

OLYMPIC GAMES



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A Global Event

An Italian **underdog** wins gold. A star player from Japan sets a record. Their stories inspire. The action pulls people in. Every two years, the Olympics **unite** the world.



The Olympic Games began thousands of years ago. They were first held in Greece. Early contests were popular but small. There was only one race, and just a few people took part. Much has changed since then.

Today, the Games are two huge events. One is held during the summer. The other is in the winter. There are many sports. Thousands of athletes come from around the world to compete. Each one wants to be the best. Who will take home a medal?



FAST FACT: The Olympic Games are made up of sports. Each sport has events. Swimming is a sport. The 200-meter backstroke is an event.

Making It Happen

Cities are picked to host the Games. Hosts are **responsible** for everything the event needs. Hosting is a big honor. But it is not easy to pull off. There is much to do to prepare. Sports arenas must be built. Safety has to be planned for. Expenses can add up quickly. Some cities struggle to make it all happen.

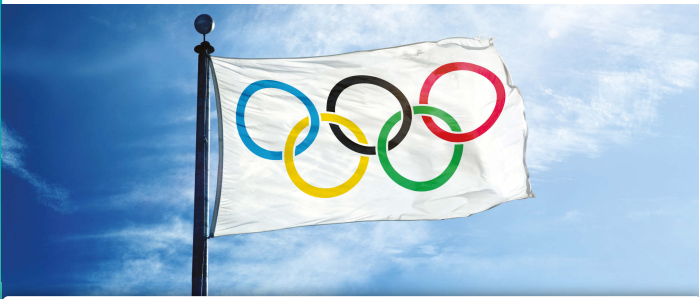
There are **benefits** to hosting the event. Host cities are put in the public eye. People wonder how they will top the previous Games. Billions tune in to find out. Media rights bring in big money. Cash flows in from tourists too. It is not always enough to cover the cost of hosting. This is a risk some cities are willing to take.



FAST FACT: About 3.6 billion people watched the 2016 Summer Games on TV. Nearly half the world tuned in.

THE OLYMPIC FLAG

There are five rings on the Olympic flag. They link together. This is meant to show unity. Each ring is colored for the flags of the countries that took part in the 1912 Games. The top rings are blue, black, and red. The bottom two are yellow and green. The Olympic flag was designed in 1912. It was first flown at the 1920 Games.





The Will to Win

The Games can be hard on athletes. They want to do their best and make their country proud. Players are under a lot of pressure. Their training is **intense**. Few will even make it to the Games. Most who do will not win a medal. But it is the chance of a lifetime. For many, the sacrifices are worth it.

What Is Next?

Scandal fills the world of sports. The Games are no exception. Officials have taken bribes from hosts. Drugs help athletes win. **Conflict** turns whole countries against each other. Still, the events continue.

What does the future look like for the Games? Many see the benefits of bringing the world together through sports. But there are complex issues surrounding the events. Changes are likely coming.



FAST FACT: The Winter and Summer Games used to be held in the same year. That changed after 1992. The Games were moved to two years apart. This gave winter sports more attention.

The Early Games

Ancient Greeks liked sports. They enjoyed competition too. It is no surprise they created the Games. The event let them show off their strength and speed.



Big Differences

The word *Olympics* comes from Olympia. This was a sacred site in Greece. The first Games were held there. It is hard to say when they began. Early writings suggest 776 BC. Experts think it was probably earlier.

These contests were not like those of today. They honored the Greek god Zeus. There were no teams. Each man competed for himself. People loved watching the event. Crowds were small though. Most who went lived nearby.



FAST FACT: There were four years between each Olympics. The ancient Greeks named this period of time. They called it an Olympiad.

More Sports and Fans

At first there was only one event. It was a footrace called the *stade*. People ran for about 200 yards. Another race was added in 724 BC. This one was twice as long.

More sports were soon played. Wrestling started in 708 BC. The pentathlon began then too. This sport had five events. Men ran, jumped, and wrestled. They also threw a spear and a discus.

The Games lasted five days by 632 BC. The number of fans grew too. As many as 40,000 people watched. They came from across the Greek empire.



FAST FACT: The pentathlon is still an Olympic sport. But there have been changes. Today, there are swimming, fencing, and horse-riding events. Players must also run and shoot pistols.

PANKRATION

Pankration means “all force” in Greek. The sport was very dangerous. Men used wrestling moves. Boxing blows were okay too. Players could not poke eyes or bite. There were few other rules. Even breaking bones was okay. Matches were not timed. Players had to give up. Some gave a signal they could not go on. Others passed out or even died. Greek fans loved this sport. Men needed more than just physical strength to win. They also needed to be smart and skilled.

A man in Roman-style armor, including a brown leather cuirass and a grey tunic, is shown in profile, holding a long spear. The background is a solid blue color with abstract, curved white and yellow lines on the left side. The title 'End of the Games' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font, underlined with a thick orange line.

End of the Games

Several hundred years went by. The event continued to grow. Then there was a great war. Greece fell to Rome in 146 BC. The Romans kept the Games going. They liked sports too. But things began to change. Athletes no longer played for honor. Winning became about personal gain. Some players cheated. Winners were worshipped like gods.

A new emperor rose to power. He believed in a single god. Pagan worship of many gods had to stop. This included events. One was the Games. They were last played in the year 393. It would be a long time before they came back.



FAST FACT: Married women could not watch or compete in the Games. But unmarried women could. There was even a separate event for them. It was a short footrace to honor the goddess Hera.

OLYMPIC GAMES

The Olympics began thousands of years ago in ancient Greece with just one event. Today, athletes from around the world compete in hundreds of events to win honor for themselves and their home countries. The Olympics unite the world, but they are not without serious problems. What does the future hold for the Olympic Games?



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