

Olympic Games ¹

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The Olympic Games are an international sports festival that began in ancient Greece. The original Greek games were staged² every fourth year³ for several hundred years, until they were abolished in the early Christian era. The revival of the Olympic Games took place in 1896, and since then⁴ they have been staged every fourth year, except during World War I and World War II (1916, 1940, 1944).

Perhaps the basic⁵ difference between the ancient and modern Olympics is that the former⁶ was the ancient Greeks' way of saluting⁷ their gods, whereas⁸ the modern Games are a manner of saluting the athletic talents of citizens of all nations. The original Olympics featured⁹ competition in music, oratory, and theater¹⁰ performances as well¹¹. The modern Games have a more expansive¹² athletic agenda, and for 2 ½ weeks they are supposed to replace the rancor of international conflict with friendly competition. In recent times, however, that lofty¹³ ideal has not always been attained¹⁴.

The Ancient Olympics

The earliest¹⁵ reliable¹⁶ date that recorded history gives for the first Olympics is 776 B.C., although virtually all historians presume that the Games began well before then.

It is certain that during the midsummer¹⁷ of 776 B.C. a festival was held at Olympia on the highly civilized eastern coast of the Peloponnesian peninsula. That festival remained a regularly scheduled¹⁸ event, taking place during the pre-Christian golden age of Greece. As a testimony to the religious nature of the Games (which were held in honor of Zeus, the most important god in the ancient Greek pantheon), all wars would cease during the contests. According to the earliest records, only one athletic event was held in the ancient Olympics — a footrace¹⁹ of about 183 m (200 yd²⁰), or the length²¹ of the stadium. A cook²², Coroibus of Elis, was the first recorded winner. The first few Olympics had only local appeal²³ and were limited to one race on one day; only men were allowed to²⁴ compete or attend²⁵. A second race — twice²⁶ the length of the stadium — was added in the 14th Olympics, and a still longer race was added to the next competition, 4 years later.

When the powerful, warlike²⁷ Spartans began to compete, they influenced the agenda. The 18th Olympiad included wrestling²⁸ and a pentathlon consisting of running, jumping, spear throwing²⁹ (the javelin), discus throwing, and wrestling. Boxing was added at the 23d Olympiad, and the Games continued to expand, with the addition of chariot racing³⁰ and other sports. In the 37th Olympiad (632 B.C.) the format³¹ was extended to 5 days of competition.

[...] In A.D. 394 the Games were officially ended by the Roman emperor Theodosius I, who felt that they had pagan connotations.

The Modern Olympics

The revival of the Olympic Games in 1896, unlike³² the original Games, has a clear, concise history. Pierre de Coubertin (1863 – 1937), a young French nobleman, felt that he could institute an educational program in France that approximated³³ the ancient Greek notion of a balanced development of mind and body. The Greeks themselves had tried to revive the Olympics by holding local athletic games in Athens during the 1800s, but without lasting success. It was Baron de Coubertin's determination and organizational genius, however, that gave impetus to the modern Olympic movement. In 1892 he addressed³⁴ a meeting of the Union des Sports Athlétiques in Paris. Despite meager³⁵ response he persisted, and an international sports congress eventually³⁶ convened³⁷ on June 16, 1894. With delegates from Belgium, England, France, Greece, Italy, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and the United States in attendance³⁸, he advocated³⁹ the revival of the Olympic Games. He found ready and unanimous support from the nine countries. De Coubertin had initially planned to hold the Olympic Games in France, but the representatives convinced him that Greece was the appropriate country to host the first modern Olympics. The council did agree that the Olympics would move⁴⁰ every 4 years to other great cities of the world.

Thirteen countries competed at the Athens Games in 1896. [...] The Games were a success, and a second Olympiad, to be held in France, was scheduled. Olympic Games were held in 1900 and 1904, and by 1908 the number of competitors more than quadrupled the number at Athens — from 311 to 2,082.

Beginning in 1924 a Winter Olympics was included — to be held at a separate cold-weather sports site in the same year as the Summer Games — the first held at Chamonix, France. In 1980 about 1,600 athletes from 38 nations competed at Lake Placid, N.Y., in a program that included Alpine and Nordic skiing, biathlon, ice hockey, figure skating⁴¹ and speed skating, bobsled⁴², and luge⁴³.

