

Springboard^{into} Comprehension 5

Main Idea
Plagues
Coral Reefs

Compare and Contrast **Olympic Game Technology**

Air, Land, and Water Transport – Then and Now

Fact and Opinion
The Cackleberry Creek Foghorn
Defying Gravity

Cause and Effect
Animal Adaptations
Severe Weather

Bias and Prejudice
Prejudice on the Goldfields
Houdini – Man of Magic or Deceit?

Figurative Language
The Big Campaign
The Loaded Dog

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Factual Description

Olympic Game Technology



Written by George Ivanoff

Olympic Game Technology



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Introduction

The ancient Olympic Games were a sporting event in ancient Greece. From 776 BC to 393 AD, they were held every four years. They were the inspiration for the modern Olympic Games. The first modern Olympics took place in 1896 in Athens, Greece.

Both in the past and today, the Olympics have caught the attention of people all around the world. Athletes from across the continents aspire to take part in the Olympics. The Olympics symbolize sporting excellence and glory.

The organization with authority over the games is called the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)**. The IOC has organized every modern Olympics since 1896. It makes sure the Olympics take place on schedule. It also decides which city will host each Olympics.



An ancient Greek vase showing athletes in a foot race at the ancient games

Many aspects of the Olympics have changed since 1896. The Olympics have become bigger, with more and different sports. They are now more lavish, with huge opening ceremonies. Thanks to television, millions of people now watch them all over the world.

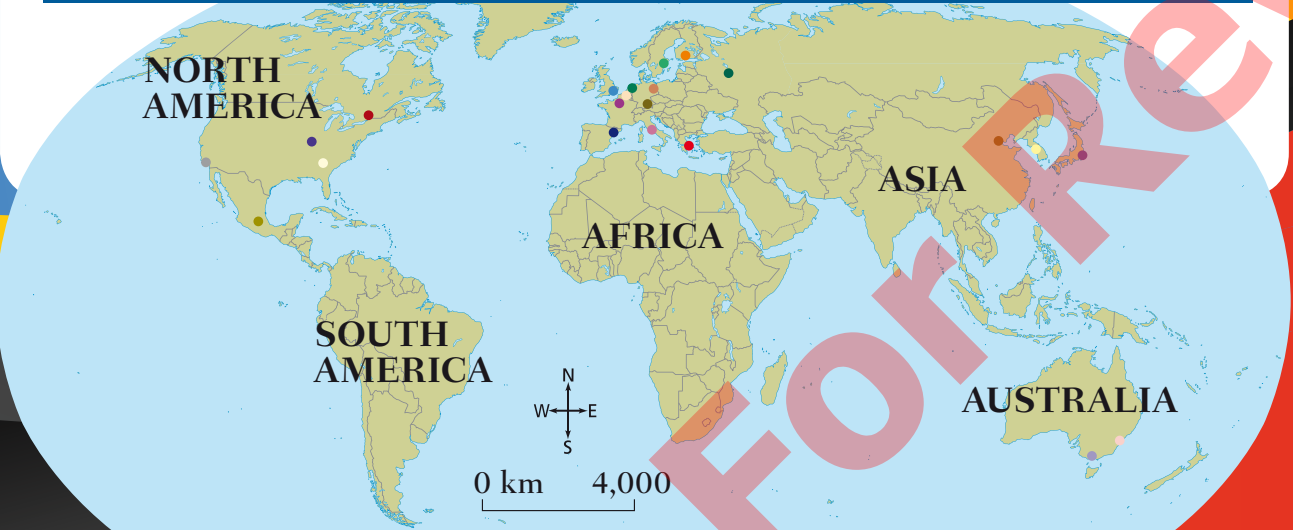
In Olympic terms, a “sport” is a category of events with an international governing body. The sport may include several related events, all governed by the same body. These are called **disciplines**. In 1896, athletes took part in nine sports. These were cycling, gymnastics, athletics, swimming, weightlifting, shooting, fencing, wrestling, and tennis.

The same nine sports are still part of the Olympics today. However, there are now 17 extra sports. The first modern Olympics had only 241 athletes from 14 countries. They took part in 43 events. By contrast, at the 2000 Sydney Olympics in Australia, there were over 10,000 athletes from 199 countries. They competed in 300 events. The first Olympics did not allow female athletes. Now, however, events for women are just as important as events for men.

Like the early modern Olympics, the Games of today use the technology of their time. However, the world has changed since 1896. Technology has moved forwards in leaps and bounds. Many people now have access to television, computers, and air travel. There were no televisions or computers in 1896. International athletes had to travel by ship.

Technology has had a huge impact on the Olympics. It has changed the way athletes compete. It has changed the way the events are judged and the way people watch them.

