

# The Modern Olympic Games

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# Introduction

## A SPORTS PHENOMENON UNLIKE ANY OTHER

The Olympic Games have become one of the biggest sporting events of our time. Athletes from the **entire world** take part. Their achievements are watched from both near and far by hundreds of millions of spectators. The five rings on the Olympic flag represent the international nature of the Games. *[see sheets "The Olympic Symbols"]*.

What makes the Olympic Games different from other sports events?

The Games are held every four years. They are the largest sporting celebration in terms of the number of sports on the programme, the number of athletes present and the number of people from different nations gathered together at the same time in the same place.

The Games are a well-known event, but are also part of a broader framework which is that of the **Olympic Movement**.

The purpose of the Olympic Movement is to:

- link sport with culture and education;
- promote the practice of sport and the joy found in effort;
- help to build a better world through sport practised in a spirit of peace, excellence, friendship and respect.

## THE SUMMER GAMES AND THE WINTER GAMES

The Olympic Games include the **Games of the Olympiad (i.e. the Summer Games)** and the **Olympic Winter Games**.

The word **Olympiad** designates the **four-year period** that separates each edition of the Summer Games. The Summer and Winter Games originally took place in the same year, but since 1992 the Winter Games have been held two years from the Summer Games. The Summer Games and the Winter Games continue to be organised once every four years.

In the Summer Games, athletes compete in a wide variety of competitions on the track, on the road, on grass, in the water, on the water, in the open air and indoors, in a total of **28 sports**.

The Winter Games feature **seven sports** practised on snow and ice, both indoors and outdoors.

## HISTORY

It was **Pierre de Coubertin** of France who dreamt up this ambitious project, although others before him had tried to revive these Games during the 19th century, without having Coubertin's success. Drawing inspiration from the ancient Olympic Games, he decided to create the modern Olympic Games. With this purpose, he founded the **International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894** in Paris. The new committee set itself the objective of organising the **first Olympic Games of modern times**.

The date of the first Games, **1896**, marked the beginning of an extraordinary adventure that has now lasted for over a century!



# Evolution of the Olympic Games

Pierre de Coubertin drew his inspiration from the ancient Olympic Games which were held in Olympia (Greece) between the 8<sup>th</sup> century B. C. and the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

[see sheet "The Olympic Games in Ancient Greece"].

## THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

In 1896, more than 1,500 years after the ancient Games were banned, the first modern Olympic Games featured many references to this legacy of Greek Antiquity.

The IOC's decision to hold them in **Athens** (Greece) was a reminder that the Olympic Games **originated in Greece**.

The majority of the competitions took place in the ancient stadium (the **Panathenaic Stadium**), which was restored for the occasion.

Most of the sports on the programme of the ancient Olympic Games were echoed in the modern Games. The organisers even went as far as inventing a new race, inspired by a legendary event: the **marathon race**.

## INNOVATIONS

Although the modern Olympic Games were inspired by the past, they are also quite different:

### GAMES AROUND THE GLOBE

In contrast with the Olympic Games of Antiquity, each edition of the modern Games takes place in principle in a **different city and country**.

### LONGER GAMES

In ancient times, the Games were held first on one day, and finally over five days. Today the official duration is no more than **16 days**.

### ATHLETES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

The ancient Olympic Games were the preserve of Greek citizens, whereas the modern Games are **open to all**. The 245 participants in Athens in 1896 came from 14 different countries.

The 1912 Games in Stockholm (Sweden) were the first to boast the presence of national delegations from the **five continents**. The universality of the Olympic Games was assured.

### WOMEN JOIN IN

As at the ancient Games, the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896 were an exclusively **male** preserve. When **women** made their Olympic debut four years later at the 1900 Games in Paris (France), only two sports were open to them: tennis and golf.

In early 20th century society, female athletes had to deal with a great deal of prejudice: there were fears that they would lose their femininity by growing overly muscular or becoming sterile. The first female athletes had to face up to this type of preconception. Little by little, they earned a place at the Games, sport by sport, and event by event.

### THE PANATHINAIKO STADIUM

in Athens hosted the ancient sports competitions known as the Panathenaica.

### THE MARATHON

This race commemorates the exploit of a soldier who, in 490 BC, ran from Marathon to Athens to announce that the Persians had been defeated in battle (distance: approx. 34.5km).