But the Summer Games [...] are still the focal point of the modern Olympics. Among the standard events are basketball, boxing, canoeing and kayaking, cycling, equestrian arts, fencing, field hockey, gymnastics, modern pentathlon, rowing, shooting, soccer, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball, water polo, weight lifting, wrestling (freestyle and Greco-Roman), and yachting. New sports are added to the roster⁴⁴ at every Olympic Games; among the more prominent are baseball, martial arts, and most recently triathlon, which was first contested⁴⁵ at the 2000 Games. The Games are governed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), whose headquarters⁴⁶ is in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The Summer and Winter Games were traditionally held in the same year, but because of the increasing size of both Olympics, the Winter Games were shifted⁴⁷ to a different schedule after 1992. [...] In 2010 they will be in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. [...]

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- ¹ **Olympic Games:** *also called Olympics. Olympiad*, oltre a significare Giochi Olimpici, Olimpiadi, indica anche l'intervallo di quattro anni che intercorre tra un'Olimpiade e l'altra.
- ² **Staged** [*to stage, staged, staging, stages*]: *to plan, organize, and carry out (an event)*: organizzare. Il termine deriva dal sostantivo *stage*=palcoscenico. *The stage* è il teatro: *to go on the stage*: darsi al teatro; *to write for the stage*: scrivere per il teatro.
- ³ **Every fourth year:** ogni quattro anni. Si noti in inglese l'uso del numero ordinale *fourth*.
- ⁴ **Since then:** da allora.
- ⁵ **Basic:** *fundamental, main*.
- ⁶ **Former:** qui è un pronome: *the first of two*: il primo (qui: le prime). *The former* (il primo) e *the latter* (il secondo) si riferiscono a persona o cosa precedentemente nominata: *Nadal and Federer are two great tennis players: the former is Spanish and the latter is Swiss*. Quando è aggettivo significa anteriore, precedente, ma indica anche *a past state or condition, as in former Soviet Union or FYROM (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia)*.
- ⁷ **Saluting** [*to salute, saluted, saluting, salutes*]: *to honor formally and ceremoniously*. Salutare nel senso meno formale si traduce con *to greet*.
- ⁸ **Whereas:** *while in contrast, while on the other hand*.
- ⁹ **Featured** [*to feature, featured, featuring, features*]: qui: presentare. Questo è un verbo di non facile traduzione che racchiude in sé una serie di significati tra cui: dare risalto, reclamizzare, caratterizzare; nel linguaggio cinematografico indica il prendere parte ad un film, infatti nei titoli si trova: *featuring...* seguito dai nomi degli interpreti. Attenzione: presentare una persona a qualcuno si dice invece: *to introduce someone to someone else*.
- ¹⁰ **Theater:** *BE theatre*.
- ¹¹ **As well:** in addition, besides, also. È importante ricordare che in questa accezione, va sempre in fondo alla frase. Può significare anche: *with a similar result, to the same effect*. In questo caso, la posizione cambia: *since he can't buy a new car, he might as well keep its own; they might as well walk as drive in this traffic*.
- ¹² **Expansive:** qui: *having considerable extent, broad*: esteso, ampio. Da non confondere con *expensive: high-priced*
- ¹³ **Lofty:** qui: *of high moral or intellectual value, elevated in nature or style*: nobile.
- ¹⁴ **Attained** [*to attain, attained, attaining, attains*]: *to gain with effort, to achieve*.
- ¹⁵ **Earliest:** *preceding all others in time, first, initial*. Dall'aggettivo *early*, comparativo *earlier*, superlativo *earliest*.

