

# The modern Olympics

In the 19th century, many countries thought that introducing sport into schools would make pupils healthier. They also believed that teaching sportsmanship would make people live together more happily. The excavations at Olympia were making people interested in the Ancient Greeks, and gave one man an idea. He was a wealthy French nobleman called Baron Pierre de Coubertin. He thought he could bring people, from all around the world, to compete in a modern Olympic Games. He invited people from other countries, to a meeting in Paris, in 1894 at which the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was set up.

People needed a clear idea about the purpose of the games and the way they were going to be organised. Baron de Coubertin's ideas formed the basis of the rules and regulations which became the Olympic Charter. The athletes who competed in the games had to obey the terms of this charter.

The first modern Olympic Games took place in 1896, in Athens. They were held every four years after that, except in 1916, 1940 and 1944. Athletes competed in athletics, cycling, fencing, gymnastics, shooting, swimming, tennis, weightlifting and wrestling. The marathon race was also introduced. The winner was a Greek shepherd called Spiridon Louy, who ran the 40 kilometres from Marathon to Athens in just under three hours. Women were not allowed to compete in the marathon, so the next day, a woman called Stamata Revithi ran the course as a protest.

The countries that took part in the first modern Olympic Games were Australia,

Austria, Bulgaria, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA. Here are some statistics about countries that competed in the games between 1900 and 2000:

Date	Venue	Number of nations
1900	Paris	26
1920	Antwerp	29
1948	London	59
1960	Rome	83
1980	Moscow	80
2000	Sydney	200

- 1) Why did people think that sport in school was a good idea?
- 2) Why were people interested in Ancient Greece in the 19th century?
- 3) Why was Pierre de Coubertin important in the development of the modern games?
- 4) When and where did the first modern games take place?
- 5) How many sports were in the first modern games?
- 5a) Which of these sports were not played in the ancient games?
- 6) Make a graph to show how the number of countries, taking part in the games, changed between 1900 and 2000.
- 7) Why do you think the games were not played in 1916, 1940 and 1944?
- 8) What is good sportsmanship and what is bad sportsmanship?