The marathon race has been on the Olympic programme since the Athens Games in 1896. The Organising Committee of the 1908 Games in London fixed the length of the marathon at 42km 195m, the last 195 metres being added to enable the course to go from Windsor Castle to the Royal Box in the London Stadium. This became the official distance as of the Games in 1924.

### COUBERTIN AND HIS VIEW OF WOMEN

Like most of the men of his time, Pierre de Coubertin was not in favour of the participation of women in the Olympic Games.

"... the true Olympic hero, in my view, is the individual adult male." *Le Sport Suisse, 31st year, 7 August 1935, p. 1.*

Some important occasions for women at the Summer Games were:

- the first appearance of women **swimmers** at the 1912 Games in Stockholm
- the first female **athletics** competitions, at the Amsterdam Games in 1928. Note that the 800m race was considered too difficult for women and was discontinued after 1928, not to be reintroduced until 1960.

From volleyball (1964), to rowing (1976), from cycling (1984) to football (1996), female Olympians have gone from strength to strength!

Women's wrestling joined the Olympic programme in Athens in 2004. At the turn of the third millennium, over 40 per cent of the athletes at the Games were women. This was the **largest proportion of female participants** in the history of the Olympic Games.

The only sports now not open to women on the programme of the Summer Games are **boxing** and **baseball**. There is one sport, **softball**, and two disciplines, **synchronised swimming** and **rhythmic gymnastics**, in which only women participate.



#### WINTER GAMES

When Coubertin revived the Olympic Games, only summer sports were included. In the 1920's, however, snow and ice sports began to enjoy soaring popularity. A number of IOC members decided to react to this new phenomenon. In 1924, it was decided to hold an **International Winter Sports Week** in Chamonix (France): 258 athletes from 16 countries (mainly in Europe and North America) attended.

The week was a great success and, two years later, it was retroactively named the first **Olympic Winter Games**. The future of an Olympic event dedicated exclusively to snow and ice sports was assured.

At the Winter Games in Turin (Italy) in 2006, a total of 2 508 participants came together from 80 countries as diverse as Madagascar, Brazil, New Zealand and Thailand!

### BETWEEN FESTIVAL AND RITUAL

A party atmosphere is a feature of the Olympic Games. Each edition has an **Opening Ceremony** during which the sports stadium is filled with music, singing, dancing and fireworks. A **Closing Ceremony** in the same spirit takes place on the last day of the Games.

The opening and closing ceremonies are an invitation to discover the culture of the country hosting the Games. Although most of the ceremony is creative and imaginative, there are some very strict rituals that have to be followed.

Most of this protocol had been established by the time the 1920 Games in Antwerp (Belgium). It has been added to over the years as the Games have evolved.

#### OPENING OF THE GAMES

- the entry of the athletes into the stadium with their delegations (in alphabetical order, except for Greece which goes first, and the host country which brings up the rear);
- the declaration of the opening of the Games by the Head of State of the host country;
- the address by the Games Organising Committee President;
- the speech by the IOC President;
- the entry of the Olympic flag into the stadium;
- the Olympic anthem;
- the symbolic release of doves (a symbol of peace);
- the oath sworn by an athlete and an official from the host country (respect for the rules);
- the entrance of the flame and lighting of the cauldron (reference to the ancient Games).

#### OPENING OF THE GAMES

- handing over of the Olympic flag to the next Olympic host city (continuity of the Games);
- gathering of the athletes in the stadium (friendship);
- the extinguishing of the flame;
- the declaration of the closing of the Games by the IOC President.

*[See sheets "The Olympic Symbols" and "The Olympic flame and torch relay"].*



### These rituals are part of what makes the Olympic Games special!

#### SPORT, ART AND CULTURE

In Ancient Greece, art and sport were seen as perfect partners. The ideal was to achieve harmony by exercising both the body and the mind.



Pierre de Coubertin adopted this ideal for the modern Olympic Games and proposed including art and culture in the programme of the Games.

On his initiative, architecture, sculpture, painting, literature and music **competitions** were part of the Olympic Games from 1912 to 1948.

Today, the competitions have been replaced with **cultural programmes** that are completely separate from the sports competitions. Plays, concerts, ballets and exhibitions are held in the athletes' village, the city, region and even the country hosting the Games.



