Summer Olympics
Olympics on U.S. Stamps

Recorded history shows that the ancient Olympic Games began in 776 BC. However, archaeology suggests there may have been Games as early as the 10th or 9th century BC. The first Games were part of a religious festival to honor Zeus, the father of the Greek gods and goddesses. The festival was held at Ancient Olympia on the Poloponnese. The last ancient Olympic Games were held in 393 AD.

The modern Summer Olympic Games were introduced in 1896, with the first event being held in Athens, Greece. The first Winter Olympic Games were held in 1924 (there were no ancient Winter Games.)

U.S. Flag with Olympic Rings
Scott 2528 • 1991
As part of the United States Postal Service’s sponsorship of the 1992 Olympic Games, a definitive stamp showing the flag over the Olympic rings was issued. This was just one of the many products marketed by the USPS in support of the Games.

USPS Logo/Olympic Rings
Scott 2539 • 1991
The USPS issued this stamp to publicize its sponsorship of the 1992 Winter and Summer Olympic Games. The U.S. Olympic Committee established the guidelines for the use of the Olympic rings, dictating that they should be printed in their natural colors.

USPS Olympic Sponsorship
Priority Mail
Scott 2540 • 1991
Express Mail
Scott 2541 • 1991
International Express Mail
Scott 2542 • 1991
With the postal increase of early 1991, the Postal Service needed to issue new Priority, Express, and International Express Mail stamps. Although the stamps had no sport’s connection, the Olympic rings were shown on each of the stamps. The incorporation of the rings by the USPS was a promotional campaign showing their corporate sponsorship of the Games.

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Olympics on U.S. Stamps

U.S. Flag with Olympic Rings
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Olympics on U.S. Stamps

Javelin Thrower
Scott 1790 • 1980

The javelin is a spear-like object, just over 3 yards long and weighing 1 2/3 pounds (for men) and almost 2 ½ yards long, weighing 1 1/3 pounds (for women.) The goal is to throw the javelin further than your opponents, landing within a specified area.

Olympic Games: Athens
Scott 3863 • 2004
Running and Olympic Rings
Scott 1462 • 1972

Running events have been included since the inception of the Olympics. The first Ancient Olympic Game was held in 776 B.C. The only event was the stadion footrace. The stadion (actual outdoor stadium) race was run from one end of the stadion to the other end — a distance of just over 200 yards. The runners would stand at the starting line with arms stretched out in front of them. The officials who stood at the starting line watched to be sure there were no false starts, while the officials at the end would decide the winner (and would determine if anyone had cheated.)

Running
Scott 1791 • 1980

The Olympic running events — for men and women — are divided into several categories: sprints, middle-distance events, long-distance events, relay races, and hurdling. In addition to speed, the middle- and long-distance races test strength and stamina.

Swimming
Scott 1792 • 1980

Olympic swimming events are held for men and women. Events include freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke, butterfly, medleys, and team relays.

Rowing
Scott 1793 • 1980

Fourteen rowing events are offered at the current Olympics. Included are sculling (each rower has two oars or sculls), coxless pair (rowers use sweep oars,) and coxless four for both men and women.

Equestrian
Scott 1794 • 1980

Equestrian events for men and women, individual and teams, are part of the Summer Olympics. Current events include dressage (how well the horse is trained,) jumping, eventing (includes dressage, cross-country, and show jumping.) All horses must be at least 7 years old.

Cycling and Olympic Rings
Scott 1460 • 1972

Men’s cycling has always been a part of the Olympic Games. Women's cycling events were added in 1984. Events include BMX, mountain bike, road racing, and track racing.

