



# 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](http://www.startwithabook.org)



# The Olympics

## Adventures in Reading:

*Reading Adventure Packs from Reading Rockets*



### Read and learn together!

- Parent reading tips
- Two hands-on activities
- Recommended books about the Olympics

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# Books about the Olympics

## Fiction

*Babar's Celesteville Games*  
by Laurent de Brunhoff

*Olympics* by X.J. Kennedy

*Max and Marla*  
by Alexandra Boiger

*The Mud Flat Olympics*  
by James Stevenson

*Olympig!* by Victoria Jamieson

## Nonfiction

*DK Eyewitness Books: Olympics*  
by Chris Oxlade

*Freeze Frame: A Photographic History of the Winter Olympics*  
by Sue Macy

*G Is for Gold Medal: An Olympic Alphabet* by Brad Herzog

*Going for Gold!* by Andrew Donkin

*America's Champion Swimmer: Gertrude Ederle* by David Adler

*Bright Path: Young Jim Thorpe*  
by Don Brown

*How to Train with a T. Rex and Win 8 Gold Medals* by Michael Phelps with Alan Abrahamson

*Nadia: The Girl Who Couldn't Sit Still*  
by Karlin Gray

*A Picture Book of Jesse Owens*  
by David Adler

*Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds: The Sammy Lee Story* by Paula Yoo

*Touch the Sky: Alice Coachman, Olympic High Jumper*  
by Ann Malaspina

*Twelve Rounds to Glory: The Story of Muhammad Ali*  
by Charles R. Smith

*Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman* by Kathleen Krull

# How to use your Reading Adventure Pack

## 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 these 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!

## “GET REAL” ACTIVITY : THE OLYMPICS

# Olympic Hosts



Thousands of athletes from around the world participate in the Olympic Games. Reading nonfiction books about the Olympics will introduce your child to the global geography of the Olympics and spark his curiosity to read and learn about other countries, especially the host nation.

After you read nonfiction books about the Olympics, talk about the significance of the Olympic Games as a world event. Introduce conversation about the cultural and racial diversity of the athletes by taking a look at the differences of the national flags of the more than 200 nations that participate in the Olympics. Talk about how the flags all have different colors and shapes, but they are all still flags. Then extend the idea to recognizing and embracing differences and other cultures by transforming your living room into another country.

### At home with the host nation

If you and your child are watching the Olympics together, there will be many opportunities to glimpse the host nation. Talk with your child about what else he's curious to know about this country and what he would ask someone his own age who lives there. To help him form his questions, get your child talking about what he thinks is important for children in other countries to know about where he lives.

Look for answers to his questions together and do a little more research about the host country's:

### Recipes and food

Research traditional dishes and the major foods grown in the country. Look for recipes that you and your child can make together or visit an international supermarket to find foods from that culture to take home and try.

### Music and art

Find out how music fits into everyday life or is used for special celebrations in the host country. What does the most popular music sound like? What does traditional music sound like? Take a listen online. Look too for what art or cultural artifacts are valued in this country. Let the art you discover and explore online, in books, or at museums inspire you and your child to get creative and make some art of your own.

### Games and stories

Since games and sports motivated you and your child to learn more about this country, dig deeper into local favorite pastimes. Try a game together and talk with your child about how many games take different names in different parts of the world, but are very similar to games he plays.

### Resources

- Whats4Eats: International Recipes and Cooking Around the World ([whats4eats.com](http://whats4eats.com))
- UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music ([folkways.si.edu/unesco](http://folkways.si.edu/unesco))
- Google Arts & Culture ([google.com/culturalinstitute](http://google.com/culturalinstitute))

Invite friends and family to share and celebrate all you've learned with a special dinner featuring the flavors, sounds, and fun of your country of study!