

DOCUMENT SET – TEACHERS



THE MAIN OLYMPIC TOPICS

- OLYMPISM AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT
- THE OLYMPIC FLAME AND THE TORCH RELAY
- THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN ANTIQUITY
- THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES
- OLYMPIC POSTERS



INTRODUCTION



The document set entitled “The Main Olympic Topics” is reference material that can be used by any teacher researching information or preparing class work on the Olympic Games and their by-products.

The set covers five themes, containing simple and practical information on the Summer and Winter Olympic Games - their history, their ancient origins and their meaning.

The texts are illustrated by images from the IOC’s photographic archives. These can be downloaded directly in pdf format and used in class. At the end of each file, there are examples of activities that can be undertaken in class with the pupils, as well as bibliographical references.

FILE 1: OLYMPISM AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

- › Olympism: a philosophy of life, values, the Olympic symbol
- › The Olympic Movement: how does it work?
- › Activities beyond the Games
- › Historical milestones

FILE 2: THE OLYMPIC FLAME AND THE TORCH RELAY

- › Origins and history
- › Lighting the flame in Olympia
- › The Olympic torch relays
- › The torch bearers
- › The torches (technology and design)

FILE 3: THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN ANTIQUITY

- › Origins, context, overview of Olympia
- › The athletes
- › The sports on the programme
- › The winners’ rewards
- › The end of the Games

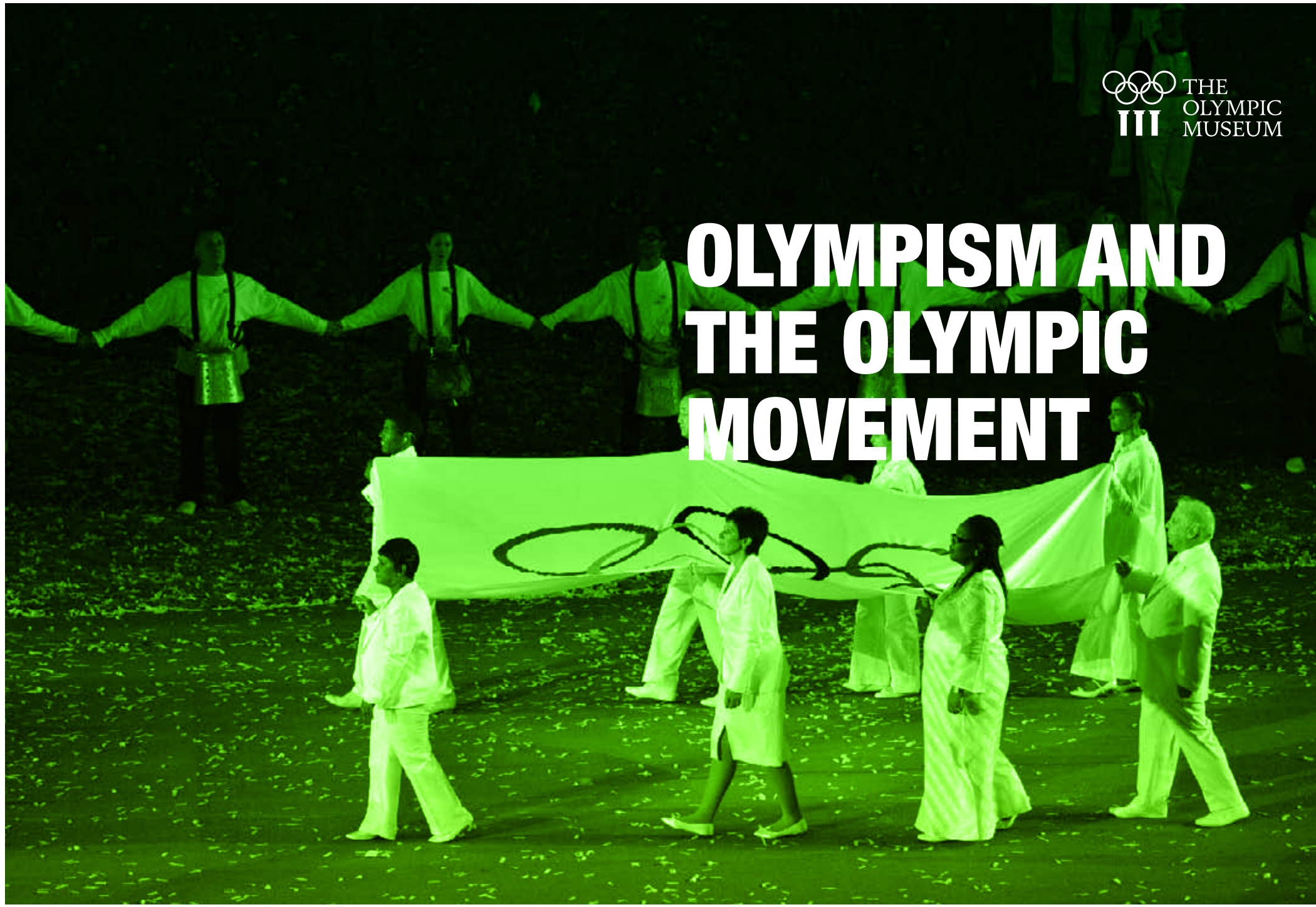
FILE 4: THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES

- › The revival of the Games by Pierre de Coubertin in 1886
- › The characteristics of the modern Olympic Games
- › The Olympic sports (criteria, programme)
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FILE 5: OLYMPIC POSTERS

- › Announcing the Games
- › The distribution of Olympic posters
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OLYMPISM AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT



OLYMPISM AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT



WHAT IS OLYMPISM?

A philosophy of life.

An ideal: the combination of sport, culture and education.

Olympic values.

Olympic symbol and other identifying elements.

3



THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT: HOW DOES IT WORK?

The structure of the Olympic Movement: the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), the International Sports Federations (IFs) and the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs).

7



ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE GAMES

Actions on various fronts
365 days a year: Sport for All, development through sport; equal opportunities; education and culture; sport for peace, the environment and sustainable development; protecting the health of athletes; combating illegal sports betting.

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HISTORICAL MILESTONES

Creation of the IOC in 1894 in Paris (France), on the initiative of Pierre de Coubertin.

The eight presidents over a century.

The IOC headquarters, in Lausanne (Switzerland) since 1915.

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This is a PDF interactive file. The headings of each page contain hyperlinks, which allow to move from chapter to chapter.



Click on this icon to download the image.

*Cover: OG London 2012, Opening Ceremony – Entry of the Olympic flag into the stadium.
© 2012 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / JUILLIART, Richard*



WHAT IS OLYMPISM?

Olympism is a **philosophy of life** which places **sport at the service of humanity**. This philosophy is based on the interaction of the qualities of the **body, will and mind**. Olympism is expressed through actions which link **sport** to **culture** and **education**.

This philosophy is an essential element of the Olympic Movement and the celebration of the Games. It is also what makes them unique.

The pursuit of this ideal and the other “fundamental principles of Olympism” [set out in the Olympic Charter] gives rise to a series of values, which are applicable both on the field of play and in everyday life.

The IOC has identified the following **three Olympic values**:

Excellence In the Olympic ideal, this value refers to giving one’s best, on the field of play or in life, without measuring oneself with others, but above all aiming at reaching one’s personal objectives with determination in the effort. It is not only about winning, but mainly about participating, making progress against personal goals, striving to be and to do our best in our daily lives and benefiting from the combination of a strong body, will and mind.

Friendship Men and women are at the centre of the Olympic Movement’s focus encouraging the links and mutual understanding between people. This value broadly refers to building a peaceful and better world through solidarity, team spirit, joy and optimism in sport.

The Olympic Games inspire humanity to overcome political, economic, gender, racial or religious differences and forge friendships in spite of those differences. The athletes express this value by forming life-long bonds with their team-mates, as well as their opponents.

Respect In the Olympic ideal, this value represents the ethical principle that should inspire all who participate in the Olympic programmes. It includes respect for oneself and one’s body, respect for one another, for rules and for the environment. It thus refers to the fair play that each athlete has to display in sport, as well as avoiding doping.

1. OG London 2012. Athletics, 5000m Men – Qualifications. Mohamed FARAH (GBR) 1st congratulates René Herrera (PHI) at the end of the race.
© 2012 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / FURLONG, Christopher

It was also Pierre de Coubertin who had the idea of an Olympic flag. He presented the rings and the flag in June 1914 in Paris, at the Olympic Congress. But as the First World War prevented the Games from being celebrated as planned in Berlin in 1916, it was not until 1920 at the Games in Antwerp that the flag with its five rings was flown in an Olympic stadium for the first time.



These values are powerfully conveyed at the time of **the Olympic Games**. However, between editions of the Games, the Olympic Movement continues to be spread through the ongoing work of the members of the Olympic family.

The values and meaning of Olympism are expressed by the **Olympic symbol** (the five rings) and other identifying Olympic elements (the flame, the torch relay, the motto, the maxim, the anthem and the oaths). These make it possible to transmit a message simply and directly. They give the Olympic Movement and the Games their own **identity**.

It was Baron **Pierre de Coubertin** who **revived the Games**. Born in 1863, he devoted his life to the reform of education and youth in France. Fascinated by the English education system, which included sport in the teaching programme (a new idea at the time), he sought to convince his contemporaries in France that sport could be beneficial for young people. Not everyone shared this view, and so Coubertin looked for a way to make people change their views. That was when he had an idea: to revive the Olympic Games.

While this was not the first attempt to revive the Games, Coubertin brought a modern and international dimension and succeeded in re-establishing them. But for him, the Games were not an end in themselves. Rather they were part of a much broader project: **education through sport**.

THE OLYMPIC SYMBOL: THE FIVE RINGS

A very powerful symbol, the five rings are the **visual representation of Olympism**. It was Pierre de Coubertin himself who designed the symbol. The **five rings** represent the five continents. They are interlinked to show the universality of Olympism and how athletes from all over the world come together for the Olympic Games. On the **Olympic flag**, the rings appear against a white background. Combined in this way, the six colours of the flag (blue, yellow, black, green, red and white) represent all the nations. It is therefore not the case that each of the colours is associated with a particular continent. Today, the symbol is one of the most widely recognised in the world. Its use is subject to very strict rules enacted by the IOC. It is important to note that there is just one Olympic symbol. For the other identifying elements described below, other terms are needed.

1. © 2002 /Getty Images News and Sport



OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE OLYMPIC IDENTITY:

› The flame and torch relay

(see “The Olympic flame and the Torch Relay”).

With the flag, the Olympic flame and torch relay are the most well-known elements of the Games.

At the modern Games, the Olympic flame is an **expression of the positive values** that human beings have always associated with the symbolism of fire.

The flame is lit at Olympia in Greece, recalling the Ancient Greek roots of the Olympic Games and also emphasising the **link** between the ancient and modern Games.

From Olympia, the flame is carried to the city hosting the Games by thousands of torchbearers. Wherever it goes, the flame announces the Olympic Games and transmits a **message of peace and friendship** to all those it meets along the way. It also promotes the **culture** and **natural riches** of the regions through which it passes.

The flame recalls the ancient Olympic Games, during which a sacred fire burnt on the altar of Zeus. However, the symbolism of the relay is linked not to these Games but to the torch races, or *lampadedromia*, held in Athens in honour of the gods associated with fire.

At the modern Olympic Games, a flame was lit for the first time in the stadium at Amsterdam, in 1928. For its part, the torch relay was not introduced until the 1936 Games in Berlin.

› The motto and maxim

A motto is a phrase or a few words expressing a way of life or a code of conduct. The Olympic motto is composed of three Latin words: CITIUS-ALTIUS-FORTIUS, which mean

FASTER – HIGHER – STRONGER

These three words encourage the athletes to give their best when they compete.

To better understand the motto, we can compare it with the **Olympic maxim:**

The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part;

the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well.

Taken together, the Olympic motto and maxim represent an ideal which Coubertin believed in and promoted as an important lesson for life learned from taking part in a sports activity and the Olympic Games. Giving one’s

1. The Olympic Flame is passed between torches
© Getty Images



best and striving for personal excellence form a laudable goal. This is a lesson which still holds true today, not just for athletes but for every one of us.

The three Latin words became the Olympic motto in 1894, when the IOC was created. Pierre de Coubertin proposed the motto, which he had borrowed from his friend **Henri Didon**, a Dominican priest who taught his pupils sport near Paris.

The idea for the maxim came later, following a sermon given by the Bishop of Pennsylvania, **Ethelbert Talbot**, during the 1908 Games in London.

› **The anthem and oaths**

The **Olympic anthem** and the **oaths (taken by an athlete, a referee and a coach)** are part of the official protocol of the Olympic Games opening ceremonies. Those who take them are nationals of the host country, and they hold a corner of the Olympic flag as they say the words.

The **Olympic anthem** was composed by Spiros Samaras (music) and Kostis Palamas (words). Although played for the first time in 1896, at the first modern Games in Athens, it became the IOC's official anthem only in 1958.

Like the athletes at the ancient Games, today's Olympic **athletes** take an **oath**. The words of this oath were written by Pierre de Coubertin, and it was spoken for the first time at the 1920 Games in Antwerp. The **referees'** oath first featured at the Opening Ceremony of the Games in 1972, while the **coaches' oath** was introduced at the 2012 Games in London.

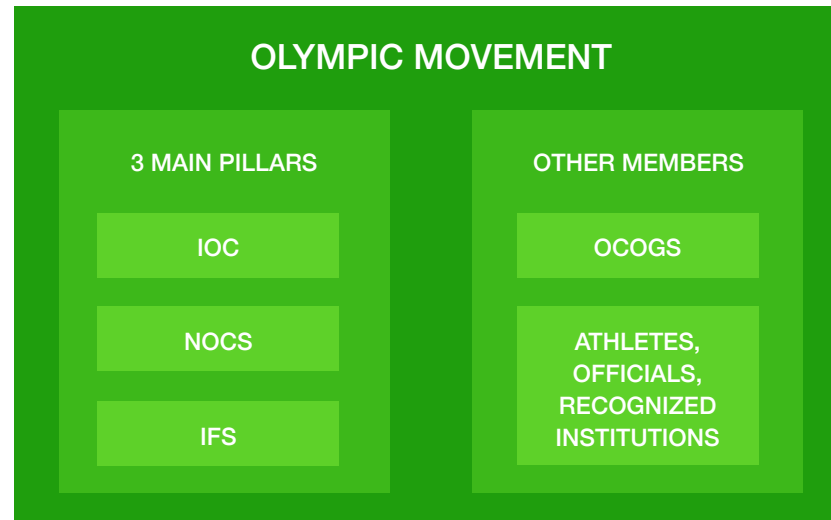
It is important to note that the oaths have been **modified over the years** to reflect the changing nature of sports competition. For example, the reference to doping was added to the athletes' oath at the 2000 Games in Sydney.

1. OG Los Angeles 1984, Opening Ceremony – Track and field athlete Edwin Moses is taking the oath in the name of all athletes.
© 1984 / Los Angeles Times
(entitled parties) GALVEZ, José



THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT: HOW DOES IT WORK?