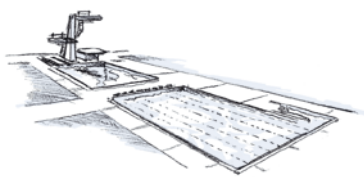
**Whether as a participant or a spectator, the Games offer an opportunity to open up to and better understand other people by discovering a new culture. Through sport, art or culture, everyone can be part of the great festival of the Olympic Games!**





## Olympic sports

The Olympic programme includes all the sports in the Olympic Games. The IOC sets the programme and decides which sports will be included. The IOC also has the right to accept or refuse any proposed new **sport**, **discipline** or **event**.

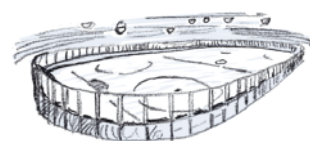


**Sport** – For a sport to be made an Olympic sport it has to be governed by an International Federation recognised by the IOC.

*e.g.:*

Swimming at the Games is governed by the International Swimming Federation (FINA);

Skating by the International Skating Union (ISU), etc.

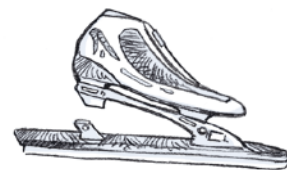


**Discipline** – an Olympic sport comprises one or several disciplines.

*e.g.:*

Water polo and diving are disciplines of swimming.

Speed skating and figure skating are disciplines of skating.



**Event** – a discipline includes one or more events or competitions. An event gives rise to a result for which medals and diplomas are awarded.

*e.g.:*

The 10m platform for women is a diving event.

The men's 500m is a speed skating event.



### CRITERIA FOR BEING AN OLYMPIC SPORT

In order to be included on the Olympic programme, a **summer sport** must fulfil, amongst others, the following conditions:

- it must be **widely practised** (by men, in 75 countries on four continents; by women, in 40 countries and on three continents);
- the **World Anti-Doping Code** must be applied;
- it must not rely on mechanical propulsion (such as a motor).

Today, a **winter sport** must be widely practised in at least 25 countries and on three continents in order to be included on the programme. No distinction is made between men and women's events.

## Summer Games sports

In Athens in 1896, **nine sports** were on the programme: athletics, cycling, fencing, gymnastics, weightlifting, wrestling, swimming, tennis and shooting.

The Olympic programme has come a long way since then: some sports have been discontinued (e.g. golf and polo); others were dropped and then reintroduced (e.g. archery and tennis), while several new sports have been added (e.g. triathlon and taekwondo).

In Athens in 2004, the programme included the **nine original sports** plus a further **19**: rowing, badminton, baseball, basketball, boxing, canoe/kayak, equestrian sports, football, handball, hockey, judo, modern pentathlon, softball, taekwondo, table tennis, archery, triathlon, sailing and volleyball. A total of **301 events** took place!

### MAJOR SPORTS ON THE PROGRAMME

The star attractions on the programme of the Summer Games are **athletics** and **swimming**. These are the most widely followed Olympic sports in the world. They also have the largest number of events and greatest number of participants from different countries.



**Athletics** consists of a wide range of events: jumping, throwing, and sprint, middle-distance and long-distance races. Some of these were performed at the ancient Olympic Games: foot races (varying distances), the javelin throw, the discus throw and the long jump.



The first **swimming** competitions at the modern Games took place in the sea or in a river. Today competitions take place in a 50m swimming pool, usually indoors.

The current programme includes the following disciplines: **swimming** (freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke and butterfly), **water polo**, **diving** and **synchronised swimming**.



### IN THE PAST – DEMONSTRATION SPORTS

Thanks to their popularity, the Games have been able to showcase some lesser known sports, which up to 1992 were included as **demonstration sports** alongside the official Olympic programme.

For example:

- Australian football, a national sport, at the Melbourne Games in 1956;
- bowling, a sport little known in the host country of Korea, at the Seoul Games in 1988;
- at the Barcelona Games in 1992, the local sport of Basque pelota, as well as roller hockey and taekwondo.

