Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games

Facts for students

The scheduled 2020 summer Olympic games will now be held from Friday 23rd July until Sunday, 8 August 2021. This will be the second time that Tokyo has hosted an Olympic Games. The first was in 1964.

A total of 33 sports will feature during that time.

Aquatics  Archery  Athletics  Badminton
Baseball/Softball  Basketball  Boxing  Canoe\Kayak
Cycling  Equestrian  Fencing  Football (Soccer)
Golf  Gymnastics  Handball  Hockey
Judo  Karate  Modern Pentathlon  Rowing
Rugby  Sailing  Shooting  Skateboarding
Sport Climbing  Surfing  Table Tennis  Taekwondo
Tennis  Triathlon  Volleyball (indoor and beach)  Weightlifting
Wrestling

The Tokyo Paralympic Games will be held from Tuesday, 24 August until Sunday, 5 September 2021.

The program will feature 22 sports during that time.

Archery  Athletics  Badminton  Boccia
Canoe  Cycling  Equestrian  Football 5-a-side
Goalball  Judo  Powerlifting  Rowing
Shooting  Sitting Volleyball  Swimming  Table Tennis
Taekwondo  Triathlon  Wheelchair Basketball
Wheelchair Fencing  Wheelchair Rugby  Wheelchair Tennis

The Tokyo Games Mascots

There are two Olympic mascots: Miraitowa and Someity. They are modelled on aspects of Japanese culture and you can find their bios at tokyo2020.org/en
About Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo is the capital city of Japan and is located on Japan’s main island called Honshu. Japan is an island country located in the East Asia region. It is bordered by the Sea of Japan (to the west) and the Pacific Ocean (to the east). It is about 3,000 km long from north to south and is actually made up of an incredible 6,852 islands! The four largest of these islands are Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku.

Japan is a mountainous country with a lot of heavily forested areas and only approximately 13% of the land is suitable for agriculture. As a result, over 90% of Japan’s population live in urban areas making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Japan's population is around 126 million.

Here's a quick fact – Australia is 20 times larger than Japan, but our population is five times smaller!

Tokyo Fast Facts

- The population of Tokyo is around 13.5 million people, but this can grow during the day when workers and students come to the city from other areas.
- The climate in Tokyo is considered ‘humid subtropical’. Summers are hot and humid and winter is cool with cold periods and snow in some areas.
- Even though Tokyo is an old city, the architecture is mostly modern due to events such as earthquakes and war time bombings destroying many of the original buildings.
- Train travel is the most common type of transport in Tokyo, and as a result, it has the most extensive urban rail network in the world.
- If you visit Tokyo there are lots of things to do including visiting museums, theatres or imperial palaces, or attending one of their many festivals or sporting events.
- When it’s time to eat, Tokyo is a great place to dine out. You can choose from local street food or one of the many fine dining restaurants (if you want something fancy). Who knows what unusual foods you might get to try?
Tokyo has a strong sporting culture. They have professional teams in baseball, football (soccer), basketball and sumo. Sumo is a style of wrestling and is Japan’s national sport. It originated in ancient times and is still very popular today.

The History of the Olympic and Paralympic Games

The Olympic Games

The idea of holding the Olympic Games was born in 776BC, in Ancient Greece. Many sporting contests occurred in Olympia during great festivals in honour of the gods. One of these was the Olympics. To participate in the ancient Olympic Games, the athlete had to be male, of Greek origin and freeborn (not a slave). Information about the participation of women in the Games is unclear and often debated.

The ancient Games only included individual sports: running, wrestling, boxing, pankration (a form of martial art), equestrian and pentathlon.

In 146BC, Rome conquered Greece and the Games slowly declined. It was not until 1896 that the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens (thanks to the hard work of Pierre de Coubertin) where 241 athletes from 14 countries competed over 43 events.

Since 1896, the Olympic Games have been held every four years, except during World War I (1916) and World War II (1940 and 1944). There weren’t any Games held in those years.

The Paralympic Games

Although sport for people with an impairment already existed, the idea of the Paralympic Games came from Sir Ludwig Guttman, who decided that participating in sports would be good therapy for World War II veterans who had suffered spinal cord injuries.

Guttman organised for 16 injured service men and women to take part in an archery competition on 29 July 1948, the day of the Opening Ceremony of the London 1948 Olympic Games. He named this event the ‘Stoke Mandeville Games’. In 1952, Dutch ex-servicemen participated and the International Stoke Mandeville Games were founded.

So what began in 1948 as a small gathering, turned into the official Paralympic Games in Rome in 1960 and featured 400 athletes from 23 countries. Since this time, the Paralympic Games have taken place every four years, just after the Olympic Games. The Paralympic Games are held in the same city and use the same venues as the Olympic Games.
OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Participation in the Paralympic Games is open to athletes with the following:

- Limb loss or deficiency
- Spinal cord or nerve damage
- Cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury or similar
- Short Stature
- Intellectual impairment
- Vision impairment
- Other physical impairments

To ensure that competition is fair and equal, athletes are classified into groups or classes with others of similar abilities.

Symbols, mottos and traditions

There are many traditions, mottos and symbols linked to the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Mottos

The Olympic motto is: ‘Citius, Altius, Fortius’. It was introduced in 1924 and translates to 'Faster, Higher, Stronger'.

The current Paralympic motto is ‘Spirit in Motion’. This was introduced at the 2004 Games in Athens. The previous motto, introduced in 1994, was ‘Mind, Body, Spirit’.

