

THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Source: <https://www.englishclub.com/esl-articles/olympic-games.htm>

Origins

The ancient Greeks first had the idea of getting men together every four years to hold and witness sporting events (in those days women did not participate, though they had their own, independent, events). The idea was to have the best athletes from all over Greece gather in one field and compete every four years. All wars and fighting had to stop while the athletes and their supporters came together in the town of Olympia for a few days to compete in a few events, mostly related to warfare (throwing the javelin, running, wrestling, boxing and chariot racing).

The first written reference to the Games is 776 BC. They lasted until 389 AD. The idea of having the modern Games was suggested in the mid 19th century but they weren't a world event until 1896. Besides being postponed because of wars, they have been held since then every four years in different cities around the world.

Symbols

The Olympic Games have many important symbols that most people recognize. The five rings that appear on the Olympic flag (coloured yellow, green, blue, black and red) were introduced in 1914. They represent the five continents of Africa, the Americas, Australia, Asia and Europe. The flag is raised in the host city and then flown to the next one where it is kept until the next Games. The Olympic torch, a major part of the ancient Games, was brought back in 1928 and is carried with great fanfare and publicity to the host city where it lights the burning flame of the Games. It is kept burning until the close of the Games. The torch symbolizes purity, the drive for perfection and the struggle for victory.

Music

The rousing Olympic anthem is simply named "Olympic Music" by John Williams, who wrote it for the 1984 Olympics, held in Los Angeles. What you hear first are the forty or so notes played on horns which form the "Bugler's Dream" (also called "Olympic Fanfare") by Leo Arnaud, first played in the 1968 Games.

The torch, fanfare and flag are clearly evident in the Opening Ceremony, when everyone formally welcomes the participants and the Games can begin. Here we find the dramatic and colorful March of Nations, in which all the athletes from each country go into the venue to the sound of their country's anthem and march behind their flags, thus becoming representatives of their countries.

Athlete's Oath

One part of the Opening Ceremony that tries to keep the spirit of the Games and sportsmanship alive is when one athlete, representing all those participating, takes the Athlete's Oath:

"In the name of all the competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport, and the honor of our teams."

Medals

In the ancient Games, only the winner was celebrated. Each winner was given a simple crown of olive leaves to wear on his head. This was the only reward for his victory. Those who came in second or third got nothing. Interestingly, when the Games started again in 1896, silver medals were given to the first place winners. Later in 1904 in the St. Louis Games, gold was the top prize. Now, of course we have gold for first place, silver for second and bronze for third.

Motto

The Olympics' official motto is "Citius, Altius, Fortius". This is Latin for "Swifter, Higher, Stronger". This is said to represent the Olympic spirit, supposed to be present throughout the Games and generally held to be a celebration of brotherhood, competition, sportsmanship, goodwill and peace. The Games help us see how similar we are, and help us celebrate our humanity.

C. Practice

5. Read and choose the correct answer!

- a. When did the Olympic Games begin?
 - ☐ 776 BC
 - ☐ 389 AD
 - ☐ 1896
- b. Which of the following was not an original sport in the Olympic Games?
 - ☐ javelin
 - ☐ running
 - ☐ skating
- c. What do the colored rings on the Olympic flag represent?
 - ☐ 5 continents
 - ☐ 5 medals
 - ☐ 5 sports
- d. Which of the following things does the Olympic torch NOT represent?
 - ☐ victory
 - ☐ purity
 - ☐ heat
- e. Which one of the following is part of the Opening Ceremonies?
 - ☐ the victory dance
 - ☐ the March of Nations
 - ☐ the first competition
- f. In the Athlete's Oath, what do the competitors promise to do?
 - ☐ obey the rules
 - ☐ honor the families
 - ☐ remember past Olympiads
- g. What did the winner receive in the ancient Games?
 - ☐ a gold medal
 - ☐ a silver medal
 - ☐ a crown of leaves
- h. The Games are meant to teach humanity how _____ we all are.
 - ☐ different
 - ☐ similar
 - ☐ athletic