Host Cities of the Modern Olympics



Key				
● Athens (1896)	● Antwerp (1920)	● Helsinki (1952)	● Montreal (1976)	● Sydney (2000)
● Paris (1900)	● Paris (1924)	● Melbourne (1956)	● Moscow (1980)	● Athens (2004)
● St. Louis (1904)	● Amsterdam (1928)	● Rome (1960)	● Los Angeles (1984)	● Beijing (2008)
● London (1908)	● Los Angeles (1932)	● Tokyo (1964)	● Seoul (1988)	
● Stockholm (1912)	● Berlin (1936)	● Mexico City (1968)	● Barcelona (1992)	
	● London (1948)	● Munich (1972)	● Atlanta (1996)	

Sports at Today's Olympics

- Aquatics
- Archery
- Athletics
- Badminton
- Basketball
- Boxing
- Canoeing
- Cycling
- Equestrian
- Fencing
- Field hockey
- Football (soccer)
- Gymnastics
- Handball
- Judo
- Modern pentathlon
- Rowing
- Sailing
- Shooting
- Table tennis
- Taekwondo
- Tennis
- Triathlon
- Volleyball
- Weightlifting
- Wrestling



The Opening Ceremony

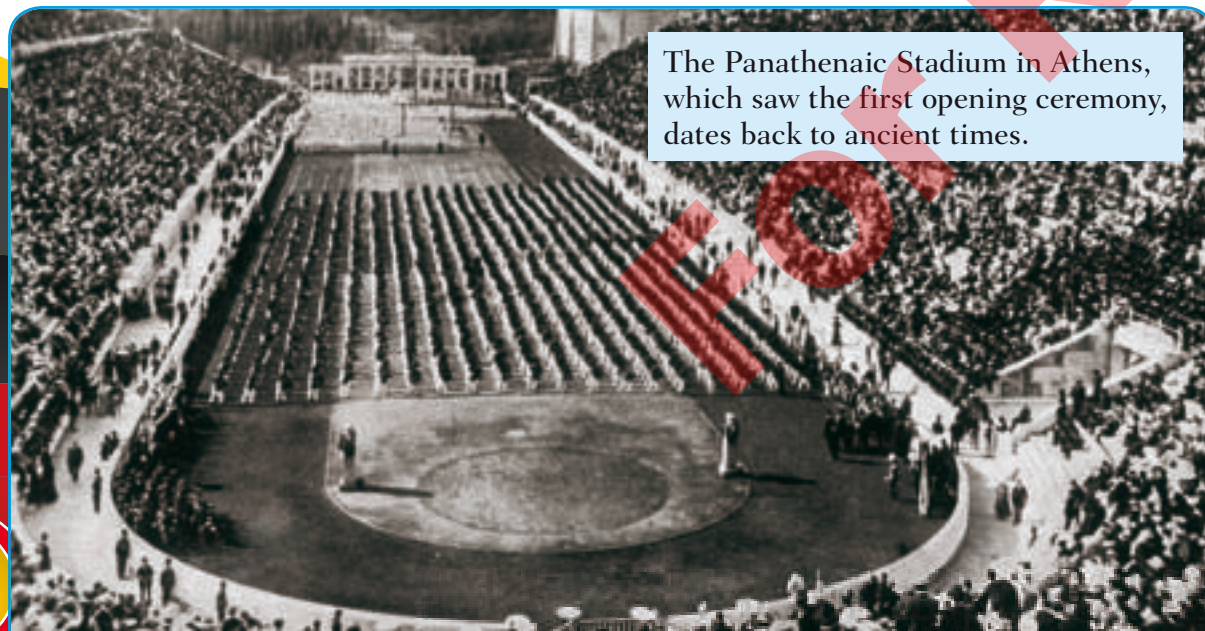
The opening ceremony begins the Olympic Games. Both in the past and today, the opening ceremony has been a distinctive part of the Games. Large crowds of people watch it. The head of state of the host nation always declares the modern Olympics open. Other parts of the opening ceremony have changed over the years. In general, it has become longer and more elaborate. Technology plays a big role in the opening ceremony.

The First Opening Ceremony

Athens hosted the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. King George I of Greece declared the Olympics open.

"I declare the opening of the first international Olympic Games in Athens. Long live the Nation! Long live the Greek people!"
George I

Many of the 60,000 spectators might not have heard the words clearly. This was before the invention of loudspeakers, so the words were not amplified. The first opening ceremony with a public address system was at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden.



The Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, which saw the first opening ceremony, dates back to ancient times.

Athens Again

In 2004, the Olympic Games returned to Athens. Many aspects were similar to the opening ceremony of the 1896 Olympics. Large crowds came to watch. The athletes paraded in the middle of the stadium. There was a show with singers and music.

