London Hosts the 2012 Summer Olympic Games

London, the capital city of England and the United Kingdom, is the Host City for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games. The Games will be held from July 27 – August 12, 2012. In addition the 2012 Summer Paralympics, games for athletes with physical challenges, will also be hosted by London from August 29 – September 9 2012.

In July of 2005, London learned that it had won the right to host the 2012 Summer Games, beating out the other finalists Madrid, Moscow, New York City, and Paris. It is the third time for London to host the games, after 1908 and 1948. A lot of hard work has gone on in London to prepare for this event. It takes years of planning to produce the Olympic Games by city officials, Olympic committee members, sports planners, architects, water managers, environmental experts, landscape architects, transportation managers, housing designers, financial managers, health and safety experts, information specialists and more. Thousands of details must be considered to provide for the approximately 10,500 athletes from about 205 countries, as well as over 5,000 team officials, thousands of media representatives and millions of fans who will travel to London or watch the games from home. The Olympic and Paralympic Game are the biggest peacetime event in the world.

Some of the events for the 2012 Games will be held at locations outside of the city of London, because many Olympic sports require their own large and specially designed venue or facility. It is necessary for host cities of Olympic Games to find areas of land spacious enough for these special facilities. The sites chosen for outdoor sports require additional consideration. There must be appropriate vertical terrain for sports like mountain biking, appropriate bodies of water for sports like rowing, canoeing and sailing, or flat areas for sports like cycling, soccer or triathlon. When considering choosing existing facilities or building new facilities, one priority of the organizers was for all facilities to be useable after the end of the Olympic Games. Some will be used unchanged, others will be resized or moved elsewhere in the UK.

In the case of the 2012 Games, most venues will be located in three zones in the Greater London area: the Olympic Zone, the River Zone and the Central Zone. Some events cannot be held in the London area, such as the sailing events, which will take place at the Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy on the Isle of Portland in Dorset, about 125 miles (200 km) southwest of the Olympic Park. A Mountain Bike course was built in Hadleigh Farm, Essex, including temporary grandstands and facilities for the 2012 Games. The soccer tournament will be held at stadiums around the UK.

A host city tries to use existing facilities for Olympic events. This helps keep down the cost of hosting the Games. Among the pre-existing venues that will be used to host Olympic events in London are Earls Court (an exhibition and conference space that will host volleyball), ExCeL (an exhibition and conference space that will host a range of sports), Greenwich Park, London’s oldest park (it will host equestrian events, among others), and Hyde Park, London’s largest Royal Park, which will host 10k swimming and triathlon events. Wembley Arena, a famous sports and music arena, will host rhythmic gymnastics and badminton. Wembley Stadium will host soccer competitions. Wimbeldon, the site of the famous Wimbledon tennis tournament, will host tennis competitions.
An important consideration during the planning of recent Olympic Games has been the impact of newly built venues on the environment and how that venue will serve the people in the future. Officials have been particularly careful about the environment and the future value of the structures built for this Olympic Games. They refer to these concerns as sustainability and legacy, and have written reports on each new venue constructed and each old area remodeled or reused for the 2010 Olympic Games. After the games, the venues of the London 2012 Olympic Games will either be used by the local communities as-is or converted for alternate uses.

The London 2012 Olympic Stadium is a good example of efforts to address the sustainability issue. It is the most sustainable ever built. To save steel, the building’s construction is 75 per cent lighter than comparable stadiums in terms of steel used. It also uses a low-carbon concrete. The concrete is made from industrial waste and contains 40 per cent less carbon than usual. The top ring of the Stadium was built using surplus gas pipes; a visible example of London 2012’s 'reduce, reuse, recycle' approach to sustainability. The Stadium’s lower section was designed to rest within a bowl in the ground, which further reduces the amount of steel and concrete used. Designers did not sacrifice capacity to sustainability, however: despite being the lightest Olympic stadium ever built, the Olympic Stadium will have a capacity of 80,000 during the Games!

But the environmentally-friendly efforts of the Olympic organizers go beyond sustainable construction methods. Green energy, public transportation, and nature conservation are also important to them. When the Olympic Park was built, 500,000 plants were planted in its wetland areas, and 4,000 newts were relocated to the Waterworks Nature reserve!
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The 2012 Olympic Sports

The 2012 Summer Olympic Games will include 26 sports and a total of 39 disciplines, at a total of 28 venues. The 2012 Paralympic Games will have 20 sports and 21 disciplines. Women’s boxing will be included in the program for the first time. Originally, London organizers had planned to feature 28 sports, as other recent Summer Olympic Games have, but the IOC dropped baseball and softball from the 2012 Games two days after London was selected to be the host city.