Olympism is spread thanks to and by the Olympic Movement. At its head is **the IOC**, which is the supreme authority governing it. The following diagram shows how the Olympic Movement is structured:



1. OG Vancouver 2010, Closing Ceremony, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police lowers the Olympic flag.
© 2010 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / FURLONG, Christopher



- › **The International Olympic Committee (IOC)** is the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement. It holds the rights to the Olympic Games, the Olympic symbol (the five rings) and the other identifying elements of the Olympic Movement.
The IOC's main decisions (including choosing the host cities of the Games, the composition of the sports programme and electing new members) are taken during **Sessions**, the IOC's general assemblies, which are held yearly and bring together all the **115 IOC members**. These members represent the IOC and the Olympic Movement on a volunteer basis in their countries. They are not their countries' delegates within the IOC.

The **IOC President** represents the IOC and presides over all its activities. He or she is elected in a secret ballot by the Session. In the past there were no limits, but today each President is limited to an eight-year term, and may be re-elected once for a further four-year term of office.

The **IOC administration** is placed under the responsibility of a director general, who manages it under the President's authority. Around 500 people currently work at the IOC headquarters in Lausanne, in Switzerland.

- › The **National Olympic Committees (NOCs)** are the representatives of Olympism around the world. There are currently **204** of them:
 - 53 NOCs in Africa
 - 41 NOCs in America
 - 44 NOCs in Asia
 - 49 NOCs in Europe
 - 17 NOCs in Oceania

The NOCs carry out many different functions in their respective countries, from the development of sport at all levels, to the creation of educational programmes, to the ongoing training of sports administrators. They are also responsible for **sending a delegation of athletes** to the Olympic Games and, since 2010, to the Youth Olympic Games.

The NOCs ensure that all the programmes carried out at a national level conform to the principles of the Olympic Charter.

- › **The International Federations (IFs) are the experts in Olympic sports.** Each IF governs its sport at a global level. It ensures the promotion and development of the sport and the development of the athletes who practise it, at all levels.

1. OG London 2012, Opening Ceremony – Lighting of the Olympic cauldron.
© 2012 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / HUET, John

During the Olympic Games, the IFs are responsible for the practical organisation of the sports events on the programme. All the **technical aspects of a sport** are their responsibility: **the rules, equipment, venues, judging**, etc.

Here are some examples of Olympic federations:

Summer sports

- International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)
- International Gymnastics Federation (FIG)
- International Cycling Union (UCI)

Winter sports

- International Ski Federation (FIS)
- International Skating Union (ISU)
- International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)

- › **The Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs)** are responsible for the practical organisation of the Games. The OCOG's task is enormous. From the moment when the city is selected to host the Games, there are only seven years left to put in place all the necessary arrangements.

Based on the plans proposed in its Candidature File, the Organising Committee must create or update the **competition venues, stadiums, training halls and the Olympic Village as well as provide all of the organisational infrastructure necessary for the smooth running of the Games**. To do this, the OCOGs work closely with the IFs. It also has to put in place an efficient transport system and medical services for everyone, from athletes to spectators.

Another of the OCOG's missions is to create a **cultural programme**. Concerts, plays, ballets and exhibitions held leading up to and during the Olympic Games make them different from most other sports events.

During the Games, the OCOG benefits greatly from the assistance of thousands of **volunteers** who contribute to the success of the Games. The OCOG recruits, then trains people from the host country and also from abroad. The volunteers' activities vary widely: from transporting athletes to hospitality and administration, to give just a few examples. The talents and experience of each individual are taken into account when allocating jobs.

After the Games, the final task of the OCOG is to compile the **Official Report** of the Games.

The OCOG's challenge in figures!

At the 2012 Olympic Games in London (Great Britain), LOCOG had to manage:

- around 10,500 athletes
- 70,000 accredited volunteers
- more than 20,000 press and other media representatives
- over 6,000 accredited staff



People often think that the IOC is responsible for organising the Olympic Games. In fact, the IOC has more of a supervisor's role, entrusting the organisation of the Games to the elected host city and the NOC of the country in which the Games will take place.

LIFECYCLE OF AN OCOG:

- 9 years

Candidature phase Cities submit their bid files. The IOC studies these and, at a Session, elects the city which will organise the Games.

- 7 years

Planning and preparation phase Once the city is elected, its OCOG begins planning and preparing for the Games: everything has to be ready for the day of the opening, and there is plenty to do!

Length: 2.5 weeks

Date of the games The city hosts thousands of athletes, journalists and spectators. The whole world is watching.

+ 1 year

Post-games dissolution The OCOG writes a report on the Games and concludes its activities before being dissolved a year after the Games.

1. OG Vancouver 2010, volunteers prepare the slope for the Snowboard Cross women event. © 2010 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / KASAPOGLU, Mine



ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE GAMES

The mission of the IOC is to not only ensure the celebration of the Olympic Games, but to also promote Olympism around the world, promote sport in society as well as support sports organisations.

To achieve these objectives, a number of programmes are put in place, covering the protection of athletes' health, equality between men and women, ensuring that athletes from all over the world can train in good conditions and participate in the Games, promoting peace, education and culture, etc.

PROMOTION OF REGULAR SPORTS ACTIVITY AROUND THE WORLD

The **Sport for All** movement seeks to encourage the regular practice of sport by all people in society, regardless of sex, age, social background or economic status.

The IOC's **Sport for All Commission** was created in 1983. Its mission is to support initiatives and projects around the world. Each year, it offers **financial and moral support** to sport for all events organised by the NOCs on the five continents. These events cover a wide range of activities, and the main selection criterion is that they are open to everyone. To date, more than 165 NOCs have benefited from the programme.

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT

To help build a better world through sport, the IOC devises programmes which offer concrete answers to social inequalities and poverty.

The **International Relations Commission** supports numerous projects in cooperation with organisations specialising in humanitarian aid and development, as well as the NOCs.

An example of the IOC's work in this area is the **"Giving is Winning" solidarity campaign** organised in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) during the Summer Olympic Games. The members of the Olympic Movement are invited to donate clothing and sports equipment, which the UNHCR then distributes in various refugee camps around the world. Almost 100,000 items of clothing were collected during the 2012 Games in London alone.

1. Sports and development.
© International Olympic Committee (IOC) / JUILLIART, Richard

Evolution of women's participation in the Olympic Games

In Paris in 1900, 22 women out of 997 athletes (1.6%) competed in 2 sports: tennis and golf. In London in 2012, around 45% of the athletes were women.

What the Charter says about women...

“Today, the IOC's role is to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures, with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women”
(Olympic Charter, Rule 2, paragraph 7)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR POOR AND RICH, WOMEN AND MEN

The **Olympic Solidarity Commission** and the **Women and Sport Commission** both work towards achieving greater **equality** in the world of sport.

Olympic Solidarity makes sure that all athletes have the same chance of participating in the Games. It gives scholarships to athletes so that they can access high-level sports facilities, benefit from a specialised coach or receive the appropriate medical back-up. The Commission also gives money to improve the sports infrastructure in various countries and to train sports leaders and coaches.

The **Women and Sport** Commission, which works for gender equality, was created in **1995** and became fully engaged in 2004.

Its goal is twofold:

- to make access to sport in general and the Olympic Games easier for female athletes;
- to increase the number of women in sports administration and management, by offering regional seminars to female sports administrators, coaches, technical officials and journalists focused on leadership, competences and management and by granting scholarships to young female athletes and coaches.

Since 1996, a **World conference on women and sport** has been organized every four years to analyse the progress made in the field as well as recommend new strategies and commitments.

Since 2000, six IOC “Women and Sport” trophies (one per continent, and one at world level) have been awarded every year to a person or institution for their remarkable contribution to the development of women's participation in sport or in the administrative structures of sport.

In 2004, the world trophy was awarded to the FIFA Women's World Cup; in 2006 to the Argentinean tennis player Gabriela Sabatini; and in 2012 to the Brazilian sports and education centre and programme Bradesco.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE THROUGH SPORT

Pierre de Coubertin believed that sport contributed to the harmonious and well-balanced development of the body, personality and mind.

As such, interaction between sport, education and culture is encouraged by the **Commission for Culture and Olympic Education**. Its aims are to promote Olympism and Olympic ideals throughout the world and reinforce cooperation with educational institutions and NOCs with projects especially targeting young people. Through Olympic education, they should maintain

Women in the IOC

In 1981, the first woman was elected as an IOC member. In 2012, 21 women were active IOC members out of 106 (19.8%).

The Olympic Truce

The tradition of the Olympic Truce was established in Ancient Greece in the 9th century BC by three kings, who signed a peace treaty for the duration of the ancient Olympic Games, to guarantee safe travel and peaceful games for the athletes and the spectators.

Nowadays, the Olympic Truce is symbolised by the dove of peace, with the traditional Olympic flame in the background. It represents the IOC's ideals and its ambition to build a peaceful and better world through sport.

their interest in sport and physical activity.

In collaboration with the NOCs, the Commission organises various activities which aim to create synergies between the sports world and different areas of artistic activity such as literature, painting, sculpture and theatre. The arts festival, or cultural programme, offered during the Olympic Games is examined and approved by the Commission.

To help combat the global problem of the increasing lack of physical activity among young people and in line with the Olympic Movement's mission to promote education and development through sport the IOC launched a new **Youth Strategy in 2012**. This wide-ranging programme spans advocacy, education and activation. The aim is to help create a positive change in society, with more active and fulfilled young people.

SPORT FOR PEACE

Taking into account the global context of sport and the Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to revive the tradition of the Olympic Truce in order to preserve, to the possible extent, the interests of the athletes and sport in general and to encourage the search for peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the conflicts in the world.

To carry out this mission, the IOC created in 2000 the International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF) to contribute to the search for diplomatic and non-violent solutions to conflicts and spread the idea that sport and peace are a win-win solution

To achieve its objectives, the IOTF has set up the International Olympic Truce Centre (IOTC), based in Athens, which is responsible for the implementation of projects related to the promotion of culture of peace through sport and the Olympic ideal throughout the world.

In addition, together with the United Nations, the IOC organizes an "International Forum on Sport and Peace", where NOCs, International Federations, NGOs, other international organizations and researchers speak about this subject. Several "Sport and Peace" projects have been initiated in collaboration with the United Nations, OCOGs, NOCs and other international organizations worldwide.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Since the early 1990s, the IOC has been working to promote sustainable development.

The main role of the IOC **Sport and Environment Commission**, created in **1995**, is to advise the Olympic Movement on policy in the areas of environmental protection and sustainable development. It also ensures

that the Olympic Games are held in conditions which respect the environment. The aim is to reduce or even eliminate environmental risks, in order to leave a positive Games' legacy for the host city, region and country.

To achieve (and sometimes even exceed) the IOC's objectives in these areas, the OCOGs often employ the services of sustainable development advisers.

PROTECTION OF ATHLETES' HEALTH

The Olympic Movement takes its responsibility to protect the rights, health and well-being of athletes very seriously. The **Medical and Scientific Commission** was originally created to deal with its main priority, the fight against doping; but this today is taken care of by the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**. The IOC's educational mission also includes **preventive** efforts to inform both elite and amateur athletes of the disastrous health consequences of doping. The Commission's other main goal is to support sports medicine, biomechanics, sporting physiology and nutrition research designed to protect the health of the athlete.

COMBATING ILLEGAL AND IRREGULAR SPORTS BETTING

After doping, the sports movement is now facing a **new threat** to its integrity: **cheating linked to sports betting**.

To monitor sports betting on the Olympic competitions, since the 2008 Games in Beijing, the IOC has used an **alerts system** developed in cooperation with the main betting operators and various national online gambling regulators.

In the area of education, the IOC has run informative and preventive **awareness programmes** for the athletes since the 2010 Youth Olympic Games in Singapore.

The IOC also encourages governments to pass legislation to enable them to combat effectively any manipulation of sports competitions and thereby help safeguard the integrity of sport.

Some examples of sustainable initiatives at the Games:

- Nagano 1998: *The volunteers' uniforms were made using recycling materials.*
- Athens 2004: *By the end of the Games, more than a million bushes, 290,000 trees and 11 million shrubs had been planted in Athens.*
- Vancouver 2010: *The roof of the speed skating oval in Richmond was built using wood from trees infected by pine beetles, so that no healthy trees were cut down. Rainwater was also harvested and used for the toilets.*
- London 2012: *Sustainability was one of the key aspects of the London 2012 bid. Its sustainability plan was based on five key areas: climate change, waste, biodiversity, integration and a healthy lifestyle.*



HISTORICAL MILESTONES

A HISTORIC DATE

The IOC was founded in Paris on **23 June 1894**, by Baron Pierre de Coubertin. To commemorate this date, the IOC decided in 1948 to introduce an Olympic Day, a sort of “birthday” of the Olympic Movement. Originally celebrated by just nine countries, Olympic Day is now an event held all over the world. In many countries, the celebrations take the form of fun runs.

EIGHT PRESIDENTS IN OVER A CENTURY OF OLYMPISM

Contrary to popular belief, Pierre de Coubertin was not the first IOC President! The IOC’s original idea was that the country in which the Games were to be held should also provide the President. It was thus a Greek (**Demetrius Vikelas**) who was chosen to be the first IOC President until the first Games in Athens in 1896. The idea was quickly abandoned, however, and **Pierre de Coubertin** not only became the second IOC President, but carried on in the role for nearly 30 years, from 1896 to 1925.

To date, the IOC has had eight presidents. **The current president is Jacques Rogge.**

Names of the Presidents

- Demetrius Vikelas (Greece), 1894 – 1896
- Pierre de Coubertin (France,) 1896 – 1925
- Henri de Baillet-Latour (Belgium), 1925-1942
- J. Sigfrid Edström (Sweden), 1946 – 1952
- Avery Brundage (USA), 1952 – 1972
- Lord Killanin (Ireland), 1972 – 1980
- Juan Antonio Samaranch (Spain), 1980 – 2001
- Jacques Rogge (Belgium), 2001 – 2013

THE IOC IN LAUSANNE

Although the city of Lausanne has never hosted the Games, it has been **the headquarters** of the **IOC** since **1915**. It was Coubertin who chose this city, in the midst of the First World War.

After having occupied various buildings in Lausanne, the IOC headquarters finally found their definitive home at the Château de Vidy in 1968. This is where the President’s office is situated.

In recognition of the long history that unites the IOC and Lausanne, the city received the title of Olympic Capital in 1993.

1. Pierre de Coubertin
© 1894 / International Olympic
Committee (IOC)

ACTIVITIES

Feel the Olympic spirit! Put together a file made up of examples from sports or situations from everyday life which illustrate the Olympic values of friendship, respect and excellence.

Next, add in some of your own sports experiences – were there times where you would have liked to act differently, or would have liked others to behave differently?

Imagine that a city/town in your country is bidding to host the Olympic Games. Why would it be the ideal place for the Olympic competitions? List the existing sports facilities. What would need to be constructed? Create a mini-candidature file including the strong points of your region.

Do a press study on the IOC. Read the newspapers for one month and collect all the articles mentioning a member of the Olympic family (the IOC, an IF, an NOC, an OCOG, etc.). Write a review, commenting on the news.

SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Authors

The Olympic Museum
Educational and Cultural
Services

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THE OLYMPIC FLAME AND THE TORCH RELAY



THE OLYMPIC FLAME AND THE TORCH RELAY



INTRODUCTION

From Olympia, Greece, to the Olympic Games stadium somewhere in the world.

3



THE FLAME

Symbolism of fire.
Antiquity: the fire in Olympia.
Lighting of the Olympic flame.

4



RELAY AT THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES

A modern invention inspired by Antiquity.

The Relay at the modern Games: first Relay, itineraries and transport.

6



TORCH-BEARERS

Selection of torch-bearers.
The importance of the first and last torch-bearer.

