

Power Up Your English with Michelle Episode 45 - Olympics Introduction

RTHK (15:29)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlxL5wVTNiY&list=LL&index=27>

Hi everyone and welcome back to Power Up Your English. I'm your host Michelle and I'm going to be giving you tips and talking through ways to get you to excel your English. Now on today's episode, we're going to be submerging ourselves in all things Olympics! Yeah!

Today we'll be talking about the history of the Olympics, fun facts about the Olympics, the opening ceremony and practical English vocabulary on the Olympics. So let's head to the beautiful Paris where the Olympics are being held this year.

History of the Olympics

So, what are the Olympics, and where did it all come from? Well, the Olympics, officially known as the Olympic Games, are a leading international sporting event that features summer and winter sports competitions. Thousands of athletes from around the world participate in a variety of competitions in the hope of winning one of its famous Olympics medals. The Olympic Games are considered the world's foremost sports competition with more than two hundred nations participating.

And as mentioned, this year's Olympic Games will be held in none other than Paris, France. It will be the thirty third summer Olympic Games, as the event is held every four years. Now, what about the history of the Olympics? Where did it all originate from? The Olympic Games can be traced back to Ancient Greek, where the first recorded Olympic Games took place in 776 BCE in Olympia, a small town in the western Peloponnesian Peninsula. These ancient games were part of a festival to honour Zeus, the king of the Greek gods. The athletes competed in various events, including running, long jump, shot put, javelin, boxing and many others. The Ancient Olympics were held every four years, a period known as an Olympiad, and this tradition continued for more than twelve centuries until Emperor Theodosius I decreed in 393 CE that all such pagan festivals be banned.

Fast forward to modern times, where the Olympic Games were revived in the late nineteenth century by Pierre de Coubertin, a French educator and historian. Inspired by the ancient games and motivated by a desire to promote physical education and international peace, Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee, IOC, in 1894. The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece in 1896, with fourteen nations and two hundred and forty one athletes competing in forty three events. Since then, the modern Olympics have grown significantly. The Summer Olympics now feature over three hundred events in more than thirty sports, while the Winter Olympics, first held in Chamonix, France in 1924, include sports such as skiing, ice hockey and figure skating. Since 1994, the Summer and Winter Olympics have been held separately and have alternated every two years. And this year's 2024 Summer Olympics will be held from July twenty sixth to August eleventh, 2024 in Paris, France.

Fun facts about the Olympics

Now we've learnt a little more about what the Olympics is all about. It's time to learn some fun facts. In no particular order, here are our top fun facts about the Olympic Games.

Fun fact number one, Olympic rings. Ever notice the Olympic rings? This iconic image of five interlocking rings of the Olympic symbol represents the five inhabited continents, Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania, and are coloured blue, yellow, black, green and red, because every national flag in the world includes at least one of these colours. Cool, huh?

Fun fact number two, person with the most Olympic medals. The person with the most Olympic medals is American athlete Michael Phleps, who holds the record for the most Olympic medals in swimming won by any athlete. He has won a total of twenty eight medals, twenty three gold, three silver and two bronze, making him the most successful Olympic athlete of all time.

Fun fact number three, women and the Olympics. When the Olympic Games were reintroduced back in 1896, it was only reserved for male competitors. Women

previously were not allowed to compete in any of the Olympic Games. However, in 1900, women participated for the first time at the Paris Olympics. These days, to combat the effects of gender, the Olympic Charter has made the presence of women mandatory in every sport since 2007. Additionally, in 2014, the European Commission defended equality in sport, and the IOC added gender parity to the 2020 Olympics Agenda. The IOC is committed to gender equality in sport. The Olympic Charter, Chapter 1, Rule 2.8 (two point eight) states 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. And lastly, with the addition of women's boxing to the Olympic programme, the 2012 Games in London were the first in which women competed in all the sports on the programme.

Fun fact number four, live broadcast of the Olympic Games. Did you know that the first live international broadcast of the Olympics was from Rome in 1960, marking a big step in global reach? And in 1964, the Tokyo Games were broadcast by satellite to the USA and Japan. By 1968, the Games reached three continents and seventeen percent of the world's population. Then in 1972, ninety eight countries across five continents could watch the Olympics. By 1984, the Los Angeles Games were shown in one hundred and fifty six countries, more than half of the world's population. This trend continued with the 2012 London Games reaching four point eight billion viewers, or sixty nine percent of the world's population.

