Olympics Trivia Questions

3 rounds · 32 questions · about 45 min

How to run it

1. Print one host sheet for yourself and one team answer sheet per team. The host sheet has the key on it — keep it face down.
2. Three to five people per team, mixed if you can: a casual fan and a superfan remember different things.
3. Read each question twice, then give about thirty seconds.
4. Teams swap sheets at the end of each round and mark each other while you read the answers. One point for each correct answer.
5. The line under each answer on the host sheet is there to be read out once the answer is in.

ROUND 1 — The Basics

1. How many rings are there in the Olympic symbol?

- **A** **Five**
- B Four
- C Six
- D Seven

Answer: A — Five

Worth adding: The five interlocking rings stand for the five inhabited continents united by Olympism, and their six colours (including the white background) were chosen because at least one of them appeared in every national flag of the time.

2. In which city were the first modern Olympic Games held in 1896?

- A London
- B Rome
- C Paris
- **D** **Athens**

Answer: D — Athens

Worth adding: Athens was chosen to link the revived Games to their Greek roots, and the events took place in the marble Panathenaic Stadium.

3. The ancient Olympic Games were held at Olympia in honour of which god?

- A Poseidon
- B Hermes
- **C** **Zeus**
- D Apollo

Answer: C — Zeus

Worth adding: Olympia was the sanctuary of Zeus, home to his giant ivory-and-gold statue, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

4. Which medal is awarded to the third-place finisher at the Olympic Games?

A Pewter

B Bronze

C Silver

D Copper

Answer: B — Bronze

Worth adding: The gold–silver–bronze ranking was standardised from the 1904 St. Louis Games onwards; in 1896 winners actually received silver medals and runners-up bronze.

5. Which city hosted the Summer Olympic Games of 2024?

A Tokyo

B Paris

C Los Angeles

D Madrid

Answer: B — Paris

Worth adding: Paris 2024 marked the French capital's third Summer Games, exactly 100 years after it last hosted in 1924.

6. What does the Olympic motto 'Citius, Altius, Fortius' mean in English?

A Swifter, Longer, Bolder

B Higher, Farther, Faster

C Stronger, Braver, Better

D Faster, Higher, Stronger

Answer: D — Faster, Higher, Stronger

Worth adding: The Latin phrase was proposed by Pierre de Coubertin's friend Henri Didon, and in 2021 the IOC added the word 'Communiter' ('Together') to it.

7. Where is the Olympic flame traditionally lit before every torch relay?

A In the host city's main stadium

B At the IOC headquarters

C In ancient Olympia, Greece

D At Mount Olympus

Answer: C — In ancient Olympia, Greece

Worth adding: The flame is kindled at the ruins of the Temple of Hera in Olympia using a parabolic mirror that concentrates the sun's rays, symbolising its 'pure' origin.

8. Which city hosted the first Olympic Winter Games in 1924?

A Chamonix, France

B Oslo, Norway

C Lake Placid, USA

D St. Moritz, Switzerland

Answer: A — Chamonix, France

Worth adding: The Chamonix event was originally billed as 'International Winter Sports Week' and was only retroactively recognised as the first Winter Olympics.

9. By tradition, which country's team enters first in the Parade of Nations at the Opening Ceremony?

- A France
- B Switzerland
- C The host nation
- **D Greece**

Answer: D — Greece

Worth adding: Greece leads the parade as the birthplace of the Olympics, while the host nation traditionally enters last.

10. The Winter Olympic sport of biathlon combines cross-country skiing with which other discipline?

- **A Rifle shooting**
- B Ski jumping
- C Speed skating
- D Archery

Answer: A — Rifle shooting

Worth adding: Biathlon grew out of Scandinavian military ski patrols, and missed shots cost athletes either penalty loops or added time.

11. What is the official distance of the Olympic marathon?

- A 40.000 km
- B 45.500 km
- **C 42.195 km**
- D 38.600 km

Answer: C — 42.195 km

Worth adding: The odd distance (26 miles 385 yards) comes from the 1908 London course and was fixed as the world standard in 1921.

12. Which swimmer won eight gold medals at a single Games in Beijing in 2008?

- A Ian Thorpe
- **B Michael Phelps**
- C Mark Spitz
- D Ryan Lochte

Answer: B — Michael Phelps

Worth adding: Phelps's eight golds in 2008 broke Mark Spitz's 1972 record of seven at one Games.

ROUND 2 — Sports, Symbols and the Paralympics

13. Which American athlete won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics?

- A Carl Lewis
- B Bob Beamon
- **C Jesse Owens**
- D Ralph Boston

Answer: C — Jesse Owens

Worth adding: Owens took the 100 m, 200 m, long jump and 4x100 m relay, a sweep that directly contradicted Nazi propaganda about racial superiority.

14. Who scored the first perfect 10 in Olympic gymnastics, at the 1976 Montreal Games?

- A Olga Korbut
- **B Nadia Comăneci**
- C Věra Čáslavská
- D Ludmilla Tourischeva

Answer: B — Nadia Comăneci

Worth adding: The scoreboard in Montreal could only display three digits, so Comăneci's 10.00 on the uneven bars appeared as '1.00'.

15. Which city hosted the Summer Olympics in 1908, 1948 and 2012?

- A Tokyo
- B Paris
- C Los Angeles
- **D London**

Answer: D — London

Worth adding: London became the first city to host three Summer Games, with the 1948 edition nicknamed the 'Austerity Games' because of post-war rationing.