## Winter Games sports

Winter sports made their Olympic debut at ... **the Summer Games in London in 1908!** Figure skating competitions were organised for men, women and pairs. The experience was repeated at the Antwerp Games in 1920, along with an ice hockey tournament.

It was in **Chamonix in 1924** that winter sports finally got their own Games. Six sports were on the programme: bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, figure and speed skating, skiing (cross-country and ski jumping) and the military patrol race.

The **number of sports** at the Winter Games has remained relatively stable over the years. At the **Turin Games in 2006**, there were seven sports – biathlon, bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, luge, skating and skiing. However, the **number of events** has increased considerably: in 2006, there were 84 on the programme!

Of the **14 disciplines** in the Olympic Winter Games, only Nordic combined and ski jumping are not open to women.

### MAJOR SPORTS ON THE PROGRAMME

The three major attractions on the Winter Games programme are **skating, skiing and ice hockey**.



**Skating** has the longest Olympic history, having figured on the programme of the London Games in 1908. Women made their debut in figure skating at the Olympic Winter Games, but speed skating was not open to them until 1960. Held in the open air until 1956, the skating events now take place indoors.



**Skiing** is the sport with the largest number of disciplines. **Cross-country skiing** is the oldest discipline and **snowboarding** is the newest one (1998 Games in Nagano, Japan). **Alpine skiing** appeared relatively late: it was on the programme of the 1936 Games, but it was not until the 1948 Games in St Moritz (Switzerland) that a more complete programme for men and women was organised. In 1952, giant slalom was added to the programme. Introduced in 1988, the super-G is the newest Olympic Alpine skiing event.

**Ice hockey**, like skating and skiing, is one of the sports that helped to launch the Olympic Winter Games. Hockey is very popular and attracts large audiences. It is a spectacular sport in which the puck travels at speeds up to 180km/h.



### IN THE PAST – DEMONSTRATION SPORTS

There are many variations on snow and ice sports. Several have featured in the Olympic Games as demonstration sports (e.g. skijoring, bandy and winter pentathlon). Other sports were absent from the official programme for several editions of the Games before being reintroduced. Skeleton is one example: it appeared at the Games in St Moritz in 1928 and 1948, but was not officially part of the programme until the 2002 Games in Salt Lake City.





# Athletes at the Olympic Games

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE GAMES

The prospect of being selected for the Olympic Games is an ultimate goal for the majority of athletes. Enormous reserves of willpower and many years of dedicated training are required to achieve such a goal. The athletes that qualify for the Games can consider themselves as being among the world's best. They will become **Olympians**, whether or not they win a medal.

In practical terms, in order to participate in the Olympic Games, athletes have to abide by the **Olympic Charter** and the rules of the **International Federation (IF)** responsible for their sport. The IFs organise qualification events, while the **National Olympic Committee (NOC)** of the athlete's country is responsible for entering athletes for the Games.

Athletes with **dual nationality** may compete for the country of their choice. However, if they have already represented one country either at the Games or another major sports event, they may not compete for a different country before a period of three years has elapsed.

There is no **age limit** for competing in the Olympic Games, except for those that may be imposed by individual IFs for health reasons. In some sports, such as equestrian, fencing and sailing, athletes can enjoy very long Olympic careers, sometimes as long as 40 years!

By entering the Olympic Games, athletes are making a commitment to respect the Olympic values and agree to undergo **doping tests**. Throughout the Games, tests are carried out under the authority of the IOC and its Medical Commission. Tests may be conducted before or during the Games.

For **individual** sports, tests are performed on each athlete who places **among the top five** in each event, **plus two other athletes** (in the heats or the final) chosen at random. For **team** sports, or other sports in which teams are rewarded, testing is performed throughout the **period of the Olympic Games**.

## LIFE IN THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE

On their arrival in the host city, athletes stay in the **Olympic Village**. While at the Games, their time is not devoted exclusively to competing: it is also an opportunity for them to **meet other athletes from different countries and cultures**. Communal life is good for encouraging contact between athletes from different sports or different countries. All of the inhabitants of the Village agree: it is not about the comfort of the surroundings or the quality of services, what counts is the relationships created between athletes of the entire world. This is what gives meaning to the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect.