Athletes from 205 different countries are expected to compete in 300 events at the 2012 Games! 147 nations are expected to take part in the Paralympic Games. In each sport, there are a number of events, each with a series of competitions to finally determine the three place winners. There are some exceptions to this, such as the marathon, which an athlete runs only once.

Let’s look at swimming as an example. Swimming will feature 34 different events (17 for men, 17 for women). Two events are open-water swims of 10 kilometers. The rest will be in a 50m pool. The events are freestyle (50m, 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m (women) and 1500m (men)); backstroke (100m and 200m); breaststroke (100m, 200m); butterfly (100m, 200m); individual medley (200m, 400m); relay (4×100 m free, 4×200 m free; 4×100 m medley); and marathon 10km. Each country is allowed to enter a maximum of two swimmers per individual event, and one entry per relay; and a country may not have more than 26 men and 26 women (52 total) on its team.

Many sports at the Olympic Games, including swimming, have preliminary (heats), semi-final and final events. The top swimmers in the heats advance to the semi-finals, and from there to the finals.

Three place winners will be declared for each of the 39 events at the Summer Olympic Games. The third place winner will receive the bronze medal, the second place winner will receive the silver medal and the first place winner gets the gold medal.

It is thought that the first Olympic Games were held in 776 BC in honor of the god Zeus. The earliest games lasted only a single day and consisted of a single event, a running race. The Ancient Games were banned in 393 AD by Emperor Theodosius who thought they were not proper for a Christian empire.

The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece in 1896. They were the idea of Frenchman Baron Pierre de Coubertin. He wanted the Olympic Games to bring together sport, culture and education. 241 athletes from 14 countries took part in the first modern Olympic Games. The winners were given a silver medal and an olive branch. Only men competed in the first modern Olympic Games. Women athletes did not compete until the next games, which were held four years later in Paris.

The newest sport in the Olympic Games is women’s boxing. Women last boxed in the Olympic Games in 1904, as a demonstration sport. In 2012, women boxers will compete in three events: flyweight (48-51 kg), lightweight (57-60 kg), and middleweight (69-75 kg). Campaigners for gender equality welcomed the decision to include women’s boxing in the Olympic Games as a step towards their goal of rectifying a perceived Olympic gender imbalance. Men compete for 38 more medals than women.
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2012 Summer Olympic Games program:

Briefly describe each sport. Research those you are unfamiliar with. Try to find out the country in which each originated and write it down.

Aquatics (diving, swimming, synchronized swimming, water polo);
   Archery;
Athletics (track and field, etc.);
Badminton;
Basketball;
Boxing;
Canoeing/Kayak (flatwater and slalom);
Cycling (BMX, mountain biking, road, track);
Equestrian (dressage, eventing, show jumping);
Fencing;
Field Hockey;
Football (Soccer);
Gymnastics (artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, trampoline);
Handball;
Judo;
Modern Pentathlon;
Rowing; Sailing;
Shooting;
Table Tennis;
Taekwondo;
Tennis;
Triathlon;
Volleyball (volleyball, beach volleyball);
Weightlifting;
Wrestling (freestyle wrestling, Greco-Roman wrestling);
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The 2012 Olympic Venues

A total of 34 venues will accommodate the 302 medal events scheduled in London. Here are the most important ones:

The Olympic Stadium will be the site of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games and the awards ceremonies. It will also host the Athletics and Paralympic Athletics events at the London 2012 Games. It is the most sustainable Olympic stadium ever built, using less steel use than other stadiums and low-carbon concrete made from industrial waste. Surplus gas pipes are used in its roof construction. It took under three years to build, and was completed in April 2011. After the Olympic Games, it will continue to serve as a venue for athletic and community events.

The Aquatics Centre, located in the Olympic Park, will be the venue for Swimming, Paralympic Swimming, Diving, Synchronized Swimming and the swimming element of the Modern Pentathlon during the 2012 Olympic Games. It has a wave-shaped roof that is 160m long and 80m wide. After the Olympic Games, it will be used by the local community, clubs and schools, as well as elite swimmers.