16. In which city were the first officially recognised Paralympic Games held in 1960?

- **A Rome**
- B Heidelberg
- C Tokyo
- D Stoke Mandeville

Answer: A — Rome

Worth adding: Rome 1960 followed the same host city as the Olympics for the first time, evolving from the Stoke Mandeville Games for wheelchair athletes founded by Dr Ludwig Guttmann.

17. What are the three curved shapes that form the Paralympic symbol called?

- A Aspiros
- B Nikes
- C Vitae
- **D Agitos**

Answer: D — Agitos

Worth adding: 'Agito' is Latin for 'I move', and the three red, blue and green crescents circling a central point echo the Paralympic motto 'Spirit in Motion'.

18. Which of these is a Paralympic sport with no equivalent in the Olympic programme?

- **A Goalball**
- B Table tennis
- C Archery
- D Rowing

Answer: A — Goalball

Worth adding: Goalball was invented for blind veterans, is played with a ball containing bells, and requires all players to wear eyeshades so the arena must stay silent during play.

19. In which sliding sport do athletes race head-first down the ice track?

- A Snowboard cross
- **B Skeleton**
- C Bobsleigh
- D Luge

Answer: B — Skeleton

Worth adding: Skeleton riders go head-first and face-down, while luge athletes slide feet-first on their backs.

20. Which of these is NOT one of the three weapons used in Olympic fencing?

- A Foil
- B Épée
- **C Rapier**
- D Sabre

Answer: C — Rapier

Worth adding: Olympic fencing uses only foil, épée and sabre, each with its own target area; the rapier is a historical duelling sword, not a modern competition weapon.

21. Which sport returned to the Olympic programme in 2016 after a 112-year absence?

- **A Golf**
- B Tug of war
- C Rugby union (15s)
- D Polo

Answer: A — Golf

Worth adding: Golf had last been contested in 1904 in St. Louis before its comeback in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

22. In which city is the headquarters of the International Olympic Committee located?

- A Athens
- **B Lausanne**
- C Geneva
- D Brussels

Answer: B — Lausanne

Worth adding: Lausanne has been the IOC's home since 1915 and is officially nicknamed the 'Olympic Capital'.

23. In which Olympic sport do men and women compete directly against each other in the same medal events?

- A Judo
- B Athletics
- **C Equestrian**
- D Shooting

Answer: C — Equestrian

Worth adding: Equestrian events are mixed because the horse is considered an equal partner, so riders of any gender compete in the same classes.

24. At the 1968 Mexico City Games, Dick Fosbury won high jump gold using a revolutionary technique known as the...

A Straddle
B Scissors kick
C Western roll
D Fosbury Flop

Answer: D — Fosbury Flop

Worth adding: Going over the bar backwards was only practical once deep foam landing mats replaced sand and sawdust pits, and today virtually every elite high jumper uses the Flop.

25. What prize did victors receive at the ancient Olympic Games in Olympia?

A A bronze shield
B A gold coin
C A laurel crown from Delphi
D A wreath of wild olive leaves

Answer: D — A wreath of wild olive leaves

Worth adding: The 'kotinos', cut from a sacred wild olive tree near the Temple of Zeus, carried enormous prestige — the real rewards came later from the athlete's home city.

26. In which year's Games was the Olympic torch relay from Olympia to the host city staged for the first time?

A 1936 Berlin
B 1896 Athens
C 1948 London
D 1920 Antwerp

Answer: A — 1936 Berlin

Worth adding: The relay was devised for Berlin 1936 by organiser Carl Diem and has been part of every Games since, even though the flame itself had burned in stadiums since 1928.

ROUND 3 — For the Experts

27. At which Games were solid gold medals awarded for the last time?

A 1936 Berlin
B 1896 Athens
C 1912 Stockholm
D 1924 Paris

Answer: C — 1912 Stockholm

Worth adding: Since 1912 'gold' medals have been made mainly of silver with a thin gold plating, which must weigh at least six grams.

28. What was the name of the first official Olympic mascot, a dachshund introduced at the 1972 Munich Games?

A Hodori

B Waldi

C Misha

D Schuss

Answer: B — Waldi

Worth adding: Waldi's striped, multicoloured body reflected the Munich Games' colours, and the dachshund was chosen for its qualities of resistance, tenacity and agility.

29. Which of these was a genuine Olympic medal event between 1900 and 1920?

A Darts

B Tug of war

C Pole climbing

D Chess

Answer: B — Tug of war

Worth adding: Tug of war was contested at five Games from 1900 to 1920, with Great Britain the most successful nation before the event was dropped.

30. Which Soviet gymnast won 18 Olympic medals between 1956 and 1964, a total that stood as the overall record for nearly half a century?

A Polina Astakhova

B Olga Korbut

C Larisa Latynina

D Lyudmila Turishcheva

Answer: C — Larisa Latynina

Worth adding: Latynina's nine golds, five silvers and four bronzes remained the all-time Olympic record until Michael Phelps passed her tally in 2012.

31. Which of the following is NOT a discipline of the modern pentathlon?

A Archery

B Shooting

C Fencing

D Swimming

Answer: A — Archery

Worth adding: Modern pentathlon, invented by Pierre de Coubertin to test the skills of a 19th-century cavalry officer, combines fencing, swimming, riding (being replaced after 2024) and the combined shooting-and-running 'laser run' — archery has never been part of it.

32. The ancient Olympic Games were finally abolished around AD 393 by which Roman emperor?

A Constantine the Great

B Nero

C Hadrian

D Theodosius I

Answer: D — Theodosius I

Worth adding: Theodosius I banned pagan festivals as part of making Christianity the empire's official religion, ending a cycle of Games that had run for roughly 12 centuries.