

# Ancient Games

For 1,000 years from 776BC to 395AD, citizens from around the Greek world flocked to Olympia every fourth year to take part in the Games in honour of the god Zeus. While the ultimate prize was the olive wreath of victory, the Olympic values – noble competition and the effort to combine body, will, and mind in a balanced whole – gave special meaning to the Games

## ▶ RUNNING

**Stadion:** Only event of first 13 Olympiads. One length of stadium – 192m. Olympiad named after winner

**Diaulos:** Two lengths of stadium

**Dolichos:** Long-distance race – anything from 7-24 lengths

**Hoplitodromia:** Endurance race wearing shield, helmet, and **greaves** – lower leg armour

## ▶ PENTATHLON

Test for all-round athlete comprising five events; discus, javelin, long jump, running and wrestling

### ▶ DISCUS THROW

Technique very similar to today's freestyle discus throw

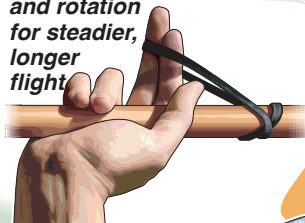
**Discus:** Made originally of stone, later of iron, lead or bronze

Diameter: 17-32cm  
Weight: 1.3-6.6kg

## ▶ JAVELIN THROW

Olympia

Leather thong looped round javelin enabled greater force of throw and rotation for steadier, longer flight



## ▶ LONG JUMP

Hand-held weights – **halteres** – gave jumper momentum on take-off and balance on landing



Different shapes, made of lead, iron or stone.  
Weight: Av. 2.5kg  
Length: 12-23cm

## Stadium

Track: 192m  
Capacity: 40-45,000

**Hippodrome**  
Equestrian events  
Track: 600m

## OLYMPIA

About 100BC

**Gymnasium**  
Running, discus, javelin

**Prytaneion**  
Hosted banquet for victors

**Temple of Hera**

**Echo Colonnade**  
Trumpeters sounded start of events

**Temple of Zeus**  
Housed gold and ivory statue of Zeus, one of Seven Wonders of Ancient World

**Bouleuterion**  
Olympic council meetings

**Palaistra**  
Pancration, boxing, wrestling, long jump

**Swimming pool**  
For relaxation only

**Leonidaion**  
Hotel for visiting officials

## ▶ EQUESTRIAN

Separate races for fully grown horses, mares, and foals

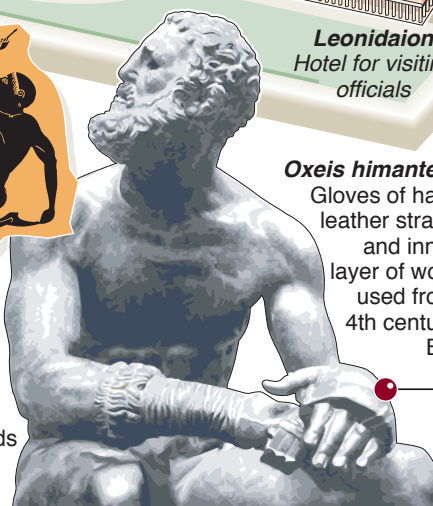
## Chariot races

**Synoris** – two-horse team  
**Tethrippon** – four-horse team. Both divided into two contests; one for horses of any age, the other for colts. Races from 4-13km



## Oxeis himantes:

Gloves of hard leather straps and inner layer of wool used from 4th century BC



## ▶ COMBAT

### Wrestling:

**Upright** – to win, contestant had to throw opponent three times to ground  
**Ground** – match continued until one competitor raised hand to acknowledge defeat



**Pancration:** Combined wrestling and boxing. All blows, kicking, strangling allowed, no biting or gouging of eyes

**Boxing:** Use of fists only. Win by fall or submission. Early boxers wrapped soft ox-hide straps – **himantes** – around hands to strengthen wrists and steady fingers