Olympic Baseball
Scott 2619 • 1992

In 1912, the first baseball games were held at the Summer Olympics. Baseball was not played again until 1936, and continued to be sporadic until 1984 when it returned with a tournament format. However, baseball will not be part of the 2012 Summer Olympic Games.
Olympics on U.S. Stamps

Javelin Thrower
Scott 1790 • 1980

Running
Scott 1791 • 1980
Rowing
Scott 1793 • 1980
Swimming
Scott 1792 • 1980
Equestrian
Scott 1794 • 1980

Olympic Games: Athens
Scott 3863 • 2004

Cycling and Olympic Rings
Scott 1460 • 1972

Running and Olympic Rings
Scott 1462 • 1972

Olympic Baseball
Scott 2619 • 1992
Runner at Starting Mark
Scott 718 • 1932
The 1932 Summer Olympics were held in Los Angeles, California. Several “firsts” occurred at the 1932 Games. Participation in the Games was limited to three per country per event. The Games, which had been lasting at least 79 days in the past, were cut to just 16 days. The men and women were separated, with the men staying in the Olympic Village and the women being housed in a hotel. The medal winners stood on a podium with the flag of the winner’s country being raised at the 1932 Summer Olympics.

Myron’s Discobolus
Scott 719 • 1932
Centennial Olympic Games (Myron’s Discobolus)
Scott 3087 • 1996
The discus throw has been a part of men's competition in the Olympics since the first Games in 1896. The women's competition was added in the 1928 Games. Issued for the 1932 Summer Olympic Games, this stamp shows Discobolus, a bronze statue by the Greek sculptor, Myron of Eleutharai.

Diver and Olympic Rings
Scott 1695 • 1976
The first men's Olympic diving event, the “fancy high dive,” was held at the 1904 Games. Women's diving was added in 1912. The first Olympic diving events were a platform diving event and a “plunge for distance” event (the winner was the diver who could reach the farthest distance underwater.)

Runner and Olympic Rings
Scott 1697 • 1976
The sprint competitions test the runners’ speed, while endurance, pacing, stamina, and race tactics are important factors for the middle- and long-distance races. Relay races are also a part of the running events. Each member in a team of four runs a specified distance in the race, carrying a baton that is handed off to the team mate running the next leg of the event. The goal is for the team member running the last leg of the race to cross the finish line.

Gymnastics
Scott 2380 • 1988
Both men and women compete in the Olympic gymnastic events. Men's individual apparatus includes floor, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars, and horizontal bar. Women's events include vault, uneven bars, balance beam, and floor.

High Jump
C97 • 1980
The high jump has been a part of the Olympics since ancient times. Competitors run toward a horizontally set bar. The method of jumping over the bar has evolved over the years, with high jumpers today usually going over the bar head and shoulders first, and then “rolling” their back over the bar. They land in a sawdust pit.

Women’s Gymnastics
Scott 4334 • 2008
In addition to the vault, women’s events include the uneven bars, balance beam, and floor exercise. Performing gymnasts demonstrate balance, flexibility, acrobatic skills, and strength.
Olympics on U.S. Stamps

Runner at Starting Mark
Scott 718 • 1932

Myron's Discobolus
Scott 719 • 1932

Centennial Olympic Games
(Myron's Discobolus)
Scott 3087 • 1996

Diver and Olympic Rings
Scott 1695 • 1976

Runner and Olympic Rings
Scott 1697 • 1976

Gymnastics
Scott 2380 • 1988

High Jump
C97 • 1980

Women's Gymnastics
Scott 4334 • 2008
Discus
Scott 2048 • 1983
Discus throwing has been in existence for hundreds of years. After spinning in a circle to gain momentum, the hurler releases the discus with one goal — to throw the discus further than any opponent. Events are held for both men and women.

High Jump
Scott 2049 • 1983
The Olympic high jump is part of the track and field events. The competitor jumps over a horizontal bar, with the goal to be the person who has cleared the highest height.

Archery
Scott 2050 • 1983
The archery events were first introduced at the 1908 Olympic Games for both men and women. A competition was again held at the 1920 Games. The sport was not contested at another Olympic Games until 1972.

Boxing
Scott 2051 • 1983
Boxing has been a part of the Olympic Games since 1904 (except in 1912 in Stockholm because Swedish law banned boxing at the time.) The competitors are divided into weight classes and participate in a set of tournaments. Women's boxing will be included in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games.

Diving
Scott 2082 • 1984
Today’s diving events at the Olympic Games include platform, springboard, and synchronized diving. Divers are scored on the approach, the flight, and the entry into the water. They need to include the proper number of rotations and revolutions while in the air. The angle of entry into the water is important, with less splash resulting in a higher score.

