

# Extracting key ideas and details using questioning

## When You Come to a Fork in the Road, Take It!

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Every four years, in the spring, Olympic fever begins to build as athletes from around the world prepare to show a rich variety of world-class individual and team skills at the Summer Games where they will compete for the gold, and thrill fans around the globe.

The world loves sport so Olympic officials who approve new sports for entry into the Summer Games lineup inevitably face disappointed fans, but also happy celebrants. It's an exciting time when all fans—young or old, casual or committed—search the television for a chance to see their favorite teams in action during the two weeks of competition. **Baseball fans like me look forward to seeing their favorite sport in the lineup.** Instead, we sigh in resignation knowing that for two weeks we will be switching between TV channels to watch either Olympic favorites like soccer, swimming, and gymnastics or our National or American League baseball team playing at the height of that sport's season. **Hope lives on, and we dream of the day when baseball and softball will be Olympic sports again, but how?**

Those in charge of approving the entry of new sports into the Summer Games lineup understand fully the importance of their selections. The ongoing list of proposed new sports includes traditional ones such as karate, baseball, and softball as well as those that are emerging such as surfing and skateboarding. It's an active world, and fans hope for the chance to view their favorite sports during the two-week summer competition.

### **Brief history of baseball and the Olympics**

Baseball appeared intermittently as an Olympic sport, first at the Summer Olympics in 1904 at St. Louis. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, baseball had a small, but consistent, role in the Olympics as a single exhibition game. Sometimes, the teams represented the host city; other times teams were composed of athletes who were at the Games competing in other sports. Variety was the rule during these earlier years.

How do I know what this article is really about?

Is this really about the excitement surrounding the Summer Olympics?

Wait, has the author introduced another topic?

Oh, the article is really about baseball in the Olympics!

Aha! The author believes that baseball should be an Olympic sport.

Oh, does this mean that baseball used to be an Olympic sport?

Yes! Baseball and the Olympics have a long history together!

Fast forward to 1992. Baseball was introduced as an official Olympic sport at Barcelona, Spain. Eight nations were represented. Players were required to be amateurs. The tournament consisted of a round-robin competition in which each team played every other team, semifinal games, and the final game. Those were the days! The format of the competition remained the same for years. The only change occurred in 2000 when professional players were allowed to compete. Through the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, teams were invited to play baseball, and baseball fans enthusiastically followed the sport at the Summer Olympics.

Those were the good times. However, behind the scenes, forces were afoot to remove baseball from the Olympics. Planning for each Olympics begins years prior to the summer of the event, and the news for baseball fans began looking bleak. In 2005, officials voted to eliminate baseball from the 2012 Olympics.

**"It ain't over 'til it's over."**

Of course, the Summer Olympics are a showcase for athletes from the entire international community and although baseball is gaining in popularity worldwide, not many new regions and cultures have embraced the sport. It earned the nickname, "America's Pastime," highlighting its popularity in the Americas. But, when asked to vote on the sport's continued inclusion in the Games, Olympic Committee officials who represent countries throughout the entire world, did not give the nod to baseball.

Another reason baseball was dropped as an Olympic sport involves the sport's own talented athletes and their availability to participate in the event. The Major League Baseball season conflicts with the timing of the Olympics. Teams could not and would not release players to compete in the Olympics, seriously limiting the talent that could be showcased for the Games.

Finally, during the past two decades, the image of baseball has suffered from some bad publicity about players' use of performance-enhancing drugs. The Olympics has an image to uphold, and doping scandals tarnish that image.

In 2014, the Olympic Committee made changes to the way in which it selects sports to participate in the Games that allowed baseball and softball—as a combined front—to make a bid for the 2020 Olympics. The Committee changed the rules about the number of sports that will be allowed into the Games. Baseball and softball almost made it to the 2016 games, only to lose to wrestling. In 2015, baseball and softball were recommended for reinstatement in the 2020 Tokyo games. In the words of Yogi Berra, "It ain't over 'til it's over."

What does, "It ain't over 'til it's over," mean?

Oh, it means that there is still hope for baseball in the Olympics!

It came close to happening in 2016, but there were setbacks.

## The next chance for bat-and-ball sports

Supporters of baseball and softball around the world have combined forces, working together under the moniker, Olympic Men's Baseball and Olympic Women's Softball, to gain re-entry into the list of events. Hopes are growing because the game is wildly popular in Asia and has new supporters in many pockets of the international community. Generating interest in baseball in other nations and promoting its popularity may help get the sport back into the Olympics.

In addition, the 2020 Olympics will be held in Tokyo, Japan, a city with a large fan base for baseball and the infrastructure to support the addition of the sport. Drug testing has evolved in the past 10 years and teams would be compliant. Consider, too, the fact that baseball has a lower injury rate than sports like American football: Comparative health benefits of the game might help build general interest in the sport.

## Still grappling with the timing issue

Major League Baseball shows no sign of relenting and releasing players to compete in the Olympics. Most Olympic officials say that without this commitment, the venture will not succeed. However, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, and South Korea will participate and are doing what is needed to send their best players to the Games.

The Olympic Committee has made big concessions to make this dream come true. They have set the stage for the re-entry of a sport that is traditional, emerging, and beloved by many. Now, Major League Baseball needs to "step up to the plate" and add the final level of support—talent!

As a die-hard fanatic, I am cautiously optimistic. Baseball continues to gain increased popularity worldwide and deserves a spot in the Olympics lineup. The good news is that it looks like the sport has been given the green light to compete in Tokyo in 2020. But, given the history of the twists and turns of the past decade, the reality is that baseball and softball could be dropped from the lineup again, simply on the whims of Olympic Committee members. We need to stand more united than ever as baseball fans around the world ready to "hit one out of the park" and win Olympic status for the sport we love—a sport with broad appeal for kids and adults of every age, gender, and culture. Go for baseball and softball gold, America!

Why does the writer think that baseball has a chance in the future?

Ah, baseball is getting more popular internationally—especially in Japan, where the next Summer Olympics will be held.

What is the timing issue?

Oh, I see. Pro baseball is played at the same time as the Olympics. This is a problem.

This must be the conclusion! The author is restating her point.

AND it includes a call to action for all baseball fans.