Anita L. De Frantz, Olympian and IOC member, said of her experience in the Village:

“For two to four weeks, the Village becomes the home for the elite athletes of the world. It was there that I realised that excellence comes in every shape, size, race and sex. It was there that I realised that an Olympian is one who can respect every individual based on the effort that it takes to become an Olympian. It was there that I learned that each sport takes a special skill and determination for a person to ascend to the top.”

*Olympic Message, no 33, July 1992.*

### WHAT IS THE OLYMPIC CHARTER?

It is a document containing all the rules of the IOC. For example, the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games has to present a programme of cultural events covering at least the period during which the Olympic Village is open.



Today's Olympic Village is almost a **small city!** It is usually located close to the competition venues and its construction is taken very seriously during preparations for the Games. In Athens in 2004, for example, the Village accommodated over 16,000 athletes and officials in more than 300 buildings the equivalent of several suburbs!



Athletes are provided with many facilities. They can eat in the Village restaurant 24 hours a day, go to the hairdresser or watch a film at the cinema. They can also surf the internet or go to discos after their competitions.



When the Games have finished, the Olympic Village is generally turned into a new residential area for the city, and the housing is sold or rented to the local population.

Athletes have not always benefitted from this type of accommodation. Before the Los Angeles Games in 1932 they stayed in a variety of places:

#### SHIPSHAPE ACCOMMODATION

There was no Olympic Village for the athletes at the first few Olympic Games. Some of them stayed in hotels or hostels. Others chose cheaper accommodation in schools or barracks. And some slept in the boats they had taken to the Olympic city. This was the case at the Amsterdam Games in 1928, when the Americans, Italians and Finns stayed in the harbour!

#### A MINIATURE TOWN, A MINIATURE WORLD

The first true Olympic Village was built for the 1932 Games in Los Angeles. Athletes (men only) from 37 countries ate, slept and trained together. For the first time certain community services were provided: a hospital, a fire station and a post office. In the early days women stayed in hotels, not the Olympic Village. It was not until the 1956 Games in Melbourne that the Olympic Village was open to both sexes.

#### MOTIVATION AND PARTICIPATION

Out of the thousands of people who enter the Olympic competitions, only a small proportion of athletes and teams reach the finals.

**Participation in the Games** is what counts the most for the majority of competitors: to have the honour of representing their country and parade behind their flag at the Opening Ceremony; to rub shoulders with elite athletes; and to have the opportunity to give their best. This is all part of the spirit of the Olympic Games!

Pierre de Coubertin spoke of this at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

"In these Olympiads, the important thing is not winning but taking part. [...] What counts in life is not the victory but the struggle; the essential thing is not to conquer but to fight well."

*Revue Olympique, July 1908, p.110. (from a speech given during the London Olympic Games in 1908)*

Almost a century later, at the Olympic Games in Sydney, the spirit remained the same. Perdita Felicien, a member of the Canadian team, explained how important the Olympic experience was to her:

"...even though I was eliminated in the preliminary round of the 100m hurdles, I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. Even though the months of religious training and the exhausting 30 hours of flight to Sydney only meant exactly 13.21 seconds of running on the hottest track in the world that day, it was beyond worth it."

*Comments made on her athletics team's website, 27 November 2000.*



## Rewards

The moment of victory is often symbolised by the athlete stepping onto the podium to receive his or her medal. Yet this ceremony has not always existed! The different elements of the ceremony entered Olympic history at different times.

### THE SUMMER GAMES MEDALS

In the beginning, Olympic medals varied from one Olympiad to the next. At the first modern Games in Athens in 1896, winners were rewarded with an olive wreath and a silver medal, while the runners-up received a bronze medal and a laurel wreath. **Gold, silver and bronze medals** were not awarded until 1904.

From the Amsterdam Games in **1928**, when the medals were standardised, until the 2000 Games in Sydney, the medals remained almost unchanged. The obverse showed a seated, wingless figure of **Victory** holding a **wreath** in one hand and a **palm frond** in the other. In the background appeared an **arena** similar to the Coliseum in Rome. The reverse had to show a victorious athlete being borne upon the shoulders of the crowd. Since **1972**, only the obverse of the medal remained the same. The reverse was modified for each Olympiad.

Then, in **2004**, the iconography changed dramatically. A representation of **the Nike of the Olympia Museum** now features on the obverse of the summer Games medals. She appears to be descending from the sky to land in the **Panathinaiko Stadium**, recalling the place where the first modern Games were held in Athens in 1896. In the background the Acropolis can be seen.