Other aspects were completely different. The 2004 ceremony used sophisticated lighting and sound equipment. It used lasers and computerized special effects. One of the main features was a complex network of cables that lifted and moved floating pieces of sculpture. These floating pieces were set to music. The stadium had a huge screen and a giant pool. The pool had a special slip-proof fibreglass floor. The pool was able to drain its water in just a few minutes.



The 2004 opening ceremony in Athens was very different from that of 1896.

Sports Equipment

Sports equipment has always been important to athletes at the Olympic Games. When the Olympics first began, athletes used simple equipment. Over the years, science and technology have resulted in more sophisticated equipment.

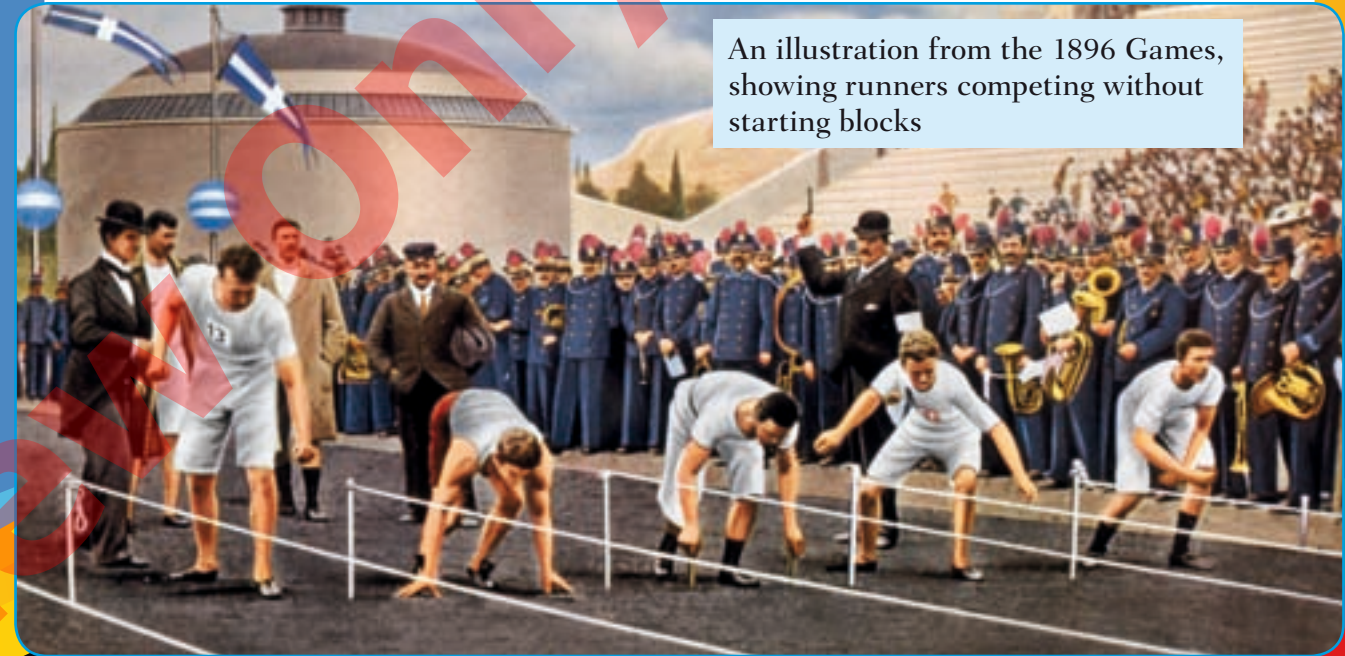
Although tennis players have always used racquets, the kind of racquet they use has changed. In the past, players used heavy wooden racquets with a small head. Later, people made racquets from a soft, light form of carbon called **graphite**. Nowadays, racquets consist of a mixture of materials including graphite, titanium, boron, and fibreglass. These new racquets are stronger, with a larger head.

Running shoes have also changed over time. There are now different kinds of shoes for different events. The design includes features for more comfort. It also cushions the impact of running. Shoes might not make that much of a difference. Ethiopian runner Abebe Bikila won the long-distance race over 42 km, the marathon, at the 1960 Olympics in Rome. He ran the marathon barefoot.



Ethiopian champion Abebe Bikala, running barefoot through the streets of Rome

Some of the simplest things people now take for granted did not exist at the early Olympics. Sprinters did not have starting blocks until the London Olympics in 1948. Before that, runners had to dig small holes to brace their feet when starting.



An illustration from the 1896 Games, showing runners competing without starting blocks



Starting blocks get the runners off to a flying start at the 2008 Games in Beijing, China.