11



TORCHES

Technology and design serving the Olympic flame.

13

This is a PDF interactive file. The headings of each page contain hyperlinks, which allow to move from chapter to chapter.



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Cover: OG Sydney 2000, Opening Ceremony – Cathy FREEMAN (AUS), final torch bearer.
© IOC

INTRODUCTION

FLAME

In the context of the modern Games, the Olympic flame is a manifestation of the positive values that Man has always associated with the symbolism of fire. The purity of the flame is guaranteed by the special way of lighting it - the sun's rays.

The choice of Olympia as a departure point emphasises the link between the Ancient and Modern Games and underlines the profound connection between these two events.

RELAY

The flame is carried by relay all the way to its final destination in the stadium. Although it is usually carried by runners on foot, other modes of transport are also used. For air transportation, the flame is sheltered in a security lamp, similar to a miner's lamp. At night time, it is kept in a special cauldron. The Relay's function is twofold: to herald the Olympic Games and to transmit a message of peace and friendship to the people along its route.

STADIUM

The highlight of the Opening Ceremony of the Olympics is the entrance of the Olympic flame into the stadium. The identity of the final torchbearer is kept secret until the last moment. It is often a personality from the sports world or a young person symbolising hope for the future.

The final torchbearer often does a lap of the stadium before lighting the monumental cauldron with the Olympic flame. A symbolic release of doves evokes the climate of peace in which the Olympic Games should take place. The flame remains lit for the duration of the Games and is only extinguished at the closing ceremony.

1. OG Vancouver 2010 –
The Olympic flame enters
the stadium during the Opening
Ceremony.

© Getty / Jasper Juinen





THE FLAME

SYMBOLISM OF FIRE

Fire has always played a very important role in the life of Man. The knowledge, mastery and use of fire figure amongst the most important achievements of humanity. Its place in the beliefs of most ethnic groups is proof of this.

The Ancient Greeks, for example, explained the presence of fire on earth through the myth of **Prometheus**.

The divine origin of fire made it a sacred element. The Greeks maintained perpetual fires in front of their main temples. The purity of this fire was guaranteed by the ignition technique: the flame was obtained by the rays of the sun. Captured at the centre of a recipient called a *skaphia*, the ancestor of the parabolic mirror used today for lighting the Olympic flame, the rays caused an intense heat which allowed a flame to be obtained.

FIRE IN OLYMPIA

In the sanctuary of Olympia, where the Ancient Olympic Games took place, a flame burned permanently on the altar of the goddess **Hestia**, situated in the *Prytaneum* (building used for the large banquets held in honour of the athletes at the end of the Games). Also obtained from the heat of the sun's rays, this fire was used to light the other fires of the sanctuary.

Such fires were lit on the altars of **Zeus** and **Hera**, situated in front of their temples. To honour these gods, animal sacrifices were made in the same place. Today, nothing remains of the altars, but the present ceremony for the lighting of the Olympic flame in front of the temple of Hera acts as a reminder of these events.

LIGHTING OF THE OLYMPIC FLAME

These days, everything starts in Olympia, Greece. A few months before the opening of the Games, a ceremony is organised on the ancient site of the Olympic Games. The flame is lit in front of the ruins of the Temple of Hera by actresses playing the part of priestesses. The choreography and costumes used in the ceremony are based on those of Antiquity.

The flame is lit according to the ancient method of the sun's rays in the parabolic mirror. The Olympic flame can only be lit in this way. The flame is placed in an urn and transported into the ancient stadium where it is given to the first runner by the high priestess responsible for this operation.

This process is done months before the opening of the Games, in order to allow for the relay to arrive at the host city.

1. OG Calgary 1988 – Lighting of the Olympic flame in Olympia.
© IOC / Jean-François Pahud

Prometheus stole fire from the gods to give to Man. As a punishment, he was chained to a rock by Zeus, father of the gods. Every day, an eagle came to devour his liver, which grew back every night. Prometheus defied the gods with his theft of fire but by the same act he also revealed the secrets of knowledge, wisdom and the human spirit to Man.

Hestia – (Roman name Vesta) goddess of the hearth. In the Roman religion, the Vestals were the guardians of the city's fire.

Zeus – (Roman name Jupiter) king of the gods of Olympia, he brought order and justice to the world. The Games in Olympia and Nemea were held in his honour.

Hera – (Roman name Juno), sister and wife of Zeus, she reigned with him. In Olympia, her cult was probably linked to that of another, older goddess of fertility. Hera herself was associated with birth.

What if the sun isn't shining?

As a precaution, on a sunny rehearsal day before the official ceremony, a flame is lit according to the traditional method. In this way, even if the sun is not out on the day of the ceremony, the torch can be lit from this flame, which is kept in a security lamp.

THE RELAY AT THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES

A MODERN INVENTION INSPIRED BY ANTIQUITY

The Olympic Torch Relay is now a powerful symbol of understanding and brotherhood among peoples. Contrary to what people could imagine, this tradition does not go back to the Games in Olympia. A modern invention (the first Relay was held in 1936 and the Olympic Movement recognised its great symbolic value in 1948), the Torch Relay is, however, inspired by several ancient practices:

Athens torch races

There were never any relays held at the ancient Olympic Games nor at the Pan-Hellenic Games (held in Nemea, Delphi and the Isthmus of Corinth. (see *"The Ancient Games" sheet*). However, in Athens there were torch races (**Lampadedromia**) held in honour of certain gods, including Prometheus. The flame was passed on by relay runners and the first to arrive at the altar of the god had the honour of rekindling the fire.

A sacred truce for the Games in Olympia

Some time before the Games, messengers wearing olive leaf crowns left **Elis** to announce the exact date of the competitions to other Greek cities. They invited the citizens to come to Olympia, and proclaimed the sacred truce (ekecheiria), which represented the obligation to cease combats one month before and during the period of the Games. This allowed the athletes and spectators to travel to Olympia and home again safely.

THE FIRST RELAYS – SUMMER AND WINTER

- › In **1936**, Carl Diem, Secretary General of the Organising Committee of the Games of the XI Olympiad in Berlin, proposed the inclusion of a torch relay in the programme of the **Summer Games**. The flame was **lit in Olympia** and **transported to Berlin** via a torch relay.

This **first summer relay** had to overcome several practical problems:

- the site of Olympia was hard to access and roads had to be specially built;
- planning of the itinerary required a lot of travelling for that period in time;
- the absence of suitable products (torch, cauldron, etc.) meant that research into specialized technology had to be undertaken, such as tests with the sun's rays and optical instruments.

***Lampadedromia** – Greek word for the ancient torch relays. They were part of religious ceremonies rather than sporting events.*

***Elis** – The sanctuary of Olympia was situated on the territory of the city of Elis, some 50km to the north.*



- › In the context of the **Winter Games**, the first relay took place during the **1952 Games in Oslo**.
This first relay did not start in Olympia, Greece, but in the valley of Morgedal in Norway.
 - the region, considered as the birthplace of skiing, was chosen as a reminder of the origins of this sport;
 - the flame was lit in the hearth of the chalet belonging to Sondre Norheim, a legendary figure in Norwegian skiing.
- › At the Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo in **1956**, the flame was lit in front of the Capitole in Rome, as the city had just been elected host of the Games of the XVII Olympiad. The tripod used for the ceremony was sent from Olympia.
- › At the Winter Games in Squaw Valley in **1960**, the flame was once again lit in Norway, at Sondre Norheim's chalet. The inscription on the torch "Olympia to Squaw Valley" is a reference to an attempt to start the relay in Olympia, which did not succeed as the time period was too restricted.
- › Since the **Innsbruck Games in 1964**, the relay for the Winter Games has begun in Olympia.

ITINERARY OF THE RELAY

Choosing a route for a relay is not as easy as drawing a straight line between Olympia and the host city of the Games! Each relay has its own "flavour" and allows for the discovery of the history and culture of a new part of the world.

From Olympia to Athens... the organisation of the lighting of the flame in Olympia is always handled by the Greek Olympic Committee. This Committee also takes charge of the transport of the flame by runners to Athens or, more precisely, to the Panathenaic stadium which was used for the 1896 Games.

From Athens to the host city... the rest of the relay to the host city of the Games is handled by the Olympic Games Organising Committee (OCOG). This Committee chooses the theme of the relay, which then helps them determine the regions to be crossed, the stops planned and the different types of transport.

Until 2008, the flame usually travelled through several countries before arriving at its final destination. As from 2010, the Torch Relay has mainly taken place in Greece and the country of the host city, to where the flame is directly transported from Athens.

1. OG Berlin 1936 –
A torchbearer with the Olympic flame in front of a crowd.
© 1936 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

The following are some examples of themes which have influenced the itineraries of the flame.

THEMATIC ROUTES – SOME EXAMPLES OF SIGNIFICANT RELAYS

The relay of peace – London 1948

In a Europe sorely afflicted by the war, the 1948 relay carried a welcome message of peace. The first runner, Corporal Dimitrelis, took off his military uniform before carrying the flame, commemorating the sacred truce observed in Ancient Greece. The planned route highlighted border crossings, where festivities were organised to celebrate the return of peace.

The relay went through Lausanne, Switzerland. As homage to the restorer of the Olympic Games, a ceremony was organised at Pierre de Coubertin's tomb in the Bois-de-Vaux cemetery.

The ancient relay – Rome 1960

The relay shone the spotlight on the two poles of classical civilisation: Athens and Rome. Lesser-known ancient sites in Greece and Italy were thus brought to the public's attention. For the first time, the relay was televised and the event closely followed by the media.

The relay to the New World – Mexico City 1968

The relay retraced the steps of Christopher Columbus to the New World. The idea was to underline the link between Mediterranean and Latin-American civilisations and between ancient (Greco-Latin) and Pre-Hispanic civilisations. A direct descendant of the great navigator, Cristóbal Colón de Carbajal, was the last runner on Spanish soil. The Olympic flame made a stop at the Great Pyramid of the Moon in Teotihuacan. A "New Fire" ceremony was organised which, in the Aztec tradition, was celebrated to mark the end of a 52-year cycle. The reappearance of the sun at dawn symbolised the renewal of the world.

The oriental relay – Seoul 1988

The relay showcased the traditions of Korea. Its route, which was a zigzag from east to west, symbolised the harmony to be found in the balance between two opposite poles. The torchbearers did not wear the official uniform provided by the Games Organising Committee, but instead wore regional or traditional costumes. The runner who brought the flame into the stadium was Sohn Kee-Chung, Olympic champion of the marathon in Berlin in 1936, under the name of Kitei Son. At the time, his medal was awarded to Japan, as Korea was under Japanese rule.



The “Down Under” relay – Sydney 2000

This relay had a twofold goal: to make Oceania widely known and to promote the culture and heritage of Australia’s various regions. The start of the relay on the Australian continent was in the centre of the country at Uluru (Ayers Rock), a sacred site for the indigenous population. The Aboriginal athlete Nova Peris-Kneebone, Olympic field hockey champion, was the first runner in the relay. The enthusiasm of the crowd along the relay route grew bigger and bigger. One million spectators welcomed the arrival of the flame in Sydney. In a ceremony which recalled the elements used in the design of the torch (fire, water, earth), Cathy Freeman “walked on water” before lighting a circle of fire which revealed itself to be a monumental cauldron.

The Northern Lights Relay – Vancouver 2010

The theme of the Relay, “A path of Northern Lights”, made reference to the flame tracing a trail among Canada’s many communities. The flame covered 45,000 kilometres throughout Canada and stopped in each province and territory of the country. More than 90 per cent of Canadians could thus see the flame as it passed less than an hour’s car drive away from every home.

ORIGINALITY OF TRANSPORTATION

Traditionally, relays have been carried out on foot (for Berlin 1936, London 1948 and Moscow 1980 the relays were entirely run in this way). With the celebration of the Olympic Games throughout the world, the flame had to travel by plane. The **modes of transport** have slowly become more and more diversified, not only for practical reasons, but also to showcase the particularities of the regions crossed.

The flame in the snow!

Legendary Norwegian skiers (or their descendants) carried out the entirety of the transport of the flame (Oslo 1952). Dog sleds and snow scooters were used for some stages of the Relay (Vancouver 2010).

The flame in the water, on the water and under water!

In the sea off Veracruz, Mexico, swimmers carried the flame from the boat *Durango* to the shore (Mexico City 1968). A diver swam across the port of Marseilles holding the flame out of the water (Grenoble 1968). The flame travelled on the frigate *Cataluña* for the passage between Greece and Spain and arrived on Spanish soil in Empuries, the gateway to Greek civilisation on the Iberian peninsula (circa 600 B.C.) (Barcelona 1992). A diver carried the flame under water at the Great Barrier Reef (Sydney 2000).

1. OG Cortina d’Ampezzo 1956. Olympic Torch Relay – Zeno COLO (ITA), former downhill ski Olympic champion, starts going downhill towards Cortina d’Ampezzo. © 1956 / Foto Constantini, Cortina



The flame in the air, through the air and in space!

The flame made its first trip in an aeroplane (Oslo 1952). The flame travelled faster than the speed of sound on its journey from Athens to Paris – on Concorde (Albertville 1992). The wonders of technology were highlighted when the Canadians organized the transmission of the flame by satellite between Athens and Ottawa (Montreal 1976). For the first time in the history of the Olympics, the torch (but not the flame) made a parachute jump. It also made an impressive entry at the Opening Ceremony of the Games, carried by a ski jumper during his actual jump (Lillehammer 1994). The torch was carried into space by astronauts (Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000).

The flame on horseback and on a camel!

Although the host of the 1956 Games was Melbourne, the equestrian events were held in another city on another continent – Stockholm, Sweden. Here, the flame was transported only by horse (Melbourne/Stockholm 1956). Horses played a special role again when the history of the Pony Express was featured as a part of the Torch Relay (Atlanta 1996). Horses were replaced by camels when the flame crossed the Australian desert (Sydney 2000).

The flame in the Wild West!

The modes of transport that are used bring to mind great moments in American history. For example, the flame traveled in an Indian canoe, on a Mississippi steamboat, and on a wagon of the Union Pacific (the first transcontinental railroad) (Atlanta 1996)

1. OG Salt Lake 2002. The Olympic flame is transported by train.
© 2002 / Kishimoto / IOC / NAGAYA, Yo – All rights reserved

2. OG Montreal 1976 – Olympic Torch Relay by boat.
© 1976 / IOC



THE TORCH-BEARERS

The flame is carried to the host city by thousands of torch-bearers: athletes, celebrities, but mostly by everyday people.

SELECTING THE TORCH-BEARERS

Until the 1970s, the torch-bearers were mainly athletes selected by the Organising Committees for the Games (Berlin 1936), the government (Rome 1960), sports organisations (London 1948, Helsinki 1952 and Stockholm 1956) or National Olympic Committees (Munich 1972).

These torch-bearers were young, male athletes. It was only at the Munich Games in 1972 that women and people with disabilities were included among the torch-bearers. It was also from this date onwards that the athletes and other known officials were joined by “ordinary” torch-bearers, often inhabitants of the regions through which the Relay passed. It is now the Organising Committee for the Games which is responsible for selecting all the torch-bearers.

From the 1990s onwards, the Organising Committees have involved Games sponsors in their torch-bearer selection process. The selection criteria for the “ordinary” candidates increasingly include the person’s social and community involvement. Major casting operations are organised. For the 1996 Atlanta Games, the “Community Heroes Programme” selected torch-bearers with local importance and influence. For the 2004 Games in Athens, torch-bearers were selected because they inspired and brought their communities together through sport, education and culture. For the London 2012 Games, candidates could be proposed via the internet. A total of 8,000 torch-bearers were thus selected from among the tens of thousands of candidatures received, on the basis of their social commitment.

