

Which Sports Belong in the Olympics?

1 Every four years, the Olympic Games bring together athletes from around the world. The Olympics celebrate skill, endurance, and creativity across many sports. Yet as new events such as skateboarding and BMX freestyle join the lineup, the debate grows louder: What makes a sport Olympic-worthy? Should the Games welcome more modern events or stick to traditional sports? This debate centers on two main arguments: Those who argue in favor of adding new events say the Olympics should change with the times, while those who disagree say the Olympics should honor traditional sports with clear, well established standards.

2 The argument in favor of adding new sports is that the Olympics should stay fresh and reflect what young people enjoy. Innovation excites fans. As former President of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach stated, new sports are an “opportunity to connect with the younger generation.” For example, surfing and climbing attract younger fans and highlight athletic skills such as balance and reading the environment. These sports also require discipline, agility, and strength—qualities that mirror traditional Olympic ideals.

3 Adding Olympic sports also increases global representation. By including sports popular in different regions, more nations have a chance to shine. Karate’s debut at Tokyo in 2020 gave athletes from places with strong martial arts traditions a bigger stage. This diversity of sports attracts more international participation and can strengthen the Olympic goals of greater international unity. Newer sports can also create more opportunities for gender equality. The introduction of skateboarding and climbing helped balance participation between women and men.

4 Newer sports also push the boundaries of athletic expression. Climbing showcases strength and strategy in ways track events do not. Breaking (often called break dancing), which was introduced at the 2024 Olympics, demands rhythm, agility, and creativity. Supporters believe that this sport and the skills it requires deserve Olympic recognition alongside sprinting and swimming.

5 The argument opposed to adding newer sports is that doing so risks turning the Olympics into a trend-driven exhibition. This argument favors a Games that features sports with worldwide appeal. If a newer sport is played and appreciated by only a few people in a few places, does it really promote greater international unity?

6 The subjective nature of judging in some events is another concern. Some events rely upon judges to award scores which are then totaled to award medals. In sports that include stylistic or artistic elements, the fear is that judges' personal preferences can

influence results. It can take years and years of competition for judging to become standardized and standards to be fairly applied in artistic events such as ice dancing or rhythmic gymnastics. Critics of expanding the list of Olympic events argue that many of the newer sports lack the objective standards which ensure fairness with skills that are clearly measurable and relatable. Who can run the fastest, jump the highest, and endure the longest? Subjective or inconsistent scoring from judges in a newer sport could damage trust in the Olympics as an institution. At Paris in 2024, a poor performance in breaking sparked debate about the required skill for qualifying in certain newer events. After the controversy, breaking was not included as an event for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

7 Some newer Olympic events value creative expression and improvisation. Anne Nguyen, the founder of a Parisian dance company, fears that Olympic competition might change the very nature of a sport like breaking. Instead of free expression, she says, Olympic breakers “will be strategic, planning everything from A to Z, to get the high scores.”

8 So, where should the line be drawn? Should the Olympics include current, popular, and creative sports from around the world? Or should they be limited to a core set of events with clear, objective standards? The debate continues, and the choices will shape the future of the Games.

Read “Which Sports Belong in the Olympics?”

Write a multi-paragraph argumentative essay in which you argue whether newer sports should or should not be included in the Olympics.

Use details from the passage to support your argumentative essay.

Remember to —

- clearly state your argument
- organize your writing
- develop your ideas in detail
- use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar

Use the space provided to write your argumentative essay.