Long Jump
Scott 2083 • 1984
A part of the track and field events, athletes participating in the long jump attempt to leap as far as possible from a specific takeoff point (foul line) and land in a pit filled with sand. The distance is measured from the foul line to the nearest break in the sand caused by any part of the body or uniform. Participants need speed — the greater the speed at takeoff, the further the jump will be — and strength — the method of the takeoff requires great strength to jump longer distances.

Wrestling
Scott 2084 • 1984
Wrestling is a physical competition between two competitors, involving grappling holds, joint locks, takedowns, and pins. This sport has been a part of the Olympic Games since 1896 for men, with a women's competition being introduced in 2004. The participants are divided into weight classes in both the Greco-Roman and the freestyle events.

Kayak
Scott 2085 • 1984
Kayaking and canoeing have been part of the Olympic Games since 1936. Races include the slalom — the racer must navigate through a course of hanging gates on river rapids, and the sprint — a race on open, flat water. The races vary in distances, but are typically 500 to 1,000 meters long. However, 200 meter events will be added to the 2012 events.
Olympics on U.S. Stamps

Discus
Scott 2048 • 1983
Archery
Scott 2050 • 1983

High Jump
Scott 2049 • 1983
Boxing
Scott 2051 • 1983

Diving
Scott 2082 • 1984
Wrestling
Scott 2084 • 1984

Long Jump
Scott 2083 • 1984
Kayaking
Scott 2085 • 1984
Olympics on U.S. Stamps

Gymnastics
Scott C101 • 1984
The beam event is competed only by women who must execute various skills including turns, leaps, and both front and back acrobatics using the entire length of the 4-inch wide apparatus.

Hurdles
Scott C102 • 1984
Three different hurdle events are part of the Olympic Games: 100-, 110-, and 400-meters. In this race, the competitors must jump hurdles that are a constant height and set at specific distances apart, depending on the event. The goal is to be the fastest across the finish line, without upsetting any of the hurdles along the way.

Basketball
Scott C103 • 1984
Men's basketball was added to the Summer Olympic Games in 1936, with the women following in 1976. The first games were held outdoors, on a converted tennis court made of clay and sand. (A rainstorm turned the court into a huge mud puddle during the 1936 championship game.) a converted tennis court, and the 1936 championship game was played during a rainstorm with 1,000 standing fans. Following this, the United States won every Olympic basketball championship until 1972.

Soccer
Scott C104 • 1984
Soccer, or Association Football, has been part of the Olympic Games since 1900. Because of the need for a large stadium, the event is often held away from the host city. Women's football was added in 1996.

Shot Put
Scott C105 • 1984
The history of the modern shot put can be traced to England, where the military had cannonball throwing competitions. Athletes in the modern shot put spin within a 7-foot diameter ring, with the goal of being the one to throw the put the furthest distance.

Fencing
Scott C109 • 1984
The Olympic Games host three fencing events for men — epee, foil, and sabre. The women have only the epee and the foil events. Once the battle begins, the goal is to be the first to score 45 hits, using a variety of movements or attacks.

Gymnastics
Scott C106 • 1984
Men's Olympic gymnastics include floor exercises, pommel horse event, still rings, vault, horizontal bar, and parallel bars. The male gymnasts must demonstrate balance, strength, power, and dynamic motion in their events.

Cycling
Scott C110 • 1984
Both men and women participate in Olympic team and individual cycling events. These include BMX, track, mountain biking, and mountain racing.

Swimming
Scott C107 • 1984
The Olympic swimming races are held in a pool that is 50 meters long. The athletes compete in individual, as well as relay events. The races vary in distances from 50 to 1500 meters. The winner is the first swimmer to touch an electronic finishing touchpad at the end of the pool.

Weightlifting
Scott C108 • 1984
In Olympic Weightlifting competitors, who are divided into weight classes, lift a barbell loaded with weight plates. Weightlifting is comprised of two events — the Snatch and the Clean and Jerk.