Well-known people from the worlds of sport, show business and politics continue to be associated with the Torch Relay, thus contributing to promoting the Olympic spirit throughout the world.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST AND LAST TORCH-BEARERS

Among the thousands of torch-bearers, the first and, particularly, the last (who lights the cauldron in the stadium during the Games Opening Ceremony) are chosen for the special relationship they enjoy with the host country. They all carry very strong messages:

1. A female torchbearer runs with the Olympic flame.
© Getty / Pascal Le Segretain



- › Tokyo 1964: The last torch-bearer, Yoshinori Sakai, was chosen because he was born in Hiroshima on the day that the atomic bomb was dropped on the city.
- › Sydney 2000: The last torch-bearer, Cathy Freeman, was chosen as she represented the cause of Australia's Aborigines.

1. *The Olympic flame is passed from one torch to another.*
© Getty / Todd Warshwa

For each edition of the Games, a new model of torch is created with specific technical and aesthetical standards!

TORCHES

For each edition of the Games, a new model of torch is created with specific technical and aesthetical standards!

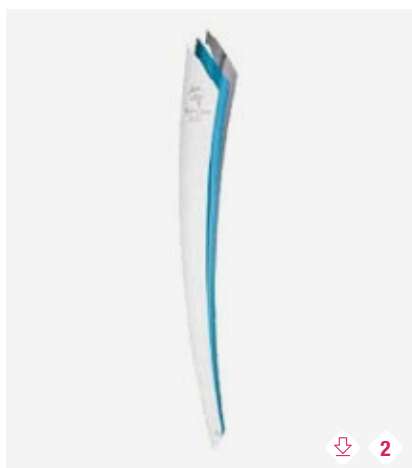
THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THE OLYMPIC TORCH

The torch must conform to exact technical standards. During the relay, the flame must never go out. The torch must be able to stand up to difficult weather conditions (such as wind, rain, snow and extreme heat) and the most unusual modes of transport. It must also be capable of burning longer than the amount of time reserved for the relay leg, in case the runner has any problems on route.

In 1936, when the first relay was organised, experiments were necessary to determine the best shape for the torch and the most suitable combustible. Magnesium, gunpowder, resin, olive oil... all these products (and many others!) have been used to fuel the Olympic Flame. These days, a gas cartridge in the body of the torch is the most popular solution chosen. The type of gas used can influence the colour of the flame (from white to yellowy-red) and its intensity.

THE DESIGN OF THE OLYMPIC TORCH

In the early days of the relay, the torch models were more or less the same. With the evolution of the Olympic Games, the shapes, colours and materials used have become more and more varied. The torches are very often created by world-famous firms or designers, for example Pedro Ramirez Vasquez and Lance Wyman for Mexico City 1968; Munemichi Yanagi for Sapporo 1972; Georges Huel and Michel Dallaire for Montreal 1976; Philippe Starck for Albertville 1992; Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby for London 2012; and Pininfarina for Torino 2006 and Bombardier for Vancouver 2010. This diversity shows the will to differentiate editions of the Games, as well as to express, through the object, the particularities of the host country or to highlight the most symbolic aspects of the Games.



Rome 1960¹ Highlights the Roman and Greek classical civilisations. The design of the torch was deliberately based on a classical model, inspired by torches found on ancient sites.

Sydney 2000² The top of the torch has the same shape as the Sydney Opera House. Its shape, as well as the logo of these Games, was inspired by the boomerang, the Aborigines' ancient hunting tool.

Salt Lake City 2002³ The shape of the torch relates to the elements of fire and ice, symbols of the 2002 Games. The torch looks like a stalactite. Its textured pewter shaft symbolises the ruggedness of the American West.

Beijing 2008⁴ The torch includes several references to Chinese culture: the lower part represents lacquer; its red colour is lucky in China. On the top part of the torch, the scrolled shapes represent auspicious clouds. Finally, the torch is shaped like a roll of paper, a Chinese invention.

London 2012⁵ The 8,000 holes in the torch represent the inspiring stories of the 8,000 torch-bearers. The triangular shape is representative of series of three: three Olympic values (friendship, excellence and respect); three words in the Olympic motto (Citius, Altius, Fortius); three editions of the Olympic Games in London (1908, 1948 and 2012); and the vision of the London 2012 Games, to combine the three aspects of sport, culture and education.

Nowadays, torches are produced in great quantities and, as a result, runners sometimes have the possibility of acquiring their torch after their participation in the relay.

Images 1 to 5: © IOC



ARRIVAL AT THE STADIUM

On the occasion of the Opening Ceremony of the Games, a torch of a different design or material from the one used in the rest of the relay is sometimes used. A smoke apparatus is sometimes added so that the public can see the arrival of the flame in the stadium and easily follow its route through the crowd right up until the moment the cauldron is lit.

1. OG Vancouver 2010 – The Torch has arrived in the stadium
© Getty / Cameron Spencer

2. Olympic Games Seoul 1988. Opening Ceremony - Son-Man CHONG, Won-Tak KIM and Mi-Jong SON light the Olympic Cauldron.
© 1988 / IOPP, Seoul 1988 / WIEDENER Jeff

ACTIVITIES

Imagine the organisation of a torch relay in your region. What is the message conveyed by the flame? What is the route of the relay? What are the places or monuments to be showcased, and where would the flame stop in your region? How would you choose the modes of transport? What criteria would you use to select the runners?

Study the symbolism of the more recent Olympic torches. Look for the relationship between the shape, materials and colours used in the torch and the culture of the city or country where the Games took place.

Compare the role of the Olympic Flame in the Games with the role of fire in other ceremonies you know about. What do fire and light bring to these ceremonies?

Discover the history of fire. How do you explain the importance given to this element in all the civilisations of the world?

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Authors

The Olympic Museum
Educational and Cultural
Services

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THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN ANTIQUITY

THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN ANTIQUITY

This is a PDF interactive file. The headings of each page contain hyperlinks, which allow to move from chapter to chapter



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INTRODUCTION

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The information we have today about the ancient Olympic Games come mainly from the many descriptions of them in ancient literature, as well as from objects found at archeological digs (statues, vases, coins and tools).



INTRODUCTION

OLYMPIA, CRADLE OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

The Olympic Games as we know them today [see *“The Modern Olympic Games” sheet*] have a long history which goes back to ancient times. Although some elements of these Games were revived “as they were” when the modern Olympic Games were created, others were removed or modified.

Everything started in the Peloponnese, in Greece, some 3,000 years ago. Sports competitions were organised at **Olympia** and were named after their location, hence their name of “**Olympic**” Games. Nobody knows exactly when they began, but the first written mention of them dates back to **776 BC**. It is difficult to know what gave rise to the ancient Games. Numerous versions attempt to explain them. Historically, the Games were created to provide unity to the Hellenic world, which, at that time, was split into city-states which were constantly at war. Mythology is mixed up with history, and the events that happened during this period were often explained as being the consequence of divine intervention.

These Games were held **every four years**. This four-year period acquired the name “**Olympiad**”, and was used as a date system: time was counted in Olympiads, rather than years.

THE PANHELLENIC GAMES

The Games organised at **Olympia** led to the development of the **Panhellenic Games**. These included:

- The Games at **Olympia** (Olympic Games): every four years
- The Games at **Delphi** (Pythian Games), 582 B.C.: every four years (third year of each Olympiad)
- The Games at the **Isthmus of Corinth** (Isthmian Games), from 580 B.C.: every two years (second and fourth year of each Olympiad)
- The Games at **Nemea** (Nemean Games), from 573 B.C.: every two years (second and fourth year of each Olympiad)

These Games were special because they **brought the Greek world together** (pan = all, hellene = Greek) at a time when Greece was not a single state, but a series of city-states (politically and economically independent communities). From Greece and the colonies (in Italy, North Africa and Asia Minor), people travelled to take part in or attend these Games, inspired by the shared feeling of belonging to the same culture or religion.

The four Panhellenic Games were never held during the same year.

1. Representation of Heracles (Hercules for the Romans) fighting against the lion of Nemea.
© IOC / Chaman Atelier
Multimédia

Unlike the modern Olympic Games, the ancient Games did not change location and the participants did not come from throughout the world.

THE SACRED TRUCE

On the occasion of the four Panhellenic Games, a **sacred truce** (*Ekecheiria*) was proclaimed. Messengers (*spondophoro*) went from city to city announcing the date of the competitions. They called for all wars to be halted before, during and after the Games in order to enable the athletes, as well as the spectators, to travel to and from the Games sites in total safety. A climate of peace was considered important during the period of competition.

GAMES FOR THE GODS

The Panhellenic Games were of major religious significance. Each of the Games was celebrated in honour of a specific god:

- **Zeus**, the king of the gods, at **Olympia** and **Nemea**
- **Apollo**, the god of light and reason, at **Delphi**
- **Poseidon**, the god of the sea and horses, at **Isthmus of Corinth**.

OVERVIEW OF THE SITE AT OLYMPIA

Of the four Panhellenic Games, those at Olympia were the most important. Olympia was not a town or city, but rather a sanctuary. The site consisted of a **sacred area**, the **Altis**, marked by a boundary wall, and a **secular (non-religious) area**. The sacred area contained the temples, including the one to Zeus, the altars on which sacrifices were made, and the Treasuries, small buildings erected by the city-states in which precious offerings were kept (e.g. vases and statues). The secular area was outside the boundary wall. It contained the training areas and competition sites, plus all the buildings used for the administration of the Games or to welcome important guests. Only the priests and the staff responsible for looking after the sanctuary lived at Olympia. At the time of the competitions, the atmosphere was very different. In addition to the athletes and spectators, merchants of all kinds flocked to the site: the number of people present for the Olympic Games is estimated to have been **over 40,000**.

OTHER FESTIVALS AND CONTESTS IN GREECE

In addition to the Panhellenic Games, major sports competitions were held in Athens. These were known as the **Panathenian Games**. They were part of the Great Panathenaea, the biggest festival in Athens, which was held every four years in honour of the goddess Athena.

Everywhere in Greece and the colonies, there were numerous **local competitions**, some better known than others. Each city made a point of organising them.

The status of the Panhellenic Games and the large number of local competitions illustrate the importance of physical exercise and the spirit of competition in Ancient Greek society.

The principle of the Truce has been revived for the modern Olympic Games.

During sporting contests, it was considered that victory was accorded by the gods. This is the biggest difference with the modern Olympic Games, which are non-religious.



1. Reconstitution of the site of Olympia (around the 3rd century BC).
© Toubis



Women were not allowed into the Olympic Games, and could only be admitted as spectators if they were unmarried.

However, this did not mean that they did not practise sport. There is evidence that running contests were held at Olympia and at other antique sites.

THE ATHLETE

When looking at a sculpture or a scene painted on a vase, it is easy to identify the athlete by his **nakedness**. Indeed, for both training and competitions, athletes were **always nude**, to illustrate the ideal of harmony between the body and the mind. According to this ideal, it was only through training the body that the mind could be developed.

GYMNASIUM AND PALAESTRA

There was a **gymnasium** and a **palaestra** in every Greek city. These places were where athletes trained and young boys were educated. It was an all-round education, including exercise for the body as well as the mind. Physical education, music, arithmetic, grammar and reading were all part of the programme.

HYGIENE AND BODY CARE

When they arrived at the gymnasium or palaestra, athletes stripped completely. Without the protection of a layer of clothing, they had to take special care of their skin. To prepare for training, an athlete would cover his body with **olive oil** and then dust it with **fine sand**. The oil and sand combination helped to regulate his body temperature as well as providing protection from the sun and from the stick that the trainer would use to beat him if he didn't perform the exercises correctly!

After training, the athlete would take his **strigil**, a curved instrument, and scrape the sweat, oil and sand off his skin. He then finished cleaning himself with water and a **sponge**.

During competitions, athletes prepared and cleaned themselves in the same way.

SELECTION OF GAMES' PARTICIPANTS

There were three main criteria for participation in the Games: one had to be **male**, of **Greek origin** and a **free man**. Women, slaves and foreigners were excluded. Most of the athletes came from well-off families. While we cannot really speak of amateurs or professionals as we know them today, only the best were allowed to participate in the Games. Participants trained individually over several months before travelling to Elis, a city close to Olympia, four weeks before the Games to join the other participants. At this point, a final selection was made to determine those who could go to Olympia. The athletes took an oath, as did the judges. They promised to take part in the competitions in an honourable way, abiding by the rules.

1. Strigil and aryballos
© IOC / Chaman Atelier
Multimédia

The equipment that the athlete needed was extremely simple:

- an **aryballos**, a kind of small bottle, often terracotta, containing oil
- a **strigil**
- a **sponge**

All three items were linked to a ring which the athlete hangs on the wall of the Gymnasium or the Palaestra.

A privileged spectator

One woman stood out from the crowd. She was the Priestess of Demeter (the goddess of agriculture and fertility). She occupied a seat facing the officials' stand.

FAMOUS ATHLETES

If physical exercise was an important part of general education in Antiquity, there were also highly specialised athletes who followed training programmes and participated in many contests.

The names of some of the great champions of Antiquity are still known today. Below are the profiles of a number of them.

The famous wrestler **Milo of Croton**, was a principal figure during the second half of the 7th century BC. He won six times at Olympia, seven times at Delphi, ten times at Isthmus of Corinth and nine times at Nemea! He thus became the most-crowned athlete of Antiquity, earning the title of **periodonikes**. Milo was not only celebrated for his legendary power, he was also known for his insatiable appetite!

Theogenes of Thassos won over 1,300 victories in the ancient contests, in boxing and pankration. He became a very important figure in his home town, where a statue to him was erected in the marketplace.

The runner **Leonidas of Rhodes** was a twelve-time winner of the stadium race, the double stadium and the race in armour. He was one of the few athletes victorious in three races on the same day. He even managed to repeat this feat over four Olympiads (from 164-152 BC)!

The pugilist (boxer) **Diagoras of Rhodes** founded a dynasty of athletes. He won in 464 BC and his sons and grandsons also went on to become champions at Olympia.

Considered as heroes and role models, such great athletes were celebrated even after their death. There are examples of tombs decorated with carvings of the wreaths won during the athlete's career. A school was even constructed over the tomb of one of them.

Periodonikes

An athlete could be victorious at the 4 sites of the Panhellenic Games. In this case, he was given the title periodonikes, champion of the circuit.



The stadium was not oval as we know it today, but rectangular. It had a packed earth floor and its boundaries were marked by grassy slopes, on which the spectators sat. The officials (organisers and judges – the Hellanodikai) sat in a stand.

THE SPORTS ON THE PROGRAMME

The Olympic Games were celebrated for over one thousand years and underwent many changes. At their peak (circa 500 B.C.), they lasted for five days and the sporting contests were a central element.

WHAT WERE THE GAMES LIKE?

The programme of the Olympic Games consisted of individual sports only, there were no team sports. The competitions took place in the **stadium** and the **hippodrome**.

First day The athletes, as well as the judges, took an oath to respect the rules. Contests for trumpet-players and **heralds** followed this ceremony, the winners of which had the honour of making the announcements during the Games. After the sounding of the trumpet, the name of the event, the arrival of the competitors and the names of the winners were announced loudly by these veritable “speakers” of their era.

