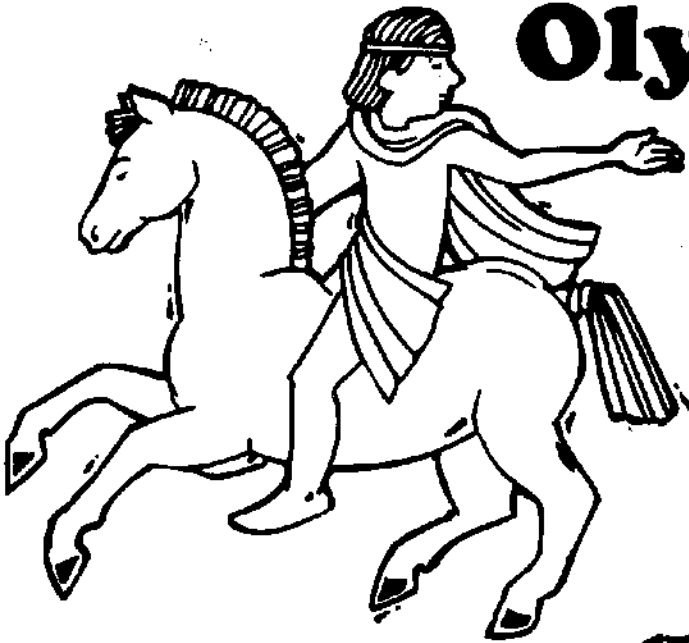


# Olympic History



finest athletes. In order to participate, competitors had to be men with spotless reputations who were of Greek descent.

The first day of the Olympian Games was devoted to sacrifices made to the gods. After that, footraces were run in the stadium.

At first, the footrace was the only event of the Olympian Games. But others were gradually added. Olympic sports included wrestling, boxing, and a combination of the two, called the pancratium.

Other events were horse racing and the pentathlon, which consisted of five parts: the sprint, long jump, javelin hurl, discus throw and wrestling.

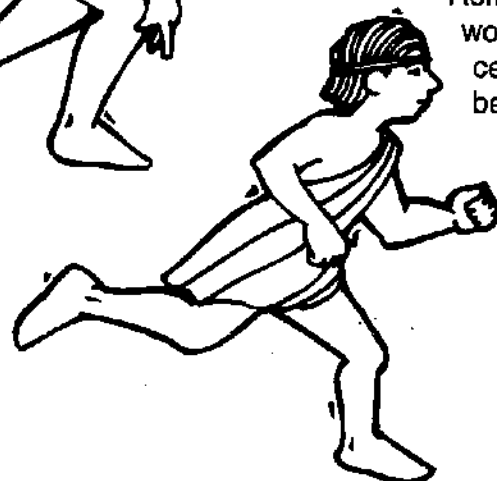
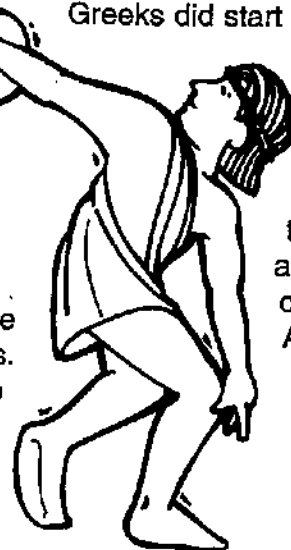
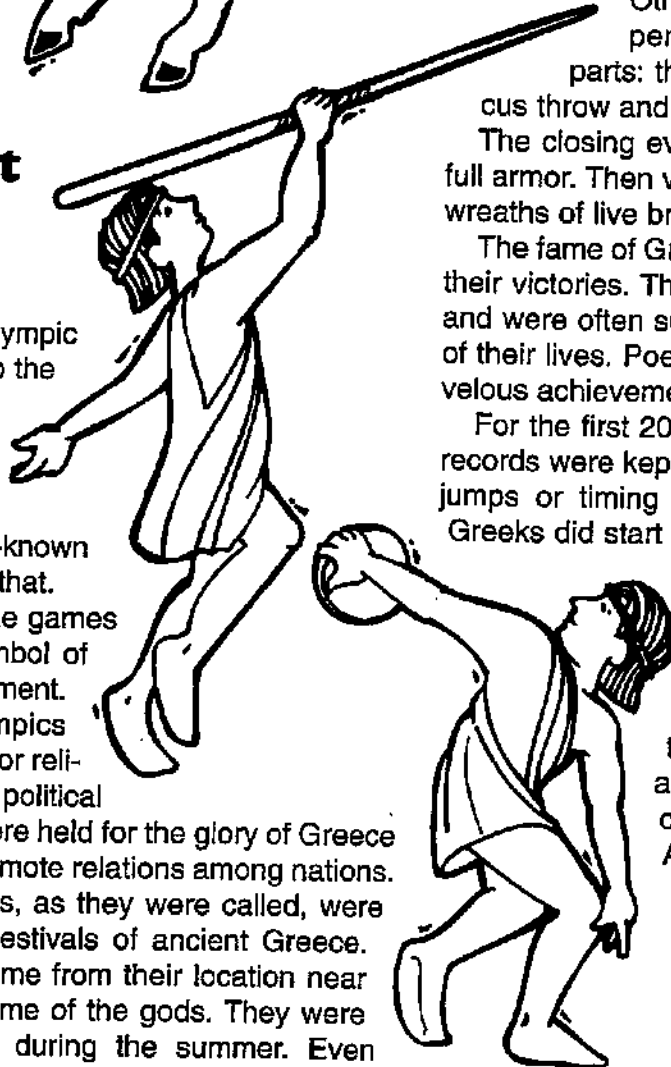
The closing event of the games was a race run in full armor. Then victorious athletes were crowned with wreaths of live branches.

