

History of the Olympic Games

The Ancient Olympics

The first Olympic Games were held in Ancient Greece in 776 B.C. in the plain of Olympia. They began as a religious festival to honor the gods. The Greeks measured time in terms of four-year periods called Olympiads. The Olympic games were part of the celebration of the beginning of each Olympiad.



In the first Olympic Games the only competition was a foot race. Later wrestling, the pentathlon, and boxing were added. In 680 B.C. chariot racing became a part of the games. Athletes usually competed nude as clothing could slow them in the race. In the horse racing competition riders rode naked and bareback (no saddle) around the track. As you can imagine, it was very difficult to control the horses this way. The winner would receive a simple olive branch, not a gold medal.

People descended on Olympia by the thousands to see the games. The stadium was built to seat between 45,000 and 50,000 people. Since the Olympic games were designed to honor Zeus, a male god, women were not allowed to see the games. The penalty for women who viewed the games was death.

The ancient games continued until 400 AD when the sacred shrine at Olympia was destroyed.

The Modern Olympics

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a Frenchman, revived the games in 1896. He felt that the games would promote physical fitness and good relations between people of different countries. Beginning in 1894 delegates from 12 countries met to lay out plans for the modern games to be held in Athens, Greece.

The next Olympics were held in Paris and then in St. Louis, but interest waned. The Olympics gained popularity again with a very well-organized Olympics in 1908 in London. They began giving out medals not only to the winner but also to the first and second runner up (gold, silver, and bronze medals). In 1912 in Stockholm electrical timing equipment was used for the first time. In the 1928 Games in Amsterdam the tradition of burning the Olympic flame throughout the games began.



The Olympic Games have grown significantly since the days of the single foot race. Now the events are divided into winter and summer games alternately every two years. Athletes from all over the world continue to gather for the Olympic Games to enjoy friendly international competition just as Baron Pierre de Coubertin dreamed.

Fuente: <https://www.inglesmundial.com/Avanzado/Leccion9/Lectura.html>

1. What god were the Olympic games were designed to honor?

Zeus, a male god

2. What was the only competition in the first Olympics?

Foot race

3. What did the winner of the ancient games receive as a prize?

A simple olive branch

4. Who began the modern Olympic Games?

Baron Pierre

4. In what year did the tradition of burning an Olympic flame throughout the games begin?

1928



Vocabulary

held	Aterido	Baron	Barón
Ancient	Antiguo	Promote	Promover
Began	Comenzó	Between	Entre
Greeks	Griegos	Delegates	Delegados
Measured	Medido	Met	Reunió
Beginning	Comenzando	Lay	Poner
Each	Cada	Gained	Ganado
Wrestling	Lucha	Waned	Menguló
Pentathlon	Pentatlón	Also	Además
Chariot	Carruaje	Stockholm	Estocolmo
Nude	Desnudo	Throughout	A lo largo de
Base	Montó	Grown	Crecido
Naked	Desnudo	Since	Desde
Bareback	A pelo		
Olive	Aceituna		
Baronchi	Rama		
Allowed	Permitido		
Sacred	Sagrado		
Shrine	Santuario		