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- ¹⁶ **Reliable:** *trustworthy, trusty.*
- ¹⁷ **Midsummer:** *the middle of the summer.* Come nella nota commedia di William Shakespeare *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*
- ¹⁸ **Scheduled** [*to schedule, scheduled, schedules, scheduling*]: *to plan or appoint for a certain time or date:* mettere in programma, fissare, programmare. Attenzione alla doppia pronuncia.
- ¹⁹ **Footrace:** *a race run by contestants on foot.*
- ²⁰ **Yd:** abbreviazione di *yard:* iarda, pari a 3 piedi o 36 pollici (0,9144 metri).
- ²¹ **Lenght:** *distance from end to end.*
- ²² **Cook:** *somebody who prepares and cooks food, usually as a job or in a particular way:* cuoco, chef. Il verbo *to cook* significa cucinare, *cooker* è il fornello (*gas cooker, electric cooker*).
- ²³ **Appeal:** *qui: attractiveness that interests or pleases or stimulates:* fascino. In senso giuridico, questo termine significa appello: *to lodge an appeal:* interporre appello.
- ²⁴ **Were allowed to** [*to be allowed to*]: fu loro permesso, furono autorizzati a.
- ²⁵ **To attend** [*attended, attends, attending*]: *to be present at.* Quando è intransitivo significa anche: *to deal with something or to provide help to somebody:we always have many things to attend to when we come back from a long trip.*
- ²⁶ **Twice:** *in doubled degree or amount.* *Once:* una volta, *thrice:* tre volte. Da quattro in poi: *the fourth time, the fifth time, etc.* Attenzione: *once* può avere anche il significato di *formerly*, cioè un tempo, una volta. Le favole in inglese cominciano con: *once upon a time there was a queen:* c'era una volta una regina.
- ²⁷ **Warlike:** bellicoso, da *war:* guerra.
- ²⁸ **Wrestling:** *sport with two (unarmed) contestants fighting:* lotta. *It is one of the oldest sports in the world, with a large number of variants. It was included in the Olympic Games in 704 B.C* (per un elenco completo degli sport olimpici, si veda la scheda).
- ²⁹ **Spear throwing:** lancio del giavellotto.
- ³⁰ **Chariot racing:** corsa dei carri.
- ³¹ **Format:** *a plan for the organization and arrangement of a specified production:* qui: la formula.
- ³² **Unlike:** *in contrast to: used to indicate a contrast between two things, people, or situations:* a differenza di.

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- ³³ **Approximated** [to approximate, approximated, approximating, approximates]: to be similar, to be or become similar to something in nature, size, or extent: avvicinarsi a.
- ³⁴ **Addressed** [to address, addressed, addressing, addresses]: qui: to say something to somebody, or make a speech to an audience: rivolgersi a.
- ³⁵ **Meager** (BE meagre): deficient in quantity, fullness, or extent; scanty: scarso.
- ³⁶ **Eventually**: un falso sinonimo insidioso. Non significa eventualmente, ma alla fine, infine, finalmente: *Eventually he died* **non** si traduce: "Eventualmente morì", bensì "alla fine morì".
- ³⁷ **Convened** [to convene, convened, convening, convenes]: to arrange meeting, to call people together for a formal meeting: convocare, adunare, riunire.
- ³⁸ **In attendance**: assistere, essere presente. *To be in attendance on somebody* significa anche prendersi cura di, essere al servizio di. *School attendance* è la frequenza scolastica.
- ³⁹ **Advocated** [to advocate, advocated, advocating, advocates]: to plead or argue in favour of, to support: sostenere.
- ⁴⁰ **Would move**: in questa frase, l'uso del condizionale semplice (*would* + verbo all'infinito senza *to*) rappresenta la forma del *future in the past*: quando ci si riferisce ad un evento che deve avvenire in futuro rispetto ad un momento del passato, si parla di *future in the past* (futuro nel passato). In italiano si utilizza il condizionale passato. Es: Promise che avrebbe mandato una cartolina dalla Francia: *He promised he would send a postcard from France*.
- ⁴¹ **Figure skating**: pattinaggio di figura (per un elenco completo degli sport olimpici, si veda la scheda).
- ⁴² **Bobsled**: *bob* (per un elenco completo degli sport olimpici, si veda la scheda).
- ⁴³ **Luge**: *slittino* (per un elenco completo degli sport olimpici, si veda la scheda).
- ⁴⁴ **Roster**: qui: tabellone. Anche: (*duty*) *roster: a list or plan showing turns of duty or leave in an organization*: lista dei turni di servizio.
- ⁴⁵ **Contested** [to contest, contested, contesting, contests]: qui: to take part in a contest or competition: disputare.
- ⁴⁶ **Headquarters**: a center of organization, supply, or activity: quartier generale, sede (centrale). Il sostantivo *headquarters* può essere seguito da un verbo al singolare o al plurale. Il plurale è più usato: *The corporation's headquarters are in Milan*. Ma quando ci si riferisce all'autorità piuttosto che all'ubicazione fisica, molti optano per il singolare: *Division headquarters has approved the new marketing campaign*.
- ⁴⁷ **Shifted** [to shift, shifted, shifting, shifts]: to change the place, position, or direction of: spostare.