The fame of Greece's champions lived on long after their victories. They were considered national heroes and were often supported by public funds for the rest of their lives. Poets even wrote odes about their marvelous achievements.

For the first 200 years of the Olympian Games, no records were kept. There was no official measuring of jumps or timing of races. Eventually, however, the Greeks did start keeping written records. In fact, historians know that Aristotle made a list of winners. However, none of these early records have survived until modern times.

The Olympian Games reached the height of their glory in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. The ancient competition was abolished in 394 A.D. when Greece came under Roman control. It would be many centuries before the games were reborn.

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## The Ancient Olympic Games

The history of the Olympic Games extends far into the past. The first official Olympic competition was held in 776 B.C. However, athletic competitions were well-known in Greece even before that.

As they are today, the games were considered a symbol of peace and accomplishment. But the ancient Olympics were also an occasion for religious ceremonies and political displays. The games were held for the glory of Greece and its gods—not to promote relations among nations.

The Olympian Games, as they were called, were only one of the great festivals of ancient Greece. The games got their name from their location near Mount Olympus, the home of the gods. They were held every four years, during the summer. Even when Greece was at war, hostilities would come to a halt for the games.

Early in a year that the Olympian Games were to take place, runners traveled to each of Greece's city-states. They invited all to come to the sacred grove at the foot of Mount Olympus. There they would join in a competition to honor Zeus, the father of the gods.

Each of the city-states organized a delegation of its

## The Modern Olympic Games

The existence of the modern Olympic Games is largely due to the efforts of one man: Baron Pierre de Coubertin of France. De Coubertin was a young man when the site of the ancient Olympian Games was discovered by archaeologists. As he grew older, the idea of reviving the games took hold of his imagination.

During the late nineteenth century, athletic competitions were rarely held between nations. De Coubertin wanted to change that. At a meeting of the French Athletic Sports Union in 1892, de Coubertin presented his plan for a modern Olympics. He made a passionate speech about how such a competition could build peace among nations.

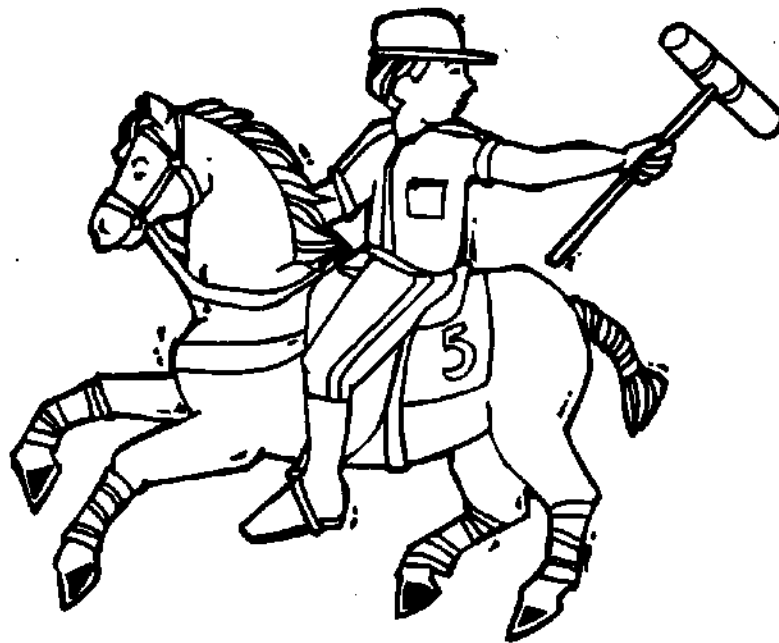
The baron's plan wasn't accepted at once. But his ideas set others to thinking. Meanwhile, de Coubertin prepared another presentation. He also started a magazine to spread his ideas. And he wrote letters to influential people in the fields of sports, youth education and fitness.