### THE WINTER GAMES MEDALS

The Winter Games medals are not subject to the same constraints. There are no rules stipulating a particular shape or design. Along with the basic gold, silver and bronze, other materials may be introduced: the medals of the Albertville Games (France) included a crystal disc; the Lillehammer (Norway) medals had a granite element, and the medals of the Nagano Games (Japan) were partially worked in lacquer. In fact, every Olympic Winter Games has seen an original medal designed.

### MEDAL CEREMONIES

During the Winter Games, the medals ceremonies used to take place just after the competitions. Now they are generally held in the evening at a special ceremony in the heart of the host city. In Turin, 55 of the 84 medals ceremonies were held on the *Piazza Castello*, in the historic heart of the city.

The first eight in each event receive a **diploma** and their names are read out. Only the first three receive a **medal**.

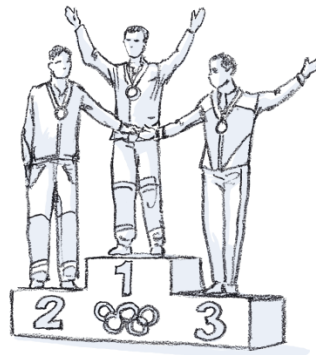
Since the Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid in 1932 (USA), the medals have been awarded on a **podium**. The winner takes the centre spot, on the highest step. He or she receives a gold medal and the title of **Olympic champion**. The second placegetter is to the winner's right and receives a silver medal. The third is to the winner's left and receives a bronze medal. The national flags of the three winners are hoisted and the national anthem of the Olympic champion is played.



### CELEBRITY OF OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS

After the Olympic Games, the champions often become superstars and role models for many people. The Olympic Charter stipulates that the names of the athletes who win a gold medal must be engraved on the walls of the main stadium.

Whether or not they are winners, everyone who takes part in the Games takes home with them the memory of an exceptional human experience.





## The Games in Modern Society

### THE GAMES BENEFIT FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORT

Depending on the location of the host city, athletes are obliged to travel greater or lesser distances. For the 1904 Games in St Louis and the 1932 Games in Los Angeles, in the USA, the number of participants was much lower because many athletes were unable to make such a long journey.

**The majority of host cities prior to World War II were European, and the athletes who took part in the Games were mostly Westerners.**

In 1956, the Games took place in Oceania (Australia). For the first time, most of the 3,178 competitors travelled **by plane** to Melbourne. This novel development, which was possible thanks to the growth of air transport, quickly became essential to the organisation of the Olympic Games.

In 1964 it was the turn of the Asian continent to host the Games, which were held in the city of Tokyo in Japan; and in 1968 Mexico City hosts the Games, for the first time in **Latin America**.

**The Olympic Games have now been held on every continent except Africa.**

### THE MEDIA BRING THE GAMES WITHIN REACH

**Television** made an enormous contribution to the growing popularity of the Olympic Games. Although tests were carried out in 1936 and again in 1948, it was not until 1956 that the Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo (Italy) were transmitted live on a small scale. **Beginning with the 1960 Games in Rome (Italy), the majority of the European continent benefited from live broadcasts of the competitions.** For the United States, Canada and Japan, a tape was flown out every day, which meant that the competitions could be screened with just a few hours' delay. With a couple of weeks' delay, the images were transferred onto film and sent to Asia, Africa, Oceania and South America. The Olympic audience ended up being far larger than just the spectators present in the stadium.

Since the 1964 Games in Tokyo, **satellites** have transmitted images with just a few seconds' delay. Today, viewers all over the world can follow the champions' achievements live. In 1968, the Olympic Winter Games in Grenoble (France) were the first to be broadcast live on colour television.

Thanks to further technological developments, picture quality has improved enormously. **Slow motion** shots mean that an athlete's movements can be seen in great detail and **underwater cameras** even take the audience into the swimming pool with the competitors.

Television networks buy **broadcasting rights** for the Games, thus providing approximately half of the Olympic Movement's income. The IOC nonetheless enables less well-off broadcasters to show coverage of the Olympic Games. This means that sports lovers all over the world can follow the performances of the champions.

