom	
2014		Sotchi, Russia
2016	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	
2018		PyeongChang, South Korea
2020	Tokyo, Japan (held in 2021)	
2022		Beijing, China
2024	Paris, France	
2026		Cortina d'Ampezzo and Milan (Italy)
2028	Los Angeles, USA	



Magic Moments of the Olympic Games

1912	Jim Thorpe wins the pentathlon and the decathlon and becomes the world's greatest all-round athlete . The medals are taken away from him after it is discovered that he has played baseball before the Olympics. In 1982 the IOC gave the medals back to Thorpe's family.
1924	Paavo Nurmi , the „ <i>Flying Finn</i> “ , wins five gold medals in track and field .
1936	The African American Jesse Owens wins four gold medals in track and field at the Berlin games. This is embarrassing to Adolf Hitler , who wants to prove that the German people are better than all the rest.
1956	Austrian skier Toni Sailer wins all races in the Olympic skiing events —French skier Jean Claude Killy does the same in 1968.
1960	Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia runs the fastest marathon ever—wearing no shoes . It is the third marathon he has ever run, and he is the first African to win an Olympic gold medal.
1968	Bob Beamon leaps 8.9 metres in the long jump. This world record holds for over 20 years.
1972	The USA's Mark Spitz becomes the world's most successful swimmer—winning seven gold medals.
1976	Romanian-born Nadia Comaneci gets the first perfect score in gymnastics : 10.0.
1980	Dutch speed skater Eric Heiden becomes the first athlete to win five gold medals in a single Olympic Games. The United States ice hockey team wins the gold medal for the first time after the sport has been dominated by the Russians for the past years.
1988	Ben Johnson sets a new world record in the 100 metre dash but is then disqualified after the IOC discovers that he has taken steroids .
1992	For the first time, professional basketball players are allowed to compete at the Olympics. America's "Dream Team" with Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan win easily.
2016	Usain Bolt becomes the only sprinter to win Olympic gold medals at three Olympic Games in a row (2008, 2012 and 2016)

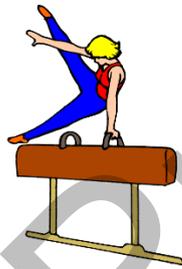


Popular Olympic Sports

Gymnastics

Gymnastics have a long and proud history. The sport goes back to the ancient games, when young men were prepared for war.

Today athletes compete on the floor, pommel horse, balance beam, rings etc..



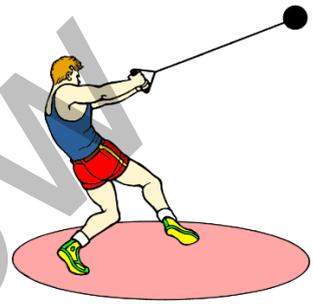
Weightlifting

Weightlifting is a sport as old as **mankind**. You need a combination of power and **strength**, speed and concentration as well as **timing**. Women were allowed to lift weights for the first time at the 2000 Olympics.



Athletics

Athletics is about running faster, jumping higher and throwing further than other athletes. It is the heart of the games. Today, the most popular **events** are athletic: the 100 m **dash**, the long jump or the marathon.



Swimming

In today's Olympics, men and women **compete** in 16 events each. The fastest swimmers compete in the freestyle race. There are also **relay races** for 4 swimmers.



Ice Skating

The Dutch were the first to skate across frozen rivers and canals. Very quickly the sport **spread** to other parts of Europe and North America. Today there are two main skating events: speed skating and figure skating.



Equestrian Events

Equestrian events were held for the first time in 1900. In the past only military officers could take part. Today there are three disciplines: Jumping, **dressage** and **eventing**.

