

**seriously
social**



DEBATE KIT: THE OLYMPIC GAMES SHOULD INCLUDE NON- SPORTING EVENTS

TEACHING RESOURCE

DEBATING

DEBATE KIT: THE OLYMPIC GAMES SHOULD INCLUDE NON-SPORTING EVENTS

TEACHING RESOURCE

Introduction

The Olympic Games are synonymous with feats of physical prowess, as reflected in the Olympic motto: Faster, higher, stronger – together. Currently, 43 sports are contested across the Summer and Winter Games. In 1912, five non-sporting events were included in the program. These events were sculpture, music, literature, painting and architecture. After 1949, these non-sporting events were dropped from the Olympic program, partly because many participants were professional artists, and this contradicted the restriction to amateur participants placed on Olympic sporting events.

Recently, some have pushed for non-sporting events to be reintroduced to the Olympic Games. Along with