

Olympic and Paralympic Games

What do you know about the history and symbols of the Olympic Games? Read the article to find out about this globally renowned sports event.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–j) with the vocabulary (1–10).

Vocabulary

1. to compete
2. a disability
3. a host city
4. a sacred place
5. Ancient Greece
6. chariot racing
7. a combat sport
8. a marathon
9. a torch
- 10..... core

Definition

- a. a sport from ancient civilisations, where people raced in small vehicles pulled by horses
- b. a place that provides the space and other necessary things for a special event
- c. a thick stick that has fire at the top
- d. a sport that involves fighting between two people or teams
- e. to take part in a race or competition
- f. a running race of slightly over 42 kilometres
- g. most important or most basic
- h. somewhere with a connection with a god
- i. a European civilisation around Greece and the Mediterranean, that existed from around 1200 to 323 BCE
- j. an illness, injury or condition that makes it difficult for someone to do some things that other people do

Olympic and Paralympic Games

With over 10,000 athletes from over 200 countries competing in more than 30 different sports, the Summer Olympic Games are the world's biggest multisport event. They usually take place every four years, in a leap year. The Paralympic Games are the biggest international event for athletes with disabilities. They take place just after the Olympic Games, in the same host city.

Why are they called the Olympic Games?

The name comes from Olympia, a sacred place in Ancient Greece, where the first Ancient Olympic Games took place. The Games were a very important event for the Ancient Greeks and they took place every four years, from 776 BCE to at least 393 CE. The Games were very different from the ones we know now! They were essentially a religious festival, the athletes were mainly soldiers, and women were not allowed to compete. Married women were not even allowed to attend! Sports included boxing, wrestling and chariot racing. Athletes competed completely naked, and occasionally even died during combat sport competitions.

When did the Modern Olympic Games start?

From Ancient Greece, we fast forward to the 1896 Olympics in Athens, which marked the beginning of a new era of the Games. The 1896 Olympic Games saw 280 athletes from 12 countries competing in 43 events, including the first marathon competition. By the time the Paris Olympics took place in 1924, there were around 3,000 athletes, including more than 100 women, from more than 44 different countries. This was also the year that the first Winter Olympics were held. The Paralympic Games first took place in Rome, Italy, in 1960, with 400 athletes from 23 countries.

The Olympic rings

The 'Olympic rings' are a globally known symbol of the Olympic movement and were introduced in 1913. The colours of the five linked rings are, from left to right, blue, yellow, black, green and red, and they appear on a white background. They represent the union of five continents and the meeting of athletes from around the world.

The Olympic torch relay

The Olympic torch relay provides continuity between the Ancient and the Modern Olympic Games and symbolises peace and friendship. The flame is lit in Olympia several months before the Olympic Games. It is carried by one person after another as it travels around different places in Greece, before being taken to the country that is hosting the event that year.

Paris 2024

The 2024 Summer Olympics and Paralympics are taking place in France. Most of the events are happening in Paris, but other towns and cities are hosting events such as football, sailing and equestrian competitions. The Paris Olympic Games will include 28 'core' sports, plus four 'optional' sports: skateboarding, sport climbing, surfing and breaking (breakdance). The Paralympics feature 22 different sports, with para athletics as the largest sport. Around 15 million international visitors are expected in Paris for the Olympic Games! Billions more

people will watch the event live on television, making it the world's most-watched multisport event.

Tasks

Task 1

Choose the best answer.

- The Ancient Olympic Games were mainly a _____.
 - meeting of the world's top athletes
 - religious festival
 - way for soldiers to train
- In the Ancient Olympic Games, married women couldn't _____.
 - compete
 - watch
 - compete or watch
- In the Ancient Olympic Games, athletes wore _____.
 - all white
 - different colours
 - no clothes at all
- The first Modern Olympic Games took place in _____.
 - Athens
 - Paris
 - Rome
- The first Paralympic Games were held in _____.
 - 1896
 - 1924
 - 1960
- From left to right, the Olympic rings are _____.
 - red, orange, yellow, green, blue
 - blue, yellow, black, green, red
 - red, green, black, yellow, blue
- The Olympic torch relay begins with a flame that is lit in _____.
 - Olympia
 - Athens
 - whichever city is hosting the games
- The Paris Olympics have _____ different sports.
 - 28
 - 32
 - 44

Task 2

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

Skateboarding	Para athletics	Chariot racing
football	multisport	marathon

1. The Olympic Games are the world's biggest event.
2. was a sport in the Ancient Olympic Games that is no longer included now.
3. The first Olympic competition happened in 1896.
4. In Paris 2024, most competitions are taking place in Paris, but some sports like are in other French cities.
5. is one of the 'optional' or newer sports.
6. is the biggest sport in the Paralympic Games.

Discussion

What sports do you enjoy watching?

Answers

Preparation task

1. e
2. j
3. b
4. h
5. i
6. a
7. d
8. f
9. c
10. g

Task 1

1. b
2. c
3. c
4. a
5. c
6. b
7. a
8. b

Task 2

1. multisport
2. Chariot racing
3. marathon
4. football
5. Skateboarding
6. Para athletics