Personal Best

Many fictional titles about the Olympics involve characters creating their own versions of the games. Like these characters, most kids crave the chance to test themselves. Give your child that opportunity as you encourage her to create and participate in her own Olympic Games.

What you’ll need

- Drawing materials and art supplies for designing and making “uniforms” or team symbols, medals or awards, and other signs or decorations
- Sports equipment and/or board games, stopwatch and tape measure, and a large open space
- A smart phone or other device for playing music and making videos

Directions

After you’ve read fiction books about the Olympics and nonfiction titles about Olympic athletes, ask your child what she noticed about the attitudes and goals of both the fictional characters and the athletes. Talk about something that she might like to accomplish. How would she go about it? Did the books give her any ideas?

Suggest that she plan and participate in her own Olympic games or a field day.

Brainstorm with your child about the kind of games your child would like to play or a challenge she’d like to tackle. Help her focus her ideas around her abilities and available resources:

- Your child may want to try a sport that takes place at the real Olympic games or create a competitive sport of her own, such as tree hugging, distance swinging, or bubble blowing.
- Invite family, friends and neighbors to participate. If no one is available to play along, consider a “Teddy bear” Olympics with stuffed animals or other toys catapulted in the long jump or high jump or raced down a hill or ramp in the 100-meter dash.
- Have your child designate teams and create symbols and artwork that can be secured onto participants’ clothing to make uniforms. Plan an opening parade or ceremony with music chosen by your child.
- Your child can also decide what kind of recognition for accomplishment in the games participants will receive and create medals, trophies, certificates, or edible awards!
- Encourage training for the games. Have your child practice and measure and note her performance using standard measures like minutes or feet or unique units, such as a stack or length of blocks.
- Take video of the opening ceremony and of the games. After you watch it together, encourage your child to create a voice over commentary with her take on the action.

Before the games begin, be sure to talk with your child about what her expectations are. Encourage her to predict outcomes about her own performance. After the medals have been distributed, give your child a chance to reflect and discuss the outcomes with you. Even if she took the gold, can she think of ways to improve her performance?

Find more books and activities about Sport and the Olympics at Start with a Book

www.startwithabook.org
Explore the Olympics!

This Reading Rockets Reading Adventure Pack about the Olympics will take you and your child on a learning adventure that starts with books. Exploring new ideas together lets your child see you learning and reading too, and gives your child personal experiences to support his growing knowledge.

Start with a book

Look at your local library for books about the Olympics. See a list of fiction and nonfiction books about the Olympics on this page.

Read together

One book is fiction — a "make-believe" story. Choose another book that is nonfiction — or informational and true. When you know you'll have at least 20 minutes, grab your child and a book, and dive right in. Talk about the cover of the book. Can your child guess what it is about? Has your child ever read a book by the same author or about the same topic? Read the book to your child. Take time to ask and answer questions as you read, explore the pictures, and wonder together what will happen next. Follow the same steps when you read the other book.

Learn together

Have a conversation and try the activities on the pages.

Reading fiction books

• Take your time and talk about the story and pictures with your child.
• Ask your child questions and let your child ask questions.
• Read with expression to create excitement.
• You don’t need to read every word. Keeping your child interested is the goal.

Reading nonfiction books

• Wonder out loud. As you are reading (or afterward), talk about facts you find interesting or questions you have.
• Explore the pictures and other graphics in the book, such as charts and diagrams.
• Don’t be afraid to jump around, reading pages that especially interest your child. You don’t have to read a nonfiction book straight through.

Send this powerful message to your child: reading and learning are fun, and can happen everywhere — not just at school!