

# Winter Olympics

Swishing down the slope. Twisting through the air. Twirling across the ice. Every four years the best cold weather athletes compete. The winners get the gold. It's the Winter Olympics.

The first Winter Olympics were in 1924. They were in France. They had events like skiing. They also had ski jumping and speed skating. And they had hockey and figure skating. 258 athletes competed. They were from 16 countries. Norway earned the most medals. They won 17 total. Athletes from the United States brought home four. The U.S. won one gold medal.

The 2014 Winter Olympics are in Sochi, Russia. 2800 athletes are competing. They come from 88 countries. They are competing in 98 events. The United States has over 200 athletes competing. Canada and Russia do too. There are 18 countries with one athlete competing. Several countries have athletes in the Winter Olympics for the first time.



Photo Credit: Brian P. Spears

The United States has sent athletes to every Winter Olympics. The U.S. has won a gold medal every time. Norway has the highest total of winter gold medals.

The Winter and Summer Olympics were the same year. This changed in 1992. The schedule would go back and forth. An Olympics would be held every two years. A Summer Olympics was held with a Winter Games two years later. The Winter Olympics was held in 1992. It was held again in 1994. It's been held every four years since.

Some athletes have competed in both summer and winter. Four have won medals in both. American Eddie Eagan a gold medals in Boxing in 1920. He won gold in bobsled in 1932. Jacob Tullin Thams was from Norway. He won gold in ski jumping in 1924. He won silver in sailing in 1936.

Clara Hughes was from Canada. She won two bronze medals in cycling in 1996. She won medals in speed skating in 2002, 2006 and 2010. She is the only person to win more than one medal in both the Winter and Summer.

One person won medals in winter and summer the same year. She is Christa Luding-Rothensburger. She is from Germany. She won gold and silver medals in speed skating in 1988. She won a silver medal in cycling in 1988. She won more medals other years.

Events can be added or taken away. Events are added if they are popular. They can't cost too much. They should give chances for men and women to compete. Some years demo events are held. These events show sports of the host country. Sled dog racing was held in 1932 in New York. Bandy is popular in Europe. It was played at the 1952 Games in Norway.

Some events are taken out of the games. Ski ballet was in the 1988 and 1992 Olympics. It took a lot of strength. It also took dance ability. Skiers would complete routines. They did flips and spins. The event didn't draw enough attention. It was cut. New "extreme" winter sports got more attention.

The X Games are very popular. They led sports such as the snowboard halfpipe in the Olympics. This event was first in the 1998 Games in Japan. Snowboard Cross became an event in 2006. In 2014 in Russia were several new events. Men's and Women's Slopestyle Snowboard are new. Ski Slopestyle and Ski Halfpipe were added.

Slopestyle has been a popular X Games event. Athletes complete tricks while skiing or snowboarding. They are on a course. The course includes jumps. It has rails and boxes. They earn more points for doing harder tricks. They earn points for how high they get in the air on the jumps.

Also new is a team event in figure skating. Figure skating is a popular winter sport. This is the first new figure skating event since 1976. Other skating events are done by individuals and pairs. The team event is the first time the competing countries compete as a team. Each team includes a male and a female individual skater. Each team also has a pair and an ice dancing pair. Each skate earns points that count toward the team's total. The highest total score wins gold.

The team from Russia won the first team gold medal. The Canadian team didn't win any of the events. But they earned enough points to get the silver medal. The United States came in third.

Plans are already underway for the 2018 Winter Olympics. They will be held in South Korea. They will be from February 9-25. 98 events will be included.