The Velodrome, in the Olympic Park, will host Track Cycling and Paralympic Track Cycling. In terms of design and construction methods, it is the most sustainable venue in the Olympic Park. Sustainability was a priority, from the source of wood to be used on the track and external cladding, to its 100% natural ventilation system, which creates a perfect track-level temperature and eliminates the need for air conditioning. After the Olympic Games, it will become a cycling park for the local community.

Earls Court is in West London. It will host volleyball competitions. It is an example of a pre-existing venue that was adapted to be used for the Olympic Games. It is a popular venue for hundreds of exhibitions, conferences and live music performances every year. It first opened in 1937, with 40,000 square meters of exhibition space. After the Games, it will go back to its function as a popular exhibition and event space.

ExCel is an exhibition and conference center near London City Airport in London's Docklands. It already existed prior to the Olympic Games. It has five arenas and will host a total of 143 sessions in a variety of Olympic and Paralympic sports during the London 2012 Games, including boxing, fencing, judo, table tennis, taekwondo, weightlifting, and wrestling. After the games it will continue to serve as a large exhibition space.

Greenwich Park on the south bank of the River Thames in south east London, is London’s oldest Royal Park, dating back to 1433, and is part of a World Heritage Site. It will be the site of the Olympic and Paralympic equestrian competitions, as well as the combined running and shooting event of the modern pentathlon. The park is also home to the famous Royal Observatory and is the home of Greenwich Mean Time at Longitude 0°. The temporary structures built for the Olympic competitions there will be dismantled after the Games.

Hyde Park is in London's West End. First opened to the public in 1637, it is the largest of the Royal Parks in London. It will host the triathlon and the 10k Open Water Swim events. After the Games, the temporary seats built for the spectator will be removed.

Wembley Stadium is in north west London, about six miles from the city center. Of the six stadiums hosting the the London 2012 Olympic Games Football competition, Wembley is the largest. It will host
the gold medal events in both the men’s and women’s competition. It has a sliding roof and is designed so that every seat has a clear view of the playing field. After the Games, it will continue to be used for sports events.

**Wimbeldon** is in south west London. It is the home of the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club and has hosted the famous Wimbeldon tennis tournament since 1877. It is the last major grass-court tennis venue in the world. It will host the Olympic Games tennis competition. After the Games, it will continue to host important tennis tournaments.

**Eton Dorney** is near Windsor. It is one of the venues outside London. It hosted the Rowing World Championships in 2006. It is a rowing course located in a 400 acre park with a nature conservation area, and will host rowing events and the canoe sprint. It will continue to host rowing events after the Games.

**Weymouth Bay and Portland Harbour** is another venue outside London. It is located in Dorset on England's south coast. It was already used for sailing before the Game, but additional facilities were added. It will be the site of the sailing and paralympic sailing events, and will be used for training, competitions and local community use after the Games are over.

Other venues around the city and the UK will host a variety of sporting events.
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British English and American English

Did you notice that some words in the Olympic article appear to be misspelled or that there may be two spellings of the same word in the text? Examples are harbour and harbor, or centre and center. Did you think you had found an error in the writing? It sure looks that way. Here is what is going on.

Language is an evolving entity and never more so than today. The electronic media has made our world smaller and exposed more people to more words and terms from other languages or that begin as slang in particular industries. But, changes in language are not new.

Over the 300 years since the United States gained independence from Great Britain, the language the colonist brought with them to the New World has changed. There are some differences in grammar, spellings and word meaning. Often seen is the difference in the spelling of words ending with the “r” sound. These words are often spelled “re” on the end in British English and with an “er” in the U.S. (Examples are centre/center and theatre/theater). A similar difference can be seen in words ending with “or” in American English, which end in “our” in British English. Examples: colour/color, neighbour/neighbor, and harbour/harbor.

One example of a word with different meanings in American and British English is the word football. Americans use it for the sport of American football. In British English it refers to the sport known as soccer in the United States (American football is called American football in British English).

While you are watching or reading about the 2012 Summer Olympic events, write down on this page words phrases that you encounter that have different spelling or meaning in Great Britain than in the U.S. Include new words or terms you have not heard before. Write down your best understanding of the meaning and the context in which you heard each word or phrase. Try them out on your friends.

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_____________________________ Date ____________________
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Vocabulary
Define these words and identify the part of speech for each. Use each word in a sentence.

- environment
- environmental
- venue
- pre-existing
- grandstand
- harbour
- harbor
- kayak
- triathlon
- pentathlon
- rhythmic
- centre
- center
- sustainability
- legacy
- Paralympics
- newt
- reuse
- waste
- kilometer
- terrain
- vertical
- consideration
- conservation
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Reading Comprehension Questions Set 1

Complete these questions about the first section of the article.