#### A LONG VOYAGE

For the 1932 Games in Los Angeles, European athletes first had to travel to New York **by boat**. They then crossed the American continent **by train** to Los Angeles (a total journey time of three weeks!). They returned the same way. Some competitors had to save up their holiday entitlement for three years in order to have the ten weeks' leave they needed for the Olympic adventure!

#### FINANCING THE GAMES

For further information on the revenue generated by the Games, visit the website [www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org)

**This has helped the Olympic Games to become one of the most watched sporting events in the world!**

### POLITICAL EXPLOITATION OF THE GAMES

Being at the forefront of the international stage, the Olympic Games have the potential to be used as a propaganda tool and an instrument of political interests.



#### Here are some of the better-known examples

- In 1936 in Berlin (Germany), the Nazi regime appropriated the Games. In the years leading up to 1936, several governments and sports organisations expressed their concerns about the regime and its policies. The threat of a **boycott** hung over the Games. In the end, it was more individual convictions that prevented certain athletes from attending.
- In 1956 in Melbourne (Australia), the **Suez crisis** and **Soviet oppression in Hungary** provoked a strong reaction from some countries, which refused to send their athletes to the Games.
- In 1968 in Mexico City (Mexico), American athletes Tommy Smith and John Carlos demonstrated against **racial segregation** in their country. As they stood on the podium to receive their medals for the 200m, they raised black-gloved fists and bowed their heads when the American flag was raised. This gesture was their way of showing their support for the “Black Power” movement which was fighting the discrimination against black people in the USA. As a result, they were sent home.
- In 1972 in Munich (Germany), **Palestinian terrorists** took **Israeli athletes** hostage. The event ended in tragedy, with nine hostages executed and the death of a policeman and two other members of the Israeli delegation. The terrorists were killed by the police.
- In 1976 in Montreal (Canada), 22 countries (mostly African) boycotted the Games to protest against a recent tour of South Africa, which imposed apartheid, by the New Zealand rugby team.
- In 1980 in Moscow (Soviet Union), the United States called for a global boycott in response to the Soviet **invasion of Afghanistan**. American athletes were forbidden to take part in the Games under threat of having their passports confiscated. Other countries followed the US example and stayed away from Moscow.
- In 1984, **in response to the American boycott of 1980**, the Soviet Union refused to attend the Games in Los Angeles (USA). The official reasons given were the commercialisation of the Games and insufficient guarantees of athletes’ safety.

#### WHAT IS A BOYCOTT?

It is the voluntary severing of relations with a person, country or other group in order to exert pressure. Boycotts at the Olympic Games occur when a **government** refuses to allow its athletes to attend the Games.

**If the Games are used for political ends, the Olympic ideal is placed under threat. Nevertheless, the Olympic celebration can be used to improve relations between countries and communities.**

## THE DIPLOMATIC ROLE OF THE GAMES



- Since the 1950s, the Olympic Games have provided an opportunity for newly created countries to show the world they exist. Their appearance at the Games has often led to more widespread international recognition (e.g. certain African countries, republics of the former Soviet Union).  
It has even been the case that the participation of certain athletes in the Games has preceded the political creation of their country (e.g. East Timor, a small country located next to Indonesia, which has been independent since 2002).
- At the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Games in Sydney (Australia), South Korea and North Korea paraded together under a single flag. **This act was unprecedented since the breakdown in diplomatic relations between the two countries after the Korean War (1950-1953).**
- Also in Sydney, the status of the **Aborigines** was front page news, and several events were organised to make their claims known. The final stage of the torch relay was entrusted to Aboriginal athlete **Cathy Freeman**, and the culture of the Aboriginal people was a highlight of the Opening Ceremony.
- At the 2004 Games in Athens, despite the war in their country, the Iraqi football team qualified for the Olympic tournament and even reached the semi-finals.