Pole Vault
Scott C112 • 1984
The pole vault has been part of the Olympics since 1896 for men, but it was not a women's event until 2000. The competitors run down a track, plant a pole in a metal box, and vault over a horizontal bar.
Olympics on U.S. Stamps

Gymnastics
Scott C101 • 1984
Basketball
Scott C103 • 1984

Hurdles
Scott C102 • 1984
Soccer
Scott C104 • 1984

Shot Put
Scott C105 • 1984
Swimming
Scott C107 • 1984

Gymnastics
Scott C106 • 1984
Weightlifting
Scott C108 • 1984

Fencing
Scott C109 • 1984
Volleyball
Scott C111 • 1984

Cycling
Scott C110 • 1984
Pole Vault
Scott C112 • 1984
Pole Vault  
Scott 2553 • 1992
Olympic pole vault rules require the participant to not move their hands along the pole, to clear the bar with their feet first, and to twist so that their stomach faces the bar while crossing over it. The goal is to be the person to vault the highest without knocking the bar down.

Discus  
Scott 2554 • 1992
A discus is a circular disc, usually made of wood with a metal rim. The center of a discus is thicker than at the edge. The men's discus is 8.7 inches in diameter and weighs 4 pounds 7 ounces, while the women's is 7.2 inches across weighing 2 pounds 3 ounces.

Women's Sprint  
Scott 2555 • 1992
The women's sprint (100m) race is held on a straight track. Runners attempt to maintain a top speed for as long as possible. The first athlete whose torso crosses the near edge of the finish line is the winner.

Javelin  
Scott 2556 • 1992
The javelin throw is a track and field event, where the javelin thrower gains momentum by running on a “runway” that is 36 yards long. The men's javelin throw has been an Olympic event since 1908, while the women have participated in the javelin throw since 1932.

Women's Hurdles  
Scott 2557 • 1992
The women run a 100- and a 400-meter hurdles race, with 10 hurdles in each event. In the 100-meter race, the hurdles are .84 meters tall, with 8.5 meters between each hurdle. The hurdles in the 400-meter race are .762 meters high, with 35 meters between each hurdle.

Soccer  
Scott 2637 • 1992
Olympic Soccer is played in a tournament format, with 16 men's teams and 12 women's teams. Each team fields 18 players — 7 are substitutes, and 2 must be goalkeepers.

Gymnastics  
Scott 2638 • 1992
Gymnastic competitions at the Summer Olympics are not always held at the same venue. Before World War II, all competitions were held outdoor. Since then, most of the gymnastics have taken place indoors.

Volleyball  
Scott 2639 • 1992
Olympic Volleyball is played on a court that is 18 meters x 9 meters. The players rotate in a clockwise manner each time they win the serve. The six athletes who are on the playing field are allowed three touches to get the ball over the net to the opponent's side.

Boxing  
Scott 2640 • 1992
Boxing is a sport in which two people hit each other, using only their fists. The Games are organized as tournaments, one set for each weight class. A referee supervises the matches.

Swimming  
Scott 2641 • 1992
The swimming events at the first Olympic Games were held in the open waters of the Mediterranean Sea. This popular spectator sport is now held in a 50-meter pool for both the men's and women's events.
Olympics on U.S. Stamps

- **Women's Hurdles**
  - Scott 2557 • 1992

- **Javelin**
  - Scott 2556 • 1992

- **Women's Sprint**
  - Scott 2555 • 1992

- **Discus**
  - Scott 2554 • 1992

- **Pole Vault**
  - Scott 2553 • 1992

- **Swimming**
  - Scott 2641 • 1992

- **Boxing**
  - Scott 2640 • 1992

- **Volleyball**
  - Scott 2639 • 1992

- **Gymnastics**
  - Scott 2638 • 1992

- **Soccer**
  - Scott 2637 • 1992
From the back of each stamp

Scott 3068a • 1996
“Decathlon: The decathlon consists of 10 events. On the first day, athletes complete in the 100-meter dash, long jump, shot put, high jump, and 400-meter run. On the second day, they perform the 110-meter hurdles, discus throw, pole vault, javelin throw, and 1500-meter run”

Scott 3068b • 1996
“Men's Canoeing: Whitewater, or slalom, events were added temporarily in 1972 and permanently in 1988. Flatwater canoeing has been part of the Games since 1936.”