Second day The **equestrian events** took place in the hippodrome. The most popular event was the four-horse chariot race (quadriga). There were also chariot races for young horses and a mounted horse race. It must be noted that the winners were not the jockeys or the charioteers, but rather the owners of the horses. This is how **Kyniska of Sparta**, owner of a stable of horses, became an Olympic champion.

The pentathlon took place in the stadium in the afternoon. It consisted of five events: discus, long jump, javelin, running and wrestling.

The discus throw was carried out without a run-up and all the athletes used the same discus.

For the long jump, stone or metal halteres (weights) were used, of various shapes. The event was probably made up of five consecutive standing jumps, which required harmony of movement and a sense of rhythm. To help with rhythm, a flute player was often present. Such figures are often represented on vases, next to the long-jumpers.

For the javelin throw, athletes used a small leather strap which was placed around the shaft in a loop, which allowed them to give the javelin an extra rotation.

1. Representation of the javelin throw
© IOC / Chaman Atelier
Multimédia



1. Representation of the races
© IOC / Chaman Atelier
Multimédia

These three disciplines were only practised as part of the pentathlon. Running and wrestling, on the other hand, were also practised as individual disciplines.

Third day This day was considered to be the culminating point of the Games. A great sacrifice took place: one hundred cows were killed in honour of Zeus and other divinities. Their meat was shared amongst the community of Games participants during a feast to which all were invited.

Fourth day **The foot races** took place in the stadium. There were several types of race:

The stadium race covered one length of the stadium, that is roughly 192m.

The diaulos, two lengths or double stadium.

The dolichos, a long-distance race (from 7 to 24 laps).

The race in arms (in Olympia it was a diaulos), where the athletes wore a helmet and greaves, and carried a shield.

The competitors took their place on a starting line marked out by white limestone slabs. A barrier was lowered to signal the start of the race. The runners ran in a straight line. For the longer races, the runners ran around a marker or a post at each end of the stadium.

The afternoon was dedicated to combat sports: pugilism (boxing), wrestling and pankration. The drawing of lots decided which athletes would compete against each other. Unlike today, there were no weight categories. To signal the end of a fight, one of the contestants could raise a finger: such scenes are sometimes represented on vases.

For boxing, the **pugilists'** hands were protected by long leather thongs. These ancestors of boxing gloves underwent numerous modifications over time. Pieces of metal were added on the knuckles, making the punches much more violent.

Wrestlers fought standing up, with bare hands. There were different types of hold. The person who first touched the ground three times was the loser.

Pankration was a type of wrestling. All moves were allowed, except for biting, gouging out eyes and putting fingers in the opponent's nose.

Fifth and last day This day was reserved for honouring victorious athletes. They were covered in ribbons and received victory palms in the stadium, before a solemn ceremony in which they were crowned with olive wreaths. Finally, a banquet was given for them, together with the politicians and judges.

CHEATING AND FINES

When the athletes did not respect the rules, the judge punished them during the race, with a whip. For more serious offences, the athletes had to pay a fine. With this money, statues of Zeus and Elis were erected, and at Olympia, the names of the cheats were inscribed on their base. At Olympia, these statues (**the Zanés**) were placed along the passageway that led to the stadium; at Elis, they were placed in the gymnasium. This reminded the athletes of the example not to follow!

MUSIC AND SINGING

Music and singing competitions were not on the programme of the Olympic Games. They were a speciality of the Games at Delphi.

Well before the appearance of sports competitions, musical competitions were organised in Delphi. These comprised singing accompanied by the cithara (a type of lyre), flute solos or singing with flute accompaniment. Music and singing remained a feature of the Pythian Games even after the integration of sports competitions. Poetry and drama competitions also figured on the programme.



WINNERS' REWARDS

CROWNS, RIBBONS AND PALM BRANCHES

At the modern Olympic Games, the first, second and third-placed athletes are rewarded, respectively, by gold, silver and bronze medals. At the Panhellenic Games, there was **only one winner** whose prize was a **wreath or crown of leaves**. At each of the venues, the crowns were made with different types of leaves:

- At **Olympia**, it was a **wild olive leaf** crown
- At **Delphi**, a **laurel** crown
- At **Corinth**, a **pine** crown
- At **Nemea**, a **wild celery** crown

As well as a crown, the winner received a **red woollen ribbon**, the taenia. A famous statue by the sculptor Polyclethus (dating from the second half of the 5th century BC) shows a victor tying the ribbon around his head. Finally, the winner often held a **palm frond**, another sign of his victory.

NIKE, THE MESSENGER OF THE GODS

The Ancient Greeks considered that it was **the gods** who decided to grant victory to an athlete. Victory was often represented in the form of a winged female character known as **Nike**, which means "victory" in Greek. As the servant or messenger of the Gods, Nike flew down to the chosen person, to bring them their **divine reward** in the form of a wreath or ribbon.

FAME

Although winners did not receive any financial reward, Olympic champions became important figures in their town or city, where they often took on a political role. The glory of the victorious athlete brought reflected glory to all the inhabitants of his home town. When he returned from the Games, he was given a hero's welcome and received numerous benefits for the rest of his life.

To show that he had become famous, the victor had the right to have a **statue of himself** erected. He could also ask a poet to write **verses** telling of his feats. Because they were proud of him, his fellow citizens sometimes made **coins** with his effigy on them, so as not to forget him and to make him known throughout the Greek world.

1. Nike handing the crown of olive leaves to the winner.
© IOC / Chaman Atelier
Multimédia

PRIZES IN LOCAL COMPETITIONS

The prizes awarded in local competitions had a greater **material value**. Amphorae filled with olive oil were often given to the winner. During this period, olive oil was extremely precious and worth a lot of money. Other treasures, such as bronze tripods (big vases with three feet), bronze shields or silver cups were also given as prizes.

In spite of this difference, the prestige of the Panhellenic Games remained unequalled. The modest crown of leaves was the highest possible reward in the Greek world, as it guaranteed its holder honour and respect from everyone.



THE END OF THE GAMES

For over one thousand years, the Greeks, and later the Romans, met at Olympia to celebrate the festival in honour of Zeus and ensure that the Games remained an important event.

We now know that the Games were still being organised in the 4th century AD.

In 393 AD, the Christian emperor Theodosius I forbade the celebration of pagan cults, which included the Games.

Nonetheless, the popularity of sports contests and cultural festivities continued in many Greek-influenced provinces of the Roman empire as late as the 6th century AD.

OLYMPIA, UNTIL ITS REDISCOVERY IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Following Theodosius' decree, pagan cults began to disappear gradually and the site of Olympia was abandoned. Earthquakes destroyed the edifices and their ruins disappeared gradually under the earth and sand. There are no longer any visible traces of the site. Thanks to the writings of ancient historians, the memory of the Games and their place in the Greek world was not totally forgotten. The Games were known to have existed, but the knowledge of their exact location had been lost.

In 1776, the English traveller Richard Chandler discovered the site of ancient Olympia.

The principal research digs were carried out a hundred years later by German archaeologists.

Today, archaeological digs have allowed us to discover the past glory of the Panhellenic Games and the significance of Olympia.

1. The sanctuary of Olympia nowadays.

© 2009 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / JUILLIART, Richard

ACTIVITIES

Find the names of the gods mentioned in these factsheets and create an identity sheet for each one. Include a short text, a drawing of the god or goddess and the symbol which allows them to be identified.

Learn to interpret a sculpture or a painting on a vase: describe the characters, their clothing, their bodies, postures and facial expressions, and the objects (look at illustrations in books or visit museums).

Observe sports scenes shown on vases: guess what the sport is, mime the movements and postures of the athletes in action.

Read works by ancient authors, in particular the parts about the Games and the athletes: for example, the odes by the poet Pindar (518-438 BC) or the stories of the writer Pausanias (110-180 AD).

Return to the past! You are a spectator at the Olympic Games in Antiquity:

- describe a competition of your choice, in the form of an article or comic strip;
- prepare a portrait of a victorious athlete, imagining that he comes from a town in the Greek colonies.

Compare the Ancient Games with the modern Olympic Games [see sheets "The Modern Olympic Games"]. Draw up a list of differences and a list of common features.

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Editor

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Authors

The Olympic Museum
Educational and Cultural Services

English translation

IOC Language Services

Graphic design

Oxyde, Lausanne
(www.oxyde.ch)

THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES



THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES



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The world's greatest sports event for over a century

Initiative of Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin

Olympic Games celebrated in a different country every four years

Games of the Olympiad (Summer Games)

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INTRODUCTION

A SPORTS EVENT UNLIKE ANY OTHER

The Olympic Games are unique. 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.

What makes the Olympic Games different from other sports events?

The Games are held every four years. They are the largest sporting celebration in 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 held at intervals, but are part of a broader framework which is that of the **Olympic Movement**. The purpose of the Olympic Movement is to promote the practice of sport all over the world and disseminate the Olympic values. It is in this spirit that the Olympic Games are held and celebrated.

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 first edition of the modern Summer Games was held in 1896 in Athens (Greece), and the first Olympic Winter Games in 1924 in Chamonix (France).

The word **Olympiad** designates the **four-year period** that separates each edition of the Summer Games.

Until 1992, the Summer and Winter Games were held in the same year, but since then, the Winter Games were moved two years from the Summer Games. The Summer and 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 7 sports practised on snow and ice, both indoors and outdoors.

The London 2012 Olympic Games were broadcast all over the world, via the traditional media as well as online and mobile platforms. They reached a record audience estimated at 4.8 billion people.



HISTORY

It was **Pierre de Coubertin** of France who dreamt up this ambitious project, although others before him had tried in vain to revive these Games. 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!

1. OG Athens 1896. Athletics.
Discus Men – Robert GARRETT
(USA) 1st.
© 1896 / International Olympic
Committee (IOC)

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES

ELEMENTS OF THE PAST

The roots of the Olympic Games are to be found in Ancient Greece [see sheet “*The Olympic Games in Antiquity*”], and the first modern Games, in 1896, featured many references to this legacy of Greek Antiquity:

- › The Games were held in Athens, in Greece, the country where the ancient Games were held.
- › Most of the competitions were held in the ancient stadium (the **Panathinaiko Stadium**), which had been restored for the occasion.
- › Most of the **sports** on the programme of the ancient Games were included in the first modern Games.
- › The organisers invented a race inspired by an event in antiquity: the **marathon**.

Generally speaking, the modern Games strive towards a more peaceful world. The Olympic Truce calling for a halt to all conflicts recalls the concept of the truce observed during the Ancient Games.

Sacred and respected throughout Ancient Greece, the **Olympic Truce** announced by messengers before the Games allowed spectators, athletes and officials to travel to and from Olympia in safety through the numerous battle zones. Today, the Olympic Truce is the subject of a United Nations resolution calling for a halt to hostilities during the period of the Games and the search for means of peaceful resolution in areas of tension. The athletes who support this initiative are invited to sign a “Truce Wall” in the Olympic Village.

INNOVATIONS

While the modern Games draw their inspiration from the past, they are also quite different.

From the outset, Coubertin proposed:

- › **Secular Games**
The modern Games are secular, unlike the ancient Games which were dedicated to the gods.

*In antiquity, the **Panathinaiko Stadium** in Athens hosted the sports competitions known as the Panathenaea.*

The marathon
This race commemorates the exploit of a soldier who, in 490 BC, ran from Marathon to tell the people of Athens of their victory in the battle against the Persians, a distance of roughly 34.5 kilometres.



› **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**.

The Games are also evolving constantly:

› **Since 1896, athletes from all over the world**

The ancient Olympic Games were the preserve of free male Greek citizens, whereas the modern Games have always been open to **athletes from all over the world**. 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 modern Olympic Games was assured.

Today, the Summer Games welcome athletes from every country of the world, without exception.

› **Since 1900, women join in**

As in Ancient Greece, there were no female athletes at the first edition of the modern Olympic Games. In Athens in 1896, only men competed. At that time, female athletes faced many prejudices. People worried that they would lose their femininity, over-develop their muscles or become sterile. They therefore had to overcome this kind of attitude and gradually take their place at the Games. **Women** made their Olympic debut at the 1900 Games in Paris (France), in tennis and golf. Subsequently, over the course of the century, they gained access to more and more sports (e.g. swimming in 1912, athletics in 1928, volleyball in 1964, rowing in 1976, cycling in 1984 and football in 1996), but it was not until the 2012 Games in London, with the introduction of women's boxing, that women could compete in all the sports on the programme. Since the 2004 Games in Athens, more than 40 per cent of the athletes at the Games have been women.

› **Since 1924, Games for winter sports**

When Coubertin revived the Olympic Games, only summer sports were included. In the 1920s, however, snow and ice sports began to enjoy soaring popularity. A number of IOC members decided to react to this, and, in 1924, it was decided

1. OG Paris 1900. Tennis, singles Women – Hélène PREVOS
© 1900 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)



to hold an **International Winter Sports Week** in Chamonix (France): 258 athletes from 16 countries (mainly in Europe and North America) attended. This proved a great success and, two years later, this “Week” was officially recognised as the **first Olympic Winter Games**. The future of an Olympic event dedicated exclusively to snow and ice sports was assured. At the 2010 Games in Vancouver (Canada), a total of 2,566 athletes came together from 82 countries as diverse as Ghana, Brazil, New Zealand and Pakistan.

› **Since 1984, professional athletes at the Games**

The modern Olympic Games were long open only to amateur athletes, in line with Pierre de Coubertin’s wishes. The IOC abolished this rule in 1984 (for the Games in Los Angeles), and since then professional athletes have also been able to take part.

THE RITUALS OF THE OPENING AND CLOSING CEREMONIES

The Olympic Games begin and end with big celebrations, important ceremonies in which various rituals express the identity of the Games. Today, these rituals are part of the protocol of the Games. They include the following elements:

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

Closing 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 (brotherhood)
- › the extinguishing of the flame
- › the declaration of the closing of the Games by the IOC President

1. OG London 2012. Opening Ceremony.
© 2012 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / FURLONG, Christopher

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

Whether through sport, art or culture, everyone can take part in the great celebration of the Olympic Games, which offer an opportunity to open up to and better understand other people.

The protocol forms part of a much broader scenography and programme. The opening and closing ceremonies are an invitation to discover the culture of the country hosting the Games, through music, song, dance, etc.

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.

Nowadays, 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 city, region and even the country hosting the Games. Numerous artists, designers, architects, choreographers and musicians play an active part in the success of the Games, be it through the construction of stadiums and other competition venues, the Look of the Games (logos, pictograms and mascots) or the opening and closing ceremonies.



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 add or remove any **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

Examples:

Swimming at the Games is governed by the International Swimming Federation (FINA); Skating by the International Skating Union (ISU).

Discipline – An Olympic sport comprises one or several disciplines.

Examples:

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.

Examples:

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 in the Olympic programme, a sport must be **governed by an International Federation** which **complies with the Olympic Charter** and applies the **World Anti-Doping Code**.

If it is **widely practised** around the world and satisfies a number of criteria established by the IOC Session, a recognised sport may be added to the Olympic programme.

Since 2000, there has been little change to the number of sports on the programme of the Summer and Winter Games, but rather changes to events in order to limit the size of the Games.

SUMMER GAMES SPORTS

In Athens in 1896, **nine sports** were on the programme: athletics, cycling, fencing,

1. OG Beijing 2008. Athletics, pole vault – final. Elena ISINBAEVA (RUS) 1st.
© 2008 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / KISHIMOTO, Tsutomu



gymnastics, weightlifting, wrestling, swimming, tennis and shooting.

