

# History

Wrestling represents one of the oldest forms of combat sport. The origins of wrestling go back around 15,000 years through cave drawings in France. [Babylonian](#) and [Egyptian](#) reliefs show wrestlers using various holds known in the present-day sport. Literary references to wrestling occur as early as the [Old Testament](#) and the ancient Indian [Vedas](#). In the [Book of Genesis](#), the [Patriarch Jacob](#) is said to have wrestled with God or an angel. The [Iliad](#), in which Homer recounts the [Trojan War](#) of the 13th or 12th century BC, also contains mentions of wrestling. Indian epics [Ramayana](#) and [Mahabharata](#) contain references to martial arts including wrestling.

In [Ancient Greece](#) wrestling occupied a prominent place in legend, literature, and philosophy. Wrestling competition, brutal in many aspects, served as the focal sport of the [ancient Olympic Games](#). [Ancient Romans](#) borrowed heavily from Greek wrestling, but eliminated much of its brutality through implementing different rules. Wrestling is referenced throughout both Ancient Greek and Roman literature. Many philosophers and leaders practiced wrestling and/or referenced the sport frequently in their works, most notably [Plato](#), [Socrates](#), [Aristotle](#), [Xenophon](#), [Epictetus](#), [Seneca](#), [Plutarch](#), and [Marcus Aurelius](#). [Dicaearchus](#) wrote that Plato wrestled at the [Isthmian games](#). Many of Plato's dialogues are set in [wrestling schools](#). [Ancient Greek lyric poet Pindar](#) wrote victory odes, grouped into four books named after the [Olympian](#), [Pythian](#), [Isthmian](#), and [Nemean Games](#) – Panhellenic festivals held respectively at [Olympia](#), [Delphi](#), [Corinth](#), and [Nemea](#). These odes were composed to honor the men and youths who had enjoyed victories in wrestling, [boxing](#), [pankration](#) and other athletic contests.

During the Middle Ages ([fifth century](#) to [fifteenth century](#)) wrestling remained popular and enjoyed the patronage of many royal families, including those of [France](#), [Japan](#), and [England](#).

Early [British](#) settlers in [America](#) brought a strong wrestling tradition with them. The settlers also found wrestling to be popular among [Native Americans](#). Amateur wrestling flourished throughout the early years of the North American colonies and would later serve as a popular activity at country fairs, holiday celebrations, and in military exercises. The first organized national wrestling tournament in the United States took place in [New York City](#) in 1888. Wrestling has also been an event at every modern [Olympic Games](#) since the [1904 games](#) in [St. Louis, Missouri](#) ([Greco-Roman wrestling](#) was contested at the [first modern Olympics in 1896](#), but not at the [1900 games](#)). The international governing body for the sport, [United World Wrestling](#) (UWW), was established in 1912 in [Antwerp, Belgium](#) as the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA). The first annual [NCAA Wrestling Championships](#) were held in 1928 in [Ames, Iowa](#). [USA Wrestling](#), located in [Colorado Springs, Colorado](#), became the national governing body of U.S. amateur wrestling in 1983.