1. The 2012 Summer Olympic Games are being hosted by __________________________.

2. London is located in ____________________________________________________________________.

3. What did London officials learn about their city in July of 2005? _____________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________.

4. Why will some Olympic events be held in areas outside London? _____________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________.

5. Name three groups of people Olympic planners need to consider when organizing the Olympic Games ___________________________, ___________________________, ___________________________.

6. Name two things Olympic planners may look for when deciding on a location for outdoor summer sports. ____________________________, ____________________________.

7. What can help keep the cost of hosting the Olympic Games down? _____________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________.

8. What advantages does London have that make it a good Olympic host city? _________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________.

9. What subject have Olympic planners taken into consideration in planning the venues for recent Olympic Games? _________________________________________________________________.

10. What two areas have the 2012 Olympic officials written about in their reports on each new and remodeled venue for the Games? ____________________________, ____________________________.
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Reading Comprehension Questions Set 2
Complete these questions about the second and third section of the article.

1. How many countries are expected to participate in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games? ________________

2. How many athletes and sports officials are expected to participate in the Games? ________________

3. The sports dropped from the Olympic Games prior to the 2012 Games are ________________ and ________________.

4. Name as many of the 26 sports that will be seen at the Games as you can here: ________________
   ________________
   ________________
   ________________

5. What was the first sporting event in the Ancient Olympic Games? ________________.

6. What is the newest sport in the Summer Olympic Games? ________________

7. Which sports will be held at the Velodrome? ________________

8. Which venues for the 2012 Olympic Games are the oldest? ________________
   ________________
   ________________

9. When was Women’s Boxing last an Olympic event? ________________

10. Name two of the newest venues to be used for this Olympic Games and tell something that was done in their design to help the environment. ________________

   ________________
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Essay or Discussion Questions

1. What do you think is meant by the terms sustainability and legacy, when used by Olympic officials in their reports on the venues at the 2012 Olympic Games? Give some examples of ways these ideas were used in planning the event.

2. What do you think is the most important aspect of planning the Olympic Games? Why?

3. There can be positive and negative effects of an event the size of the Olympic Games on a community. What do you think are the most positive and the most negative effects that might occur for London with this Olympic Games? Are there ways to prevent some of the negative effects?

4. Do you think the Olympic Games are beneficial to the world? In what ways? What is the most valuable outcome of the Olympic Games?
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Answers
Reading Comprehension Questions Set 1
1. London, United Kingdom
2. England, Great Britain or United Kingdom
3. That the city had won the right to host the 2012 Olympic Games
4. Answers will vary, but should include the idea that summer sports require large, specialized facilities that require large spaces to construct or special terrain or large areas of open water and these are things are not available in the city.
5. Answer may vary but include some or all of these groups; athletes, officials, athletes and officials, media representatives, fans.
6. Answer may vary but include some or all of these ideas; vertical terrain, large spaces, flat areas, large areas of open water (sailing), large expanse of calm water (rowing), accessibility for fans, existing facilities that meet venue requirements.
7. Using existing buildings and facilities as venues.
8. Answers may vary but include; appropriate terrain and weather, several existing sports venues within the city, proximity to outdoor sports venues around the country, good infrastructure, good international transportation connections.
9. The environment.
10. Sustainability and legacy.

Reading Comprehension Questions Set 2
1. About 205
2. About 10,500
3. Baseball and softball
4. Aquatics; Archery; Athletics; Badminton; Basketball; Boxing; Canoeing/Kayak; Cycling; Equestrian; Fencing; Field Hockey; Football (Soccer); Gymnastics; Handball; Judo; Modern Pentathlon; Rowing; Sailing; Shooting; Table Tennis; Taekwondo; Tennis; Triathlon; Volleyball; Weightlifting; Wrestling.
5. Running
6. Women’s boxing
7. Track cycling
8. Greenwich Park (1433), Hyde Park (1637), Wimbledon (1877)
9. 1904 (as a demonstration event)
10. Answers may vary. Two possible examples: Olympic Stadium (low-weight construction using less steel and recycled pipes for upper level, set into ground to reduce amount of steel and concrete needed, low-carbon concrete), Velodrome (natural ventilation system eliminates need for air-conditioning)

Essay Questions: Answers will vary