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

At the 2004 Games in Athens, 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. This represented a total of **301 events!**

The two **major sports** 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 Olympic 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**.

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 Olympic 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.

Some sports were missing from the official programme for several editions of the Games before being reintroduced. One example is skeleton, which featured at the 1928 and 1948 Games in St Moritz, before returning to the programme for the 2002 Games in Salt Lake City.

The **number of sports** at the Winter Games has remained relatively stable over the years. At the **Vancouver Games in 2010**, there were seven sports – biathlon, bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, luge, skating and skiing. However, the number

1. OG London 2012, Swimming – Michael PHELPS (USA), © 2012 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / FURLONG, Christopher

2. OG Vancouver 2010, Men ice-hockey – Game for the bronze medal, Finland (FIN) 3rd – Slovakia (SLO) © 2010 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / EVANS, Jason



of events has increased considerably: in 2010, there were 86 on the programme!

Of the **15 disciplines** in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, only Nordic combined is not yet open to women.

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

Skating has the longest Olympic history, having figured for the first time 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 launching 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.

DEMONSTRATION SPORTS

Thanks to their popularity, the Games have provided a showcase for a number of sports. These were known as **demonstration sports**, which featured as an addition to the Olympic programme until 1992, when this concept was abandoned.

- › At the 1956 Games in Melbourne, there was Australian football, one of the national sports;
- › At the 1988 Games in Seoul, it was bowling, a sport unknown in the host country, Korea.
- › At the 1992 Games in Barcelona, it was Basque pelota, roller hockey and taekwondo.

There have been many different sports at the **Winter Games**. Some have been featured as demonstration sports (e.g. skijoring, bandy, winter pentathlon and freestyle skiing).

For more information about the Olympic sports, go to the IOC website (www.olympic.org/sports).

1. OG Chamonix 1924,
Figure skating.
© 1924/ International Olympic
Committee (IOC)



1. OG Beijing 2008. Athletics,
100m Men – semi final, start.
© 2008 / International Olympic
Committee (IOC) / KISHIMOTO,
Tsutomu



ATHLETES AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

THE CHALLENGE OF THE GAMES

The prospect of being selected for the Olympic Games is the dream of 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.

Taking part in the Games is what matters to the majority of the competitors: having the honour of representing their country and marching behind their flag at the Opening Ceremony, mixing with elite athletes, and having the opportunity to give their best. That is what the spirit of the Olympic Games is all about! Pierre de Coubertin knew this already at the start of the 20th 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.”²

Almost a century later, at the Olympic Games in Sydney, the spirit was the same. Canadian athlete Perdita Felicien explains why taking part in the Games was so important 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.”³

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 to the Games.

Athletes with **more than one 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 three years have elapsed.

There is no **age limit** for competing in the Olympic Games, except for the one



1. OG London 2012, Opening Ceremony, Athletes Parade of the Costa Rica delegation. © 2012 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / EVANS, Jason

2. Olympic Review, July 1908, p. 110. (Extract from a speech given at the Olympic Games in London in 1908).

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

What is the Olympic Charter?

It is an official document containing all the rules to be followed and explaining the role and mission of each Olympic Movement stakeholder.



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

Upon 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 representatives from remote countries. All 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.

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 special skills and determination for a person to ascend to the top."*²

Today's Olympic Village is almost a **city**! It is usually located close to the competition venues and its construction is taken very seriously during preparations for the Games. In London in 2012, for example, the Village accommodated over 17,000 athletes and officials!

Inhabitants of the village benefit from many advantages. They can eat in the Village restaurant 24 hours a day, have their hair cut, go clubbing or attend evening concerts.

When the Games have finished, the Olympic Village becomes 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.

1. OG London 2012, Athletes while jogging in the Olympic Village.

© 2012 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / EVANS, Jason

2. Olympic Message, no. 33, July 1992.

Before the Los Angeles Games in 1932 they stayed in a variety of places:

Shipsshape 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!

All in the same village

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.

VICTORY

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

THE MEDAL'S ICONOGRAPHY

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 **Nike** from 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. Even the materials may vary: 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

Since the Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid (USA) in 1932, 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 placed athlete is to the winner's right and receives a silver medal. The

1. Athens 2004, winner's medal (gold)
© IOC





third placed athlete 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.

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

CELEBRITY OF THE 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 in the city hosting the Games.

However, a medal is not always a guarantee of celebrity. If it is won in a little known sport with low media coverage, a medal alone will not suffice to attract the interest of the sponsors or the general public.

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

1. OG Vancouver 2010,
Medal ceremony for cross-
country ski, 50km Men mass
start free.
© 2010 / International Olympic
Committee (IOC)

THE GAMES AND THEIR ERA

The Olympic Games are much more than just a series of sports competitions. Technological progress in the last century helped turn them into an international event eagerly awaited and followed by people all over the world. Everything that happens during the Games is reported and analysed by thousands of journalists and experts. So it is quite understandable that, at certain points in recent history, governments have exploited the Games for political or diplomatic ends (sometimes, sadly, to the detriment of sport).

DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY

In little over a century, the Olympic Games have become a global event. Two major technological revolutions have contributed to this: in transport and the media.

IMPROVED TRANSPORT – EASIER ACCESS TO THE GAMES

Depending on the city and country hosting the Games, 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 and afford 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; then, in 1968, it was Latin America, with the Games in Mexico City.

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

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA - GAMES ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE

Television made an enormous contribution to the growing popularity of the Olympic Games. The first tests were carried out in 1936 and 1948. And the first live television broadcast of the competitions was in 1956, at the Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo (Italy). **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

A long journey – 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 travel 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 10 weeks' leave they needed for the Olympic adventure!



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 (Japan), **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 and has reached a high level of perfection. **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.

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

POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC 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

- › 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.
- › 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.
- › 1968 in Mexico City (Mexico): American athletes Tommy Smith and John Carlos demonstrated against the **racism** in the USA. 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 disqualified.
- › 1972 in Munich (Germany): **Palestinian terrorists** took **Israeli athletes** hostage.

1. OG London 2012,
Photographers at the Women
Triathlon
© 2012 / International Olympic
Committee (IOC) / FURLONG,
Christopher

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.



- 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.
- › 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.
 - › 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.
 - › 1984 in Los Angeles (USA): **in response to the American boycott of 1980**, the Soviet Union refused to attend the Games. The official reasons given were the commercialisation of the Games and insufficient guarantees of athletes' safety.

THE DIPLOMATIC ROLE OF THE GAMES

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

- › 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. Timor Leste, a small country located next to Indonesia, which has been independent since 2002).
- › The end of the **apartheid regime** allowed **South Africa** to participate again in the Olympic Games at the 1992 Games in Barcelona (Spain). The victory lap, hand-in-hand, of Ethiopia's **Derartu Tulu**, who won the women's 10,000 metres, and her South African rival **Elana Meyer** symbolised this change and became one of the highlights of these Games.
- › 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.

1. OG Barcelona 1992 Athletics. 10000m Women – final, Derartu TULU (ETH) 1st and Elana MEYER (RSA) 2nd. © 1992 / IOPP / SASAHARA, Koji



THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE GAMES

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	World War I: The Olympiad was not celebrated		
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	World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated		
XIII	1944	World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated		
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	South 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
XXXI	2016	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	Latin America

1. OG Helsinki 1952
Men's 10km walk: medal
ceremony
© 1952 / International Olympic
Committee (IOC)



Winter Games

Number	Year	City	Country	Continent
1st	1924	Chamonix	France	Europe
2nd	1928	St Moritz	Switzerland	Europe
3rd	1932	Lake Placid	USA	North America
4th	1936	Garmisch-Partenkirchen	Germany	Europe
	1940	World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated		
	1944	World War II: The Olympiad was not celebrated		
5th	1948	St Moritz	Switzerland	Europe
6th	1952	Oslo	Norway	Europe
7th	1956	Cortina d'Ampezzo	Italy	Europe
8th	1960	Squaw Valley	USA	North America
9th	1964	Innsbruck	Austria	Europe
10th	1968	Grenoble	France	Europe
11th	1972	Sapporo	Japan	Asia
12th	1976	Innsbruck	Austria	Europe
13th	1980	Lake Placid	USA	North America
14th	1984	Sarajevo	Yugoslavia	Europe
15th	1988	Calgary	Canada	North America
16th	1992	Albertville	France	Europe
17th	1994	Lillehammer	Norway	Europe
18th	1998	Nagano	Japan	Asia
19th	2002	Salt Lake City	USA	North America
20th	2006	Turin	Italy	Europe
21th	2010	Vancouver	Canada	North America
22th	2014	Sotchi	Russia	Europe
23th	2018	PyeongChang	South Korea	Asia

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

1. OG Sydney 2000, Closing Ceremony – Gathering of athletes in the stadium. © 2000 / Kishimoto / IOC / NAGAYA, Yo

ACTIVITIES

SCHOOLS – SUBJECT AREA: HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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 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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Editor

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Authors

*The Olympic Museum
Educational and Cultural
Services*

English translation

IOC Language Services

Graphic design

*Oxyde, Lausanne
(www.oxyde.ch)*



OLYMPIC GAMES POSTERS

OLYMPIC GAMES POSTERS



INTRODUCTION

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Poster-making techniques

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READING AN OLYMPIC POSTER

Two examples:
Olympic Winter Games official poster – St. Moritz 1948
Olympic Summer Games official poster – Rome 1960
Context – Image – Designers
– Composition and Style –
Message

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This is a PDF interactive file. The headings of each page contain hyperlinks, which allow to move from chapter to chapter.



Click on this icon to download the image.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A POSTER?

The **poster** is a form of visual communication, specific to public places, in which words, pictures and/or symbols are used together to convey a message.

The roots of the modern poster lie in Antiquity, where for instance in ancient Greece, mobile wooden panels called axons were used to inform the population of decisions made by the authorities. Citizens of ancient Rome consulted the public album which consisted of a whitewashed wall on which official decisions were written.

The invention of printing techniques in the mid 15th century, together with rising in literacy levels, meant that information of general concern became more and more common in public places. Advances in printing techniques in the 18th century also played a fundamental role in the further development of poster art. Since the mid 19th century, the poster has become a main advertising medium and a form of expression for many artists. The modern poster is born!

In the past, posters often had a majority of text in order to convey the chosen message. Today's posters, on the contrary, communicate with a strict minimum of text, relying heavily on signs and symbols, logos and images. The choice of colour is another important factor in modern poster art. Bold or contrasting colours are often used in order to attract the eye and make people take notice.

The role of a poster is to inform and promote. Whether the poster is used in the domain of politics, culture, sport, tourism or advertising, **instant recognition and immediate comprehension** remain the principal factors in the choice of graphic design.

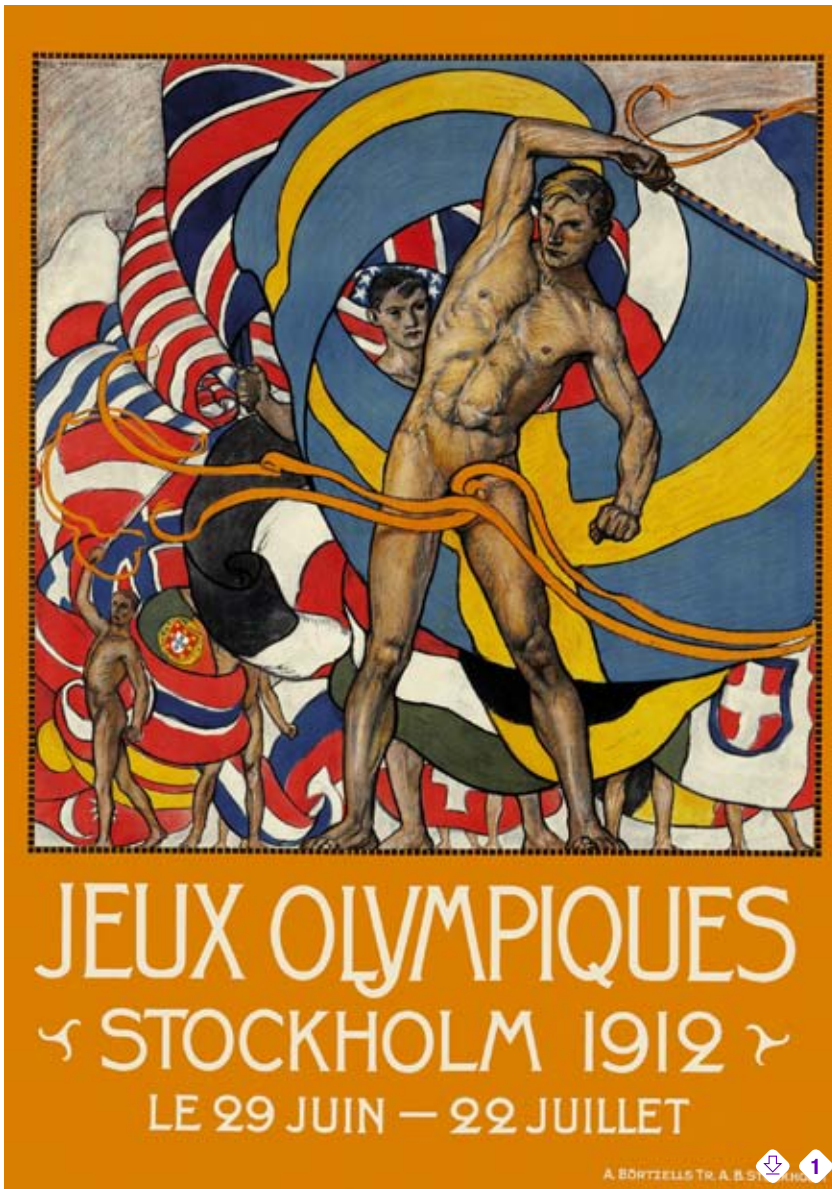
POSTER-MAKING TECHNIQUES

Posters, by definition, rely on being able to create multiple productions. This would be impossible without printing technology.

There are numerous different printing methods. In general, early official posters were **lithographs** and more recent official posters are **offset lithographs**.

The process involves copying the original image onto another surface (plate or cylinder), applying ink and then running it through a printing press, which transfers it to a sheet of paper.

The introduction of the computer in the creation process for original designs is the most recent evolution in poster art. Although such new methods mean that traces of the artistic medium are more difficult to find than in the Olympic posters of the past, new technology in the hands of today's designers adds endless creative possibilities designers of the past could only have dreamed of.