The Flags

The Olympic flag was developed in 1914 and made its first appearance at the 1920 Games in Antwerp. It has five different-coloured interlinked rings: blue, yellow, black, green and red. These colours represent the five continents of the world (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe) that were joined together in the Olympic movement. The colours were chosen because they include at least one colour from the flag of every nation.
The Paralympic flag has a white background with the Paralympic symbol in the centre. The symbol is composed of three crescent shapes coloured red, blue and green. It is a symbol of movement in the shape of an asymmetrical crescent. As with the Olympic flag, the colours chosen are those represented most widely in national flags around the world.

Opening and closing ceremonies

The opening ceremony of an Olympic or Paralympic Games is always a huge occasion. Host countries often spend a lot of time and money creating a ceremony that celebrates their local culture, as well as the athletes and the Games.

During the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, the procession of athletes is always led by the Greek team, followed by all other teams in alphabetical order (from the language of the hosting country), except for the last team which is always the team from the hosting country.

At the Paralympic Games the countries parade in alphabetical order (in the language of the host country) with the host nation last.

The closing ceremony is often a smaller occasion than the opening, but it is a great chance to celebrate the athletes and their achievements. Unlike the opening ceremony, the athletes all enter together, rather than as nation groups.

Medal ceremonies

At an Olympic or Paralympic medal ceremony:

- The gold medallist presents in the centre of the podium, the silver medallist is on their right and the bronze medallist on their left.

- Medals are placed around the winners' necks and their countries' flags are raised.

- The national anthem of the gold medallist's country is played.
Flame and torch relays

The Olympic Games - The tradition of a relay to move the Olympic flame from Greece to the Olympic venue in the host country began at the Berlin Games in 1936.

The torch (usually designed by the host country) is lit by concentrating the rays of the sun with a parabolic reflector at the site of the ancient Games in Olympia. The torch is then carried all over the world by athletes, celebrities, world leaders and ordinary people, until it arrives at the opening ceremony where it is used to light a cauldron. This signifies the beginning of the Games.

The cauldron is usually lit when a torch bearer touches the torch to the cauldron, but there have been some more interesting ways, such as with a bow and flaming arrow in Barcelona (1992) and an airborne running man in Beijing (2008).

The Paralympic Games - Until the 2010 Winter Paralympic Games, the host country chose where and how the torch was lit. Since the 2012 Summer Games, the concept of the torch relay has changed.

A Heritage Torch will be lit in Stoke Mandeville (in honour of the first Paralympic Games) then travel to the host country where it will join other regional torches. One to two days before the Games, the torches assemble to follow a single route to the main stadium where they will light the main flame.

Australia and the Olympic and Paralympic Games Fast Facts

Here are some facts about Australia's involvement in the Summer Olympic, and Paralympic Games:

- Amazingly, over 3000 Australians have competed at a Summer Olympic Games since Athens in 1896.
- Since the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens and up to the 2020 Games in Tokyo, Australia has won a total of 512 Summer Olympic medals, including 150 gold, 170 silver and 192 bronze.
- Have you ever heard of Edwin Flack? He was the first ever Australian to compete at an Olympic Games. He won gold in the 800 metres and 1500 metres (running) races at the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens.
Australian has hosted the Olympic Games twice: Melbourne in 1956 and Sydney in 2000. The 1956 Games were the first ones held outside of North America and Europe. Interestingly, the equestrian events had to be held in Stockholm (Sweden) because of Australia's quarantine laws.

Sydney 2000 was the most successful Olympic Games for Australia to date, with a total of 16 gold medals.

Australia has sent competitors to every Paralympic Games since they began in Rome in 1960 and has won a total of 1125 medals (up to and including the 2016 Rio Games): 368 gold, 393 silver and 364 bronze.

Ian Thorpe (swimming) is currently Australia's most successful Olympic Games medal winner with 5 gold, 3 silver and 1 bronze.

Leisel Jones (swimming) is Australia's most successful female Olympic medallist winning 9 medals: 3 gold, 5 silver and 1 bronze.

Louise Sauvage is one of Australia’s most accomplished Paralympians. She has even been inducted into the Paralympics Hall of Fame. She has won nine gold medals and four silver medals in wheelchair racing across four Paralympic Games. An amazing achievement!

Australia first competed in the Winter Olympic Games in 1936 and in the early years we did quite poorly (probably due to our warm/temperate climate). We didn't win our first medal until 1994 (Norway), where the men's 5000 metres short track relay team won bronze. Our first individual medal was won by Zali Steggall in 1998 (Japan) when she won bronze in the slalom event.

General Olympic and Paralympic Games Fast Facts

There are many similarities between the Paralympic and Olympic Games: both have opening and closing ceremonies, both are preceded by a torch relay and both include competitors from all over the world.

Would you believe that the first recorded Olympic Games only had one event? It was a running race called the ‘stade’, which was 192m long.
At the 1976 Olympics (Montreal), the Czechoslovakian cycling team lost all its wheels and spares when they were mistaken for rubbish and thrown away. They had to organise replacements as quickly as they could, but this did not stop Anton Tkac from winning the 1000m sprint. Go Anton!

Amazingly Andrew Hoy (equestrian) has been selected for eight Olympic Games (1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2012) and competed in seven of those (the equestrian section was boycotted in the 1980 Games). That's dedication!

Prior to 1976 only wheelchair sports were contested at the Paralympic Games. At the 1976 Paralympic Games, athletes with various physical impairments and intellectual disabilities were included for the first time.

Did you know that the Paralympic Games are one of the biggest events in the world? They are even bigger than the Commonwealth Games!

References

The following links will direct you to the homepage of websites that were used as references for this topic.

- International Olympic Committee: [www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org)