Fun fact number five, the Olympic Oath. The Olympic Oath is an oath that is taken during the opening ceremony. It emphasizes sportsmanship and fair play. The original oath was written by Pierre de Coubertin, but has been updated over time. From 1972, a judge was also added along with the athletes to take an oath at the ceremony, and since 2012, a coach does too. And since the 2018 Pyeong Chang Winter Games, the athletes, officials and coaches' oaths have been combined into one to save time. Unlike ancient times when athletes swore on animal innards, today's athletes take the Oath with the Olympic flag.

"In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honor of our teams."

Fun fact number six, the Olympic Flame. The tradition of the Olympic Flame was introduced in the 1928 Amsterdam Games. It is lit in Olympia and carried to the host city through a relay. The Olympic Torch Relay is a tradition that goes back to the roots of the games. The first torch for the Paris 2024 Olympic Torch Relay will be lit on the sixteenth of April 2024 during a ceremony in Olympia, Greece, where the ancient Olympics were once held. The Olympic Flame will then head to Athens and eventually cross the Mediterranean Sea to Marseille. Then, from the eighth of May 2024 until the twenty sixth of July 2024, when the Olympic opening ceremony is, the Olympic Flame will embark on its epic journey around France in a 68-day relay race.

Fun fact number seven, unusual sports. Now, when it comes to the Olympics, we all expect some sports to appear in the Olympics that perhaps we wouldn't consider doing ourselves. But did you know that there were some very unusual sports that have been part of the Olympics? They include sports such as tug-of-war, 1900 to 1920, live pigeon shooting, 1900, Glima, 1912, solo synchronised swimming, 1984 to 1992, and Basque pelota, 1900.

Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony of the Olympic Games are most notably one of the biggest highlights of the Olympics Games. It's a fantastic way to kick off the events and is usually watched by millions, if not billions, all around the world. So, what happens? Well, this year is going to be a very special opening ceremony. For the first time in the history of the Olympic Summer Games, the opening ceremony won't be taking place in a stadium. Instead, it will be set in the heart of the city along the River Seine. The parade of the athletes will be held on the Seine with boats for each delegation. The boats will travel from east to west for about six kilometres, with around ten thousand five hundred athletes crossing through the centre of Paris to the overall playing field of the Games, on which the events will be displayed over the next sixteen days. The parade will eventually come to an end in front of the Jardins du Trocadéro, where the final part of the show will take place. The opening ceremony will also include music, dance and fireworks, making this year's ceremony one to remember.

Practical English vocabulary on the Olympics

So now we've explored what the Olympics is, the history, the fun facts and the opening ceremony. It's time to start taking a look at what practical English vocabulary we can use. Let's take a look at the following vocabulary and learn how to use them when talking about the Olympics.

“Event.” An event is a specific competition within the Olympics, like the 100-metre race. To use it in a sentence, you may say, “I am looking forward to watching the 100-metre sprint, which is always one of the most highly anticipated events at the Olympics.”

“Qualify.” This means to meet the standard to compete in an event. To use it in a sentence, you may say, “I think this athlete has got what it takes to qualify in this round.”

“Heat.” Heat refers to a preliminary race or competition to determine who advances to the final round. To use it in a sentence, you may say, “In the preliminary heat of the 200-metre freestyle, the swimmer sets a new personal best to advance to the finals.”

“Doping.” Doping refers to the use of banned substances to enhance performance. To use it in a sentence, you may say, “The strict anti-doping regulations at the Olympics ensure a fair competition where athletes can showcase their natural talents and hard work.”

“Final.” Final refers to the last race or competition that determines the winner. To use it in a sentence, you may say, “The crowd went wild as the gymnast flawlessly executed her routine in the final, securing a gold medal for her country.”

“Record.” This means the best performance in a particular event, often categorised as world records or Olympic records. To use it in a sentence, you might say, “The athlete broke the world record for the 100-metre backstroke.”

Well, that concludes our episode today on the introduction of the Olympics. You now know a little bit more about the history, some interesting and fun facts, a bit more about what happens during the opening ceremony and, last but not least, some English vocabulary that is practical to use when talking about and discussing anything Olympics-related. Next week, we'll be exploring more about the Olympics, and taking a specific look at some events that will be taking place during the Olympic Games. So keep a lookout. Until then, enjoy watching the various events that are due to take place this next week.

For more English videos, look up "Power Up Your English" on RTHK's Youtube channel. Well, that's all from me today. Catch you next week. Bye-bye.

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