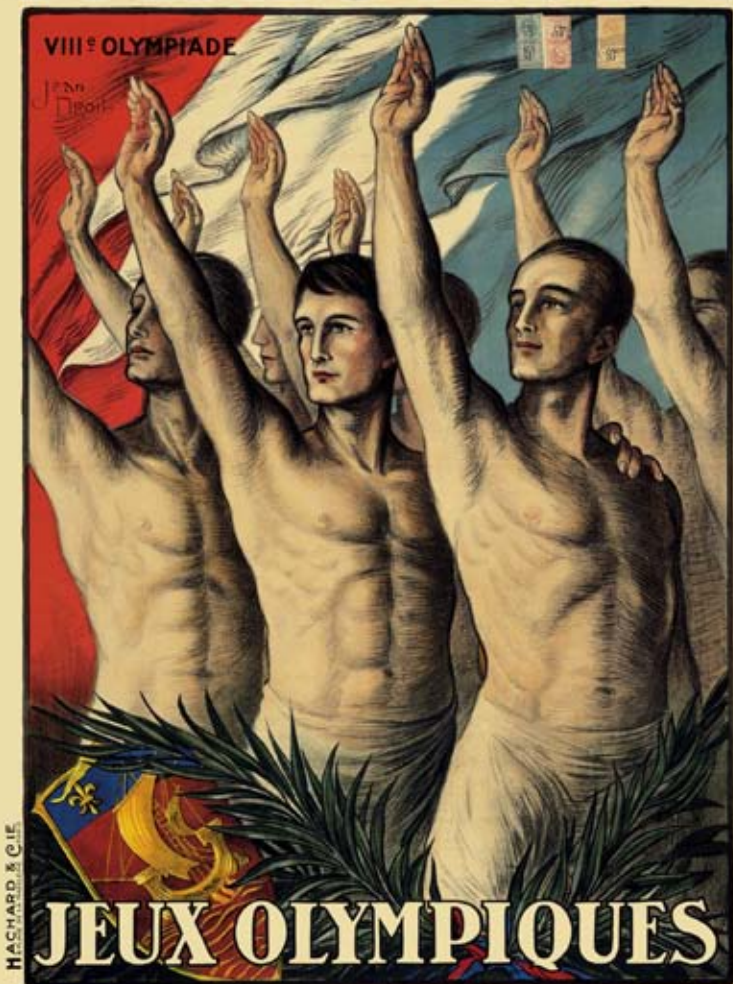


1. © IOC

Lithography is a technique of reproducing images, also known as the "flat printing technique". It was invented in 1798 by Aloys Senefelder. The term, derived from the Greek word lithos meaning stone, describes the art of reproducing an image executed directly on a stone plate.

Offset lithography is a printing method in which the image is printed from a stone or metal plate onto a cylinder coated with rubber. The cylinder is then used to transfer the image, non-reversed, to the paper.

PARIS 1924



ANNOUNCING THE GAMES

WHAT IS AN OLYMPIC POSTER?

An Olympic poster communicates information about the Olympic Games.

Each edition of the Games results in the creation of a substantial number of posters for advertising or communication purposes. Posters may feature the Olympic torch, mascots or pictograms, specific Olympic sports, competition sites, the Olympic village, cultural festivals or may seek to recruit volunteer helpers.

WHAT IS AN OFFICIAL OLYMPIC POSTER?

The official Olympic poster promotes a specific edition of the Olympic Games.

Usually selected by the Organising Committee, it is part of a specific “look and feel” of the Games. Over time, it becomes the **image or symbol of that edition of the Games**.

THE FIRST OLYMPIC POSTERS

The first modern Games were held in Athens (Greece) in 1896. No official Olympic poster was created to promote the specific edition of the Games. It was not until the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm (Sweden) that an official poster was planned for and executed.

Since 1912, host cities have been in charge of organising the promotion and advertising of each edition of the Games. In 1924, the first Olympic Winter Games were held; from then on, official Olympic posters have been produced for both Summer and Winter Games.

THE PROCESS OF SELECTION

In order to create the official Olympic poster, the **Organising Committee** of each edition of the Games generally sets up a poster contest. This contest may be open to all, to artists from the host country, or to specific artists pre-selected by the OCOG.

The poster that wins first prize becomes the official poster of the Games and offers the artist or designer the opportunity to have his work circulated throughout the entire world.

Occasionally, a poster design has managed to impose itself completely on its own.

For example, in 1920, the artwork on the official poster came from the cover of a book printed in 1914, called “*Will we have the VIIth Olympiad in Anvers in 1920?*”. This image was already strongly identified with the host city of the Games.

For the 1952 Helsinki Games (Finland), the poster design that had been chosen for the cancelled Games of 1940 was revived.

1. © IOC

When a host city is awarded the Olympic Games, it establishes an Organising Committee (OCOG), in charge of putting the necessary structures in place. [See sheets “The Olympic Movement”].



Artists submitting designs for official Olympic posters are often given strict guidelines for content. The designer does not necessarily have complete artistic freedom but must often adapt to a specific image of the Games. This does not mean that the end result is not of artistic merit! In fact, communicating a specific desired message to the viewer is often the role of a graphic designer.

SIGNIFICANT VISUAL ELEMENTS

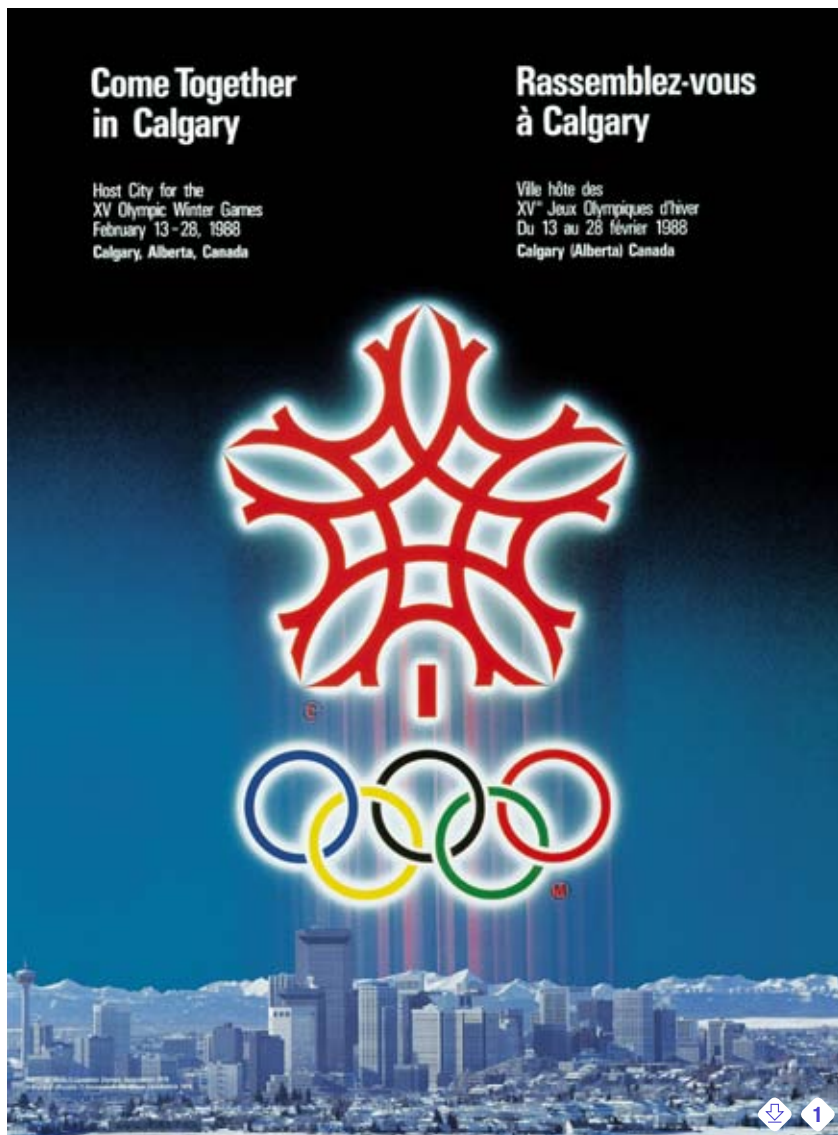
These posters, which span a century of Olympic history, draw on a specific vocabulary of symbols which can be divided into two main groups. The first includes figurative elements of significance for the host country such as public monuments, statues, flags, landscapes or cityscapes. The second puts more of an accent on graphic elements (e.g. poster of Mexico City 1968) or on the emblem of the Games (a design featuring the Olympic rings together with other distinctive elements). The most recent posters rely heavily on this form of communication and any text tends to be limited to the name of the host city and the year of the Games.

The Olympic rings themselves are usually what makes official posters immediately identifiable. Indeed, since 1928, the year they first appeared, the rings have been the overall unifying element on official posters.

ROLE IN THE COMMUNICATION OF THE GAMES

The official Olympic posters show the evolution not only of the Games themselves but also of design and poster art from 1896 to today. They are an Olympic tradition, and serve to remind us of each edition of the Games. Windows on the past, they let the Games of yesterday live and breathe.

1. © IOC



THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE OLYMPIC POSTER

In order to bring together athletes and spectators from around the world, Games organisers did not always have the highly developed modes of communication of today. For instance, radio was not used until the 1928 Games in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and television not before the 1936 Games in Berlin (Germany); this meant the promotion of the Games was essentially dependent on print. **The poster was therefore an important method of announcing the Games.**

Making the Games a truly international event was a real challenge for the organisers of the first Olympiads. The official poster of 1912 was produced in 16 languages, which shows the importance for Games organisers of being understood by a large number of people. Although there was little time for the distribution of the poster abroad, it was sent to 30 different countries and posted in locations as varied as hotels, restaurants, stores, travel agencies, transport companies, sporting clubs and even in doctor's rooms. In the following years, Games organisers called on consulates and embassies of the host country as well as citizens living abroad in order to ensure the distribution of the poster.

The Organising Committee paid close attention to the public's reception of the poster. When the Stockholm official poster was issued, it was often criticised as being "too daring", even though the nudity of the athletes made reference to the Games of Antiquity. It was not distributed in certain countries, even though the artist added ribbons in order to mask a certain amount of the nudity. Further remarks were made concerning the order of the 21 national flags presented in the poster. Actually, the artist had based the order of the flags on a colour scheme and not on politics. The Organising Committee defended their choice and left the poster as it was, as the artistic quality of the work was not in question.

With time, other forms of media, particularly television, have come to relate the information once communicated mainly by posters. Today, we no longer need to put the exact dates of the Games on the official poster, nor to geographically situate the host city, as on the poster for the 1932 Lake Placid Games. The promotion of the Games, including related practical information, is now effectively communicated via television, radio and internet. However, the official poster remains an Olympic tradition.

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READING AN OLYMPIC POSTER

OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES OFFICIAL POSTER - ST MORITZ 1948

ARTISTS	Fritz Hellinger (1923 – 1977), graphic art Keerl, photography
DIMENSIONS	100 x 64 cm
PRINT METHOD	Lithography
EDITION	15,000 copies, in several languages

THE CONTEXT

It is important to situate the 1948 St. Moritz official poster in its social and political context. The 1940 Olympic Winter Games were to be held in Sapporo (Japan) but their candidature was withdrawn in 1938 due to the war with China. The candidature for the Games first shifted to St. Moritz and then to Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Germany). However, with the advent of the Second World War, cancellation of the Olympics was inevitable. No Olympic Games were organised in 1940 or in 1944. Finally, after the war in 1948, Switzerland, as a neutral country, offered favourable conditions for hosting this international sporting event.

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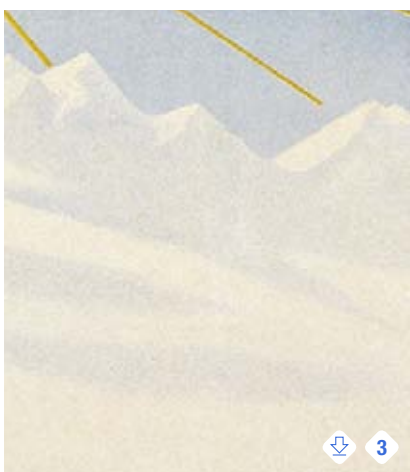
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READING THE IMAGE

The Alpine Sun¹ The alpine sun is of primary importance in this poster, filling the sky with its radiating sunbeams and taking up a large portion of the image. This seems a very appropriate choice, as St. Moritz is known for its “champagne climate”, boasting 322 days of glorious sunshine per year.

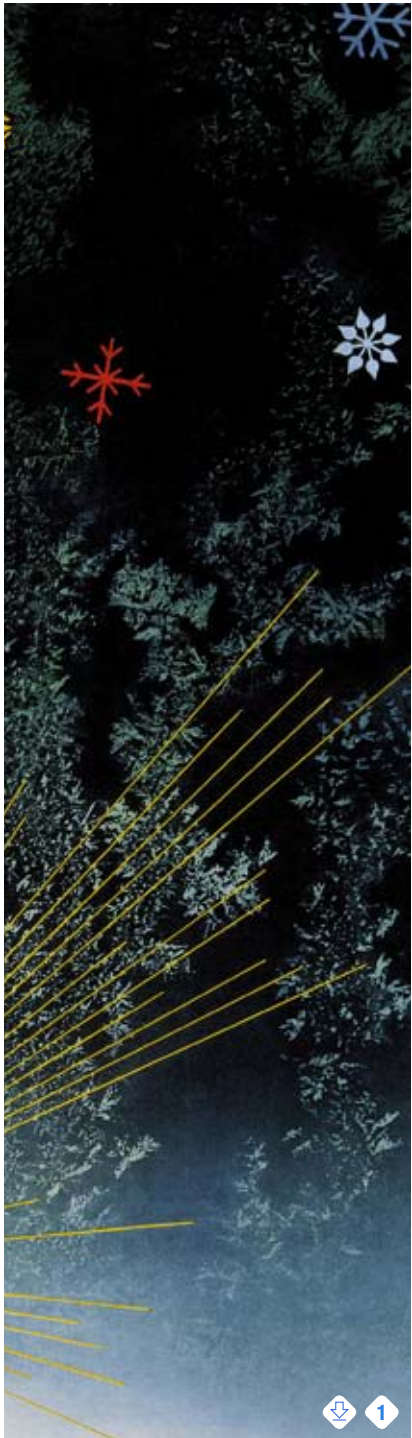
The image of the sun has been associated with St. Moritz for a very long time. A sun designed in 1930 by graphic artist Walter Herdeg became the registered trademark of St. Moritz in 1937. Herdeg's trademark sun, although not represented in the official poster, is part of the 1948 St. Moritz Olympic emblem and is found on other Games posters, athletes' bibs and participant badges.

The Couple² The poster shows a man and a woman on skis, viewed from behind. They appear particularly small in relation to the dominant motif of the sun. Surprisingly for an Olympic poster, they don't seem particularly athletic. They look more like fashionable and relaxed tourists than athletes participating in an international sporting competition.

The couple's brightly-coloured ski-clothes are representative of 1930s fashion. The man is shown tanned, an image associated at this time with good health, leisure and travel, as well as a certain quality of life. When tanning came into fashion in the 20's, the negative effects of sun-exposure were still unknown!

The Mountains and Snow³ The snow-covered mountains in this image obviously relate to the theme of winter and skiing. St. Moritz is one of the world's most famous ski resorts, and cannot be disassociated from this winter sport. The sun-flooded, alpine view is clearly accented. The St. Moritz ski area, with the Piz Nair, boasts a top elevation of 3,057 metres. The width of ski slope depicted in the poster is worthy of note, as is the fact that the couple seems to be alone, “on top of the world”, as the St. Moritz slogan states.

The Snowflakes⁴ Ten very large snowflakes (almost as large as the sun) fill the sky and appear as the culminating point at the end of the sun's rays. The snowflakes, thickly outlined in black, appear as cut-outs. It is interesting to note the bold colours chosen: red, blue, orange and yellow, which are far from realistic! Certain forms clearly represent snowflakes while other shapes seem to resemble flowers. After 1948, the snowflake is often used as a symbol in official Winter Olympic posters.



The Sky¹ The sky takes up the majority of the image. Its colour changes from light blue where it touches the immaculate white mountaintops, to dark bluish-green and then to greenish-black, the largest part.

The effect created in the sky can be seen as similar to frost on a window-pane, accentuating the winter aspect. The choice of the colour green may however suggest an area such as a forest or a pasture.

