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For thousands of years, people have competed in athletics competitions to be the fastest or strongest. Many athletes are famous for the amazing records they have broken in running, jumping and throwing. There are events for everyone, and athletics is a great way to make friends and learn to be your best.



Information Report/Procedure

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Athletics  
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# Athletics

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# Athletics

## What Is Athletics?

The sport of athletics, also called track and field, is a group of competitions testing human ability in running, jumping and throwing. Over time, competitions have developed to find the fastest and the strongest people.

There are athletics programs for all ages. Starting as young as three years old, athletes can become involved in fun activities, learn a new sport and compete against other athletes.

Today, the sport of athletics includes many different events that take place on and around a running track. Training for all athletics events keeps the body healthy and fit.



Young athletes participate in an athletics event by racing around a track.



These boys are competing in a cross-country running event, which takes place off the running track.



## Ancient Sports

Athletics is one of the oldest sports in the world. Paintings of javelin-throwing competitions and marathon races have been found on the walls of 4000-year-old Egyptian tombs. In Ireland, there are books telling of the ancient Tailteann (pronounced *tell-shin*) Games. The games were thought to have been held since around 1820 BCE. They involved running and rock-throwing to honour the goddess Taitiu (pronounced *tall-chu*).



Ancient Egyptian art shows javelin throwing.

The ancient Greeks invented athletics competitions as we know them now. They held an Olympic Games every four years, starting in 776 BCE. The first Olympic Games had only one competition, called the “stade”, which was a 190-metre sprint. Later, more races were added. In some, the runner carried a torch or wore full armour. The ancient Greeks also added the long jump, the discus and the javelin throw to their five-day games.

The games were so popular, tens of thousands of visitors came to Olympia in southern Greece to watch them. The competitions even took place during times of war.

The word “athletics” comes from the Greek word *athlos*, meaning competition or contest.



The ancient Greeks held races where runners carried torches.



A modern version of the ancient Tailteann Games was held in 1924, 1928 and 1932.



## Modern Athletics Competitions

Athens, Greece, was the site of the first modern Olympic Games, held in 1896. Now, Olympic athletics competitions take place during the Summer Olympics, held every four years.



The first Olympic stadium was more narrow than the ones that are built today.



Modern stadiums are built to hold thousands of people.

Between Olympic Games, there are other athletics events and championship competitions. These give athletes the chance to train and compete with other athletes.

Modern athletics is a sport for all people and all ages. Athletes can participate in professional or non-professional competitions.

The World Athletics Championships, which began in 1976, are another chance for athletes to compete for medals. They take place every two years.

Athletes can form friendships with people from different countries during events.