## GAMES OF THE OLYMPIAD (SUMMER GAMES)



OLYMPIAD	YEAR	CITY	COUNTRY	CONTINENT
I	1896	Athens	Greece	Europe
II	1900	Paris	France	Europe
III	1904	St Louis	USA	North America
IV	1908	London	United Kingdom	Europe
V	1912	Stockholm	Sweden	Europe
VI	1916	<i>World War I: The Olympiad was not celebrated</i>		
VII	1920	Antwerp	Belgium	Europe
VIII	1924	Paris	France	Europe
IX	1928	Amsterdam	The Netherlands	Europe
X	1932	Los Angeles	USA	North America
XI	1936	Berlin	Germany	Europe
XII	1940	<i>World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated</i>		
XIII	1944	<i>World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated</i>		
XIV	1948	London	United Kingdom	Europe
XV	1952	Helsinki	Finland	Europe
XVI	1956	Melbourne, Stockholm (Equestrian Games)	Australia Sweden	Oceania Europe
XVII	1960	Rome	Italy	Europe
XVIII	1964	Tokyo	Japan	Asia
XIX	1968	Mexico City	Mexico	Latin America
XX	1972	Munich	Germany	Europe
XXI	1976	Montreal	Canada	North America
XXII	1980	Moscow	USSR	Europe
XXIII	1984	Los Angeles	USA	North America
XXIV	1988	Seoul	Korea	Asia
XXV	1992	Barcelona	Spain	Europe
XXVI	1996	Atlanta	USA	North America
XXVII	2000	Sydney	Australia	Oceania
XXVIII	2004	Athens	Greece	Europe
XXIX	2008	Beijing	China	Asia
XXX	2012	London	United Kingdom	Europe
XXVIII	2004	Athens	Greece	Europe
XXIX	2008	Beijing	China	Asia
XXX	2012	London	United Kingdom	Europe
XXXI	2016			

**The Olympiads are counted even if the Games do not take place!**



## WINTER GAMES



GAMES	YEAR	CITY	COUNTRY	CONTINENT
1 <sup>st</sup>	1924	Chamonix	France	Europe
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1928	St Moritz	Switzerland	Europe
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1932	Lake Placid	USA	North America
4 <sup>th</sup>	1936	Garmisch-Partenkirchen	Germany	Europe
	1940	<i>World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated</i>		
	1944	<i>World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated</i>		
5 <sup>th</sup>	1948	St Moritz	Switzerland	Europe
6 <sup>th</sup>	1952	Oslo	Norway	Europe
7 <sup>th</sup>	1956	Cortina d'Ampezzo	Italy	Europe
8 <sup>th</sup>	1960	Squaw Valley	USA	North America
9 <sup>th</sup>	1964	Innsbruck	Austria	Europe
10 <sup>th</sup>	1968	Grenoble	France	Europe
11 <sup>th</sup>	1972	Sapporo	Japan	Asia
12 <sup>th</sup>	1976	Innsbruck	Austria	Europe
13 <sup>th</sup>	1980	Lake Placid	USA	North America
14 <sup>th</sup>	1984	Sarajevo	Yugoslavia	Europe
15 <sup>th</sup>	1988	Calgary	Canada	North America
16 <sup>th</sup>	1992	Albertville	France	Europe
17 <sup>th</sup>	1994	Lillehammer	Norway	Europe
18 <sup>th</sup>	1998	Nagano	Japan	Asia
19 <sup>th</sup>	2002	Salt Lake City	USA	North America
20 <sup>st</sup>	2006	Turin	Italy	Europe
21 <sup>st</sup>	2010	Vancouver	Canada	North America
22 <sup>nd</sup>	2012	Sochi	Russia	Europe
23 <sup>rd</sup>	2018			

## Explore a little further...

**Look at** a globe or a map of the world and locate the Olympic Games host cities. Discuss the geographical distribution of the Summer and Winter Games.

**Write** an article on an athlete who has taken part in the Games but who did not win a medal: describe his/her feelings, emotions and experience.

**Find out about** an Olympic sport. Pick a sport you don't know from the list of sports on the programme of the Summer or Winter Games. Do some research and prepare a fact sheet on it, including the names of some of athletes who practise the sport.

**Imagine** some costumes that could be used at the opening ceremony of the next Olympic Games. Choose a theme and sketch some designs.

**Identify** some other major events that bring people together like the Olympic Games. Make a list of them and identify their similarities and differences.

**Find** some other examples of the interplay between the Olympic Games and the historical, political or cultural situation of the time.

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#### Teachers

- > **Official reports of the Olympic Games Organising Committees**
- > Periodicals published by the IOC: **Olympic Review**  
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