The Olympic Rings² The symbol of the Olympic rings represents the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes from all nations at the Olympic Games. In the 1948 St. Moritz official poster, the Olympic rings are situated just above the text, where their colours stand out against the bright white snow of the background.

The first time the Olympic rings are used in an official Olympic poster is for the 1928 St. Moritz Games.

The Swiss Shield³ The Swiss Shield is seen in the top right-hand corner, perhaps as a counterbalance to the Olympic rings. The message is clear: the nations of the world are coming to Switzerland for the Olympic Games.

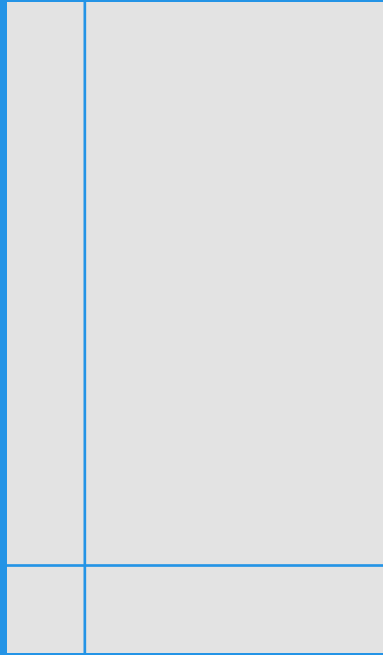
The Text⁴ The text reads “Olympic Winter Games 1948 St. Moritz Switzerland”, giving the title of the event, the year and the place where the Games are to be held. A second poster was made which also gives the exact dates of the event (30.01.1948 – 08.02.1948).

In order to ensure global communication, the text was translated into several languages.

THE DESIGNERS

This poster appears to be a cooperative work between **Fritz Hellinger**, a Swiss poster artist from Basel, and a photographer named Keerl. Both names are found inscribed in the top left-hand corner of the poster. As no clear explanation has been left behind in the archives, it is unclear whether Hellinger based his artwork on a photograph taken by Keerl or whether a collage of photography, drawing and cut-out was used.

Hellinger studied at the Basel Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Design) and worked as a freelance graphic artist for several Swiss clients such as Ricola sweets and the Basel Zoo.



COMPOSITION AND STYLE

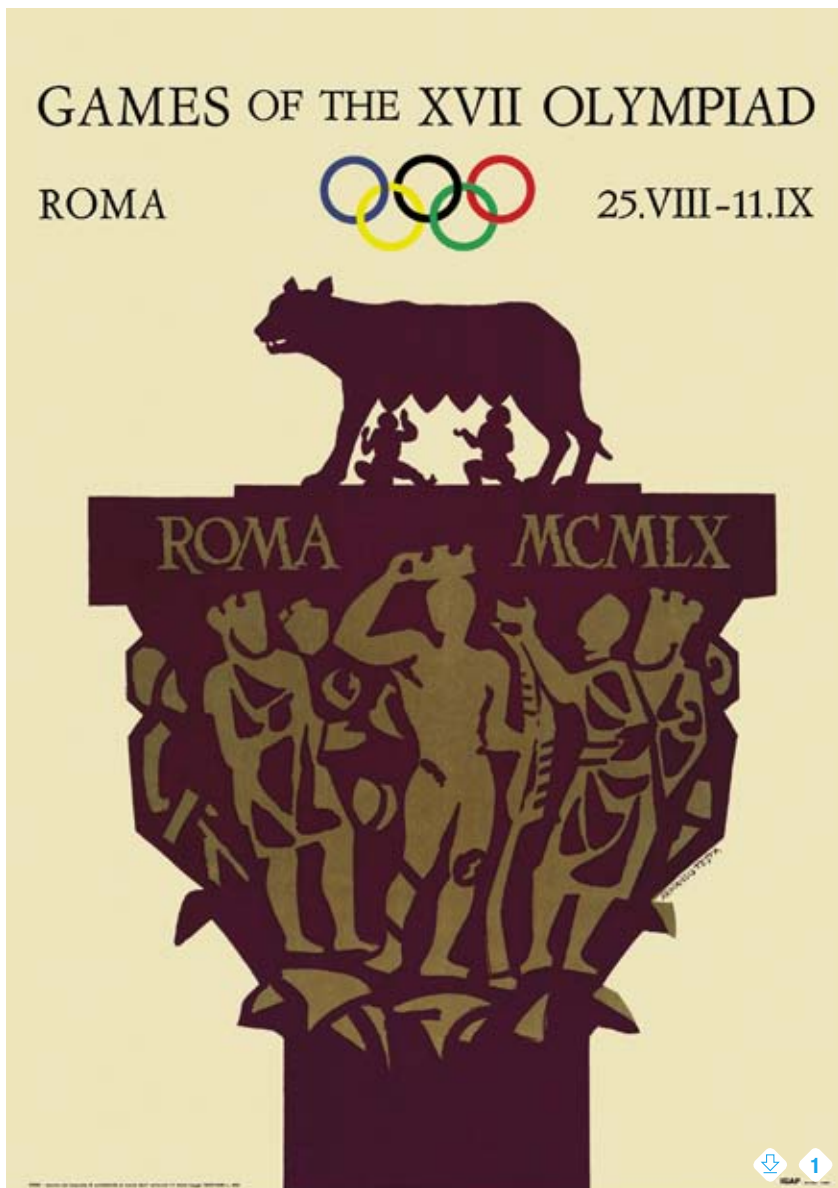
The design of the 1948 St. Moritz official poster is notably asymmetrical. The main element of the composition, the sun, is situated in the left third, while the two remaining thirds are filled with the sky. This “imbalance” is compensated for by the extension of the sun’s rays and the counterweight of the vast sky.

The style draws on the Swiss travel poster, presenting the alpine landscape. It is also characteristic of the two-dimensional style of the “Swiss school” in which all traces of perspective are suppressed.

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE?

- › The message of this poster is dual: to inform the public of the coming Olympic Winter Games and to promote the ski resort of St. Moritz. The sunshine and snow-covered mountains depicted in the poster undoubtedly aim to encourage tourism in this post-War period.
- › The couple appears “on top of the world”, highlighting the exclusiveness of the ski station, while the rays of sunshine they bathe in emphasize St. Moritz’s famous climate. The image very clearly encourages winter tourism, and perhaps less obviously, tourism in summer (as seen in the green tint of the sky and the snowflake “flowers”). Overall, the image presented is clearly one of leisure sports and pleasure, promoting St. Moritz as a Swiss tourism “mecca”.

Supporting this theory, aside from the clear tourism poster style, is the fact that this poster was issued by the Swiss National Tourist Office (SNTO) in both an Olympic and non-Olympic form. A travel poster, using the exact same design, was also issued in 1948 with the text “*Vacances en Suisse*” (Holidays in Switzerland). This was not by chance, as the President of the Commission for Propaganda and Advertising for the St. Moritz Organizing Committee was also Director of the SNTO.



READING AN OLYMPIC POSTER

OLYMPIC SUMMER GAMES OFFICIAL POSTER - ROME 1960

ARTIST	Armando Testa (1917 - 1992)
DIMENSIONS	99.5 x 70 cm
PRINT METHOD	Lithography
EDITION	290,000 copies in 11 languages

THE CONTEXT

When Rome was designated to host the 1960 Olympic Games, a clear decision was made to bring the city's rich history to the forefront through this international sporting event. As well as the new sport infrastructures which were built, a number of ancient sites were restored and used to hold Olympic competitions: the wrestling events were held in Basilica of Maxentius, gymnastics in the Baths of Caracalla and the Arch of Constantine served as the finish line of the marathon.

1. © IOC



READING THE IMAGE

The poster shows the upper part of a column, known as a capital, decorated with human figures. At the top a she-wolf can be seen, feeding two infants. Text, dates and the Olympic rings complete the picture.

The Wolf feeding Romulus and Remus¹ The she-wolf and twins represent the popular myth of the founding of Rome.

Legend has it that the twin boys were the offspring of the Roman god of war, Mars, and the nephews of the King of Alba Longa. The king, fearing a challenge for the crown, set the twins afloat in a basket on the Tiber River, which later floated ashore and was found by a female wolf.

Nursed by the she-wolf, the twins were later adopted by a shepherd and named Romulus and Remus. According to tradition, the adult Romulus and Remus founded the city of Roma in 753 B.C., on the site where they were discovered by the she-wolf. Later, in a quarrel for leadership, Romulus killed Remus and became sole ruler of Rome. The image of the she-wolf and the twins is based on the sculpture of the Lupa Capitolina (Capitoline Wolf), which dates from the VIth century BC. The original sculpture had been damaged during Antiquity and was restored during the Renaissance. The twins we see today date from this period.

The sculpture has become a well-known symbol of the city of Rome.

The Belvedere Capital² (upper element of the column)

The capital featured on the poster is a reference to the **Belvedere capital**. This decorative architectural element was originally found in the Baths of Caracalla, built in the early third century AD. The Baths, richly decorated with artwork, housed cold, warm and hot water pools, plunge baths, a space for the practice of gymnastics, a large enclosed area for running and games, a library and gardens.

The Belvedere capital was later removed from the site of the ancient Baths of Caracalla to decorate the palaces of the Vatican.

The presence of the Belvedere capital on this Olympic poster, refers to the ancient Baths and accentuates Roman heritage of physical movement. For this reason, the Organizing Committee of the Rome 1960 Games decided to hold the gymnastics competition in this early third century "sports complex".

On the Capital: the Athlete and the Crown³

The scene represented is of an athlete crowning himself with his right hand while holding a palm leaf of victory in his left. While he himself is nude, those surrounding him are toga-clad. Several other athletes are also wearing crowns, a symbol of victory.

The Belvedere capital can now be seen at the Vatican Museum in Rome.



The Text¹ The text on the poster uses Roman numerals rather than Arabic numbers, which reinforces the “antique” identity of these Games. It reads “Games of the XVII Olympiad, Roma, 25.VIII – 11.IX”; and, on the capital, “Roma MCMLX”. The information provided is complete: the name of the event, the edition of the Games, the Olympic symbol, the specific dates, the year and the location. As with other posters in the past, as a result of the amount of text used and for communication purposes, the poster was translated into 11 languages. The Olympic rings are placed between the name of the city and the dates of the Games, communicating the nature of the event and its international status.

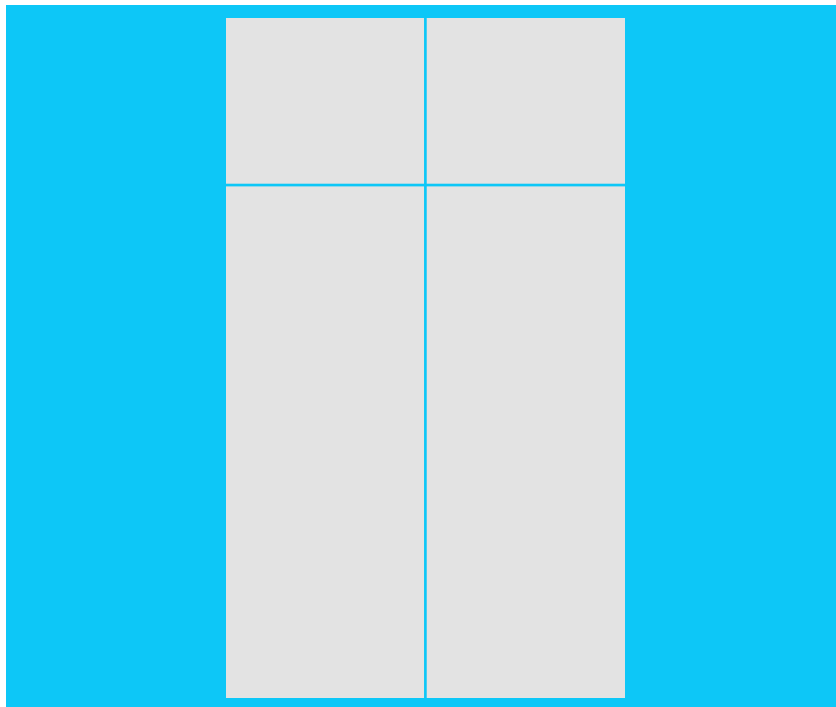
THE DESIGNER

Armando Testa is a key figure in modern Italian graphic design, and more specifically in advertising. Originally a painter, he became a commercial artist with a vision which led to the creation of the advertising agency Studio Testa in 1956. In his work for well-known clients (Pirelli tyres, Lavazza coffee, the airline Alitalia, etc.) he displays an unconventional creativity as well as a sense of humour. “Armando Testa” is now an international Italian advertising agency working in the field of communication (media, television and internet), based on the original vision of its founder.

COMPOSITION AND STYLE

Three years before the Games, a poster contest was set up for Italian designers with clearly defined content stipulations: the idea of Olympic sport in Rome, the Olympic rings, and the text “Games of the XVII Olympiad – Rome – MCMLX”. Although 249 designs were submitted, the Jury did not find any to be to their liking. No prize was awarded, but rather a second competition was organised in which 12 of the most qualified Italian poster artists were invited to participate.

Armando Testa was awarded the prize for best design in this contest. He was nonetheless asked to make several specific modifications while keeping the same overall artistic inspiration and feel. Testa presented a second project, which was still found to be lacking. The elements to be included in the poster were indicated even more specifically: a pillar with capital and the Capitoline Wolf, the Olympic rings, and the previously mentioned text. Testa’s final project was accepted and went on to become the official poster. The design of the 1960 Rome official poster is symmetrical, organised around a central axis, which gives an impression of harmony. The colours of the Capital and the column are subdued, yet stand out from the neutral white background. The artist has found a balance between the classical elements imposed and his personal style and vision. He proposes a modern version of the Capital and Wolf, simplifying the design by using outlines. The overall design remains simple and eye-catching.



WHAT IS THE MESSAGE?

The Capitoline Wolf, the Belvedere capital, the Baths of Caracalla and, of course, the Olympic Games: the poster brings together the past and the present, clearly establishing the link between ancient and modern Rome, and between sport and culture.

ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL CURRICULUM AREAS: ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Summer Olympic Posters: Where Art and Sport meet (in collaboration with Bridgeman Education)

The Olympic Museum in Lausanne and The Bridgeman Education in London have collaborated to develop an entertaining educational activity on the topic of the “Olympic Summer Games” posters.

With this activity, students discover twenty-six posters (between 1896 and 2008) through different approaches including: traditions and styles, visual and historical references and symbols. They are given tips to create their own poster for the forthcoming Olympic Games.

This journey through the history of the Olympic Games and their posters is aimed at art teachers, art historians, teachers interested in combining art and sport as well as various subjects such as social, political and cultural history. Target public: students aged 10 to 14 years.

Olympic Posters: <http://www.bridgemaneducation.com/> - “Resources”
(Please note that you will need to register on your first visit)

Imagine the Olympic Games were to be hosted by your hometown (or a near-by city). Design an Olympic Games poster. What elements would you find important to include and why?

Observe in detail an official Olympic Games poster. Try to analyse the choice of representation, the colours chosen, as well as any other significant elements. Situate the poster in its social and political context.

Compare two posters and try to decipher which is the more modern of the two. How does each poster relate to the period in which it was produced? How do its “look and feel” help identify its origins?

Choose another major sporting or cultural event and analyse the poster created for it.

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Editor

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Authors

The Olympic Museum
Educational and Cultural Services

English translation

IOC Language Services

Graphic design

Oxyde, Lausanne
(www.oxyde.ch)