By the time de Coubertin made his second presentation, in 1894, he had gathered a great deal of support. The plan was accepted with enthusiasm.

The decision was made to hold the first modern Olympics in 1896. The city would be Greece, home of the ancient games. Athens was chosen as the host city because it was closest to the original site. And the games would be held every four years, just as they had been centuries before. There were important differences, however. The athletes would come from nations around the world. And the games would move to another city and nation for each competition.

On April 6, 1896, Athens was filled with Olympic competitors and spectators. The stadium was built to hold 50,000 people. The actual number of spectators was closer to 100,000. As the crowd cheered, the 285 athletes marched into the stadium. They represented 13 nations from around the globe.

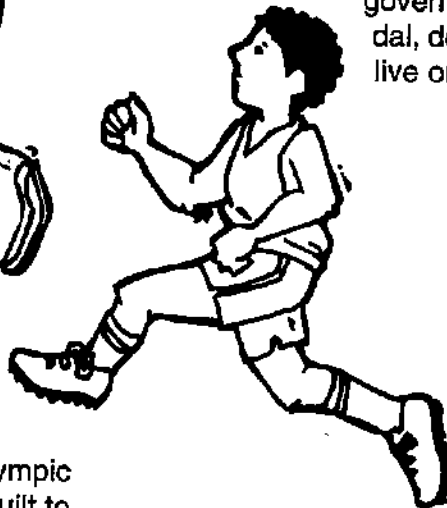
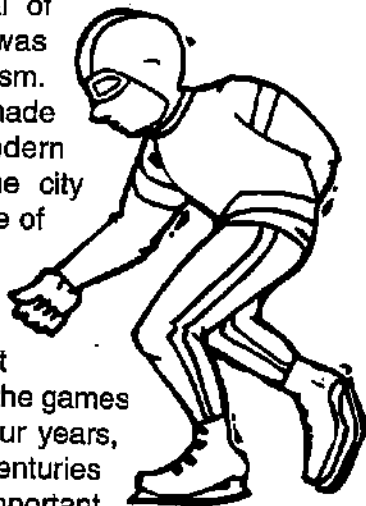
The modern Olympic games continued to be held every four years afterward, with the exception of 1916, 1940 and 1944, when the world was at war. In 1924, the winter games were added. The winter and



summer games took place in the same year until 1994. Only the winter games were held again that year and continued every four years. So an Olympic competition now takes place every two years.

The Olympics are overseen by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Between competitions, the committee works to prepare for the next set of games. Recently members of the committee were accused of taking bribes from officials of hopeful host cities. The IOC is attempting to "clean house" and

restore the luster of the competition to its governing body. Despite the scandal, de Coubertin's dream is sure to live on.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