Scott 3068c • 1996
Women’s Running: There are 8 women's running events, from 100 meters to the marathon (26 miles, 385 yards). Until 1964, the longest race was only 200 meters.”

Scott 3068d * 1996
“Women's Diving: Platform diving is performed from a board 10 meters above the water. The most difficult dive is the back 1 ½ somersault with 4 ½ twists. The U.S. has won over half the medals awarded in both men's and women's events.”

Scott 3068e • 1996
“Men's Cycling: Sprint cycling was one of the original events in the 1896 Games. It combines speed and strategy on a banked track. A women's event was added in 1988.”

Scott 3068f • 1996
“Freestyle Wrestling: Wrestling has 10 weight divisions. It is the only sport with a maximum weight limit: wrestlers must be less than 286 pounds. The United States has earned more medals than any other nation.”

Scott 3068g • 1996
“Women's Gymnastics: Women gymnasts compete in an all-around event, a team event, floor exercises, balance beam, uneven bars, and vault. Contestants must be at least 15 years old by the end of 1996 [Ed. Note: the year of the competition].”

Scott 3068h • 1996
“Women's Sailboarding: The first sailboarding contest was included in the 1984 Los Angeles Games. A separate women's event was added in 1992.”

Scott 3068i • 1996
“Men's Shot Put: The shot put has been included in all Games since 1896. A shot is a 16-pound ball of iron or brass. The United States has won 15 of 22 gold medals.”

Scott 3068j • 1996
“Women's Soccer: Although men's soccer has been a part of the Games since 1900, a women's tournament will be held for the first time in 1996. Eight teams will take part.”

Scott 3068k • 1996
“Beach Volleyball: Beach volleyball, played with two-person teams, will be added to the Games program for the first time in 1996. There will be both men's and women's events.”

Scott 3068l • 1996
“Men's Rowing: There will be 14 rowing events contested at the 1996 Games: 8 for men and 6 for women. For the first time, lightweight events will be included for men under 160 lbs. and for women under 130 lbs.”

Scott 3068m • 1996
“Men's Sprinting Events: The 100 meters and 400 meters were part of the first games in 1896. In the 100, 200, and 400 meters and the two sprint relays, the United States has won two-thirds of the gold medals.”

Scott 3068n • 1996
“Women's Swimming: The women's 400-meter freestyle event was first held in 1920; the 800-meter event was added in 1968. American women have won 15 of 24 gold medals in these events.”

Scott 3068o • 1996
“Women's Softball: Softball will make its first appearance in the 1996 Games. The United States team is the world champion and one of the teams favored to win a medal.”

Scott 3068p • 1996
“Men's Hurdles: The 110-meter hurdles event has been included in all the Games since 1896. The United States has earned 48 medals. No other nation has won more than 5.”

Scott 3068q • 1996
“Men's Swimming: The backstroke event was first included in the Games of 1900. There are now two events: the 100-meters, which is two lengths of the pool, and the 299 meters, which is four lengths.”

Scott 3068r • 1996
“Men's Gymnastics: Male gymnasts compete in 6 events: horizontal bar, parallel bars, vault, pommel horse, rings, and floor exercises. There are also an all-around event and a team event.”

Scott 3068s • 1996
“Equestrian: Equestrian is one of only two sports in which women compete against men. The jumping event was first included in the 1900 Games. The sport was opened to women in 1952.”

Scott 3068t • 1996
“Men's Basketball: Since basketball first made its appearance in 1936, the United States has won 92 games and lost only 2. Professionals from the NBA were allowed to compete for the first time in 1992.”
The American Philatelic Society

A special thank you to Mark Maestrone, President of Sports Philatelists International for his assistance in identifying the U.S. stamps related to the Summer Olympic Events.

This album does not include every issue related to the topic. Use the blank pages at the end of this album to add stamps related to the Olympic Games.

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The July-August issue of the American Topical Association’s Topical Tidbits focuses on the history and symbols of the summer Olympics.
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