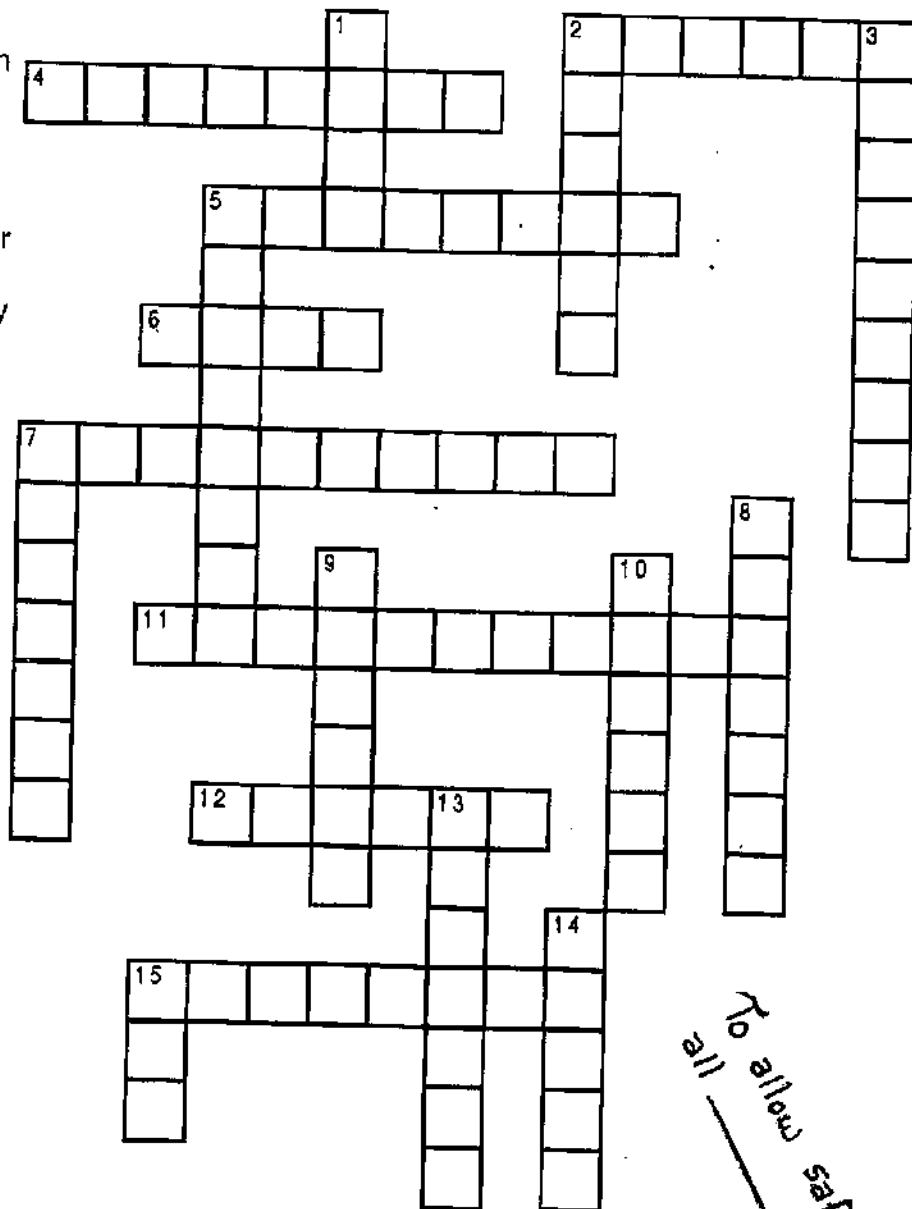
# Olympic History

Per. \_\_\_\_\_

Read each clue. Think of a word that fits. Then write that word in the appropriate space on the puzzle. If you need help, look back at the "Olympic History" article.

## Across

2. The \_\_\_\_\_ Olympics started in 1924.
4. At the first modern Olympics, \_\_\_\_\_ nations took part.
5. The ancient Olympian Games were actually a Greek \_\_\_\_\_ in honor of the gods.
6. The ancient Olympics were held every \_\_\_\_\_ years.
7. The ancient Olympics began with \_\_\_\_\_ to the gods.
11. The man responsible for the revival of the Olympics is Baron \_\_\_\_\_.
12. One event in the original pentathlon was the \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Baron de Coubertin started a \_\_\_\_\_ to gain support for his ideas.



## Down

1. The Olympic Games were held in honor of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A champion of the Olympian Games received a \_\_\_\_\_ as a reward.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ ceremonies were part of the ancient Olympics.
5. The first Olympics only featured one event, the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The ancient Olympics were held in an outdoor \_\_\_\_\_.
8. In ancient times, \_\_\_\_\_ spread the word about an upcoming Olympic competition.
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ Olympics started in 1896.
10. The first modern Olympics was held in \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Today the Olympics bring together athletes from many \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Both the ancient and the modern Olympics are symbols of \_\_\_\_\_.
15. In ancient times, all Olympic competitors were \_\_\_\_\_.

Year of first Olympics: \_\_\_\_\_



To allow safe travel, all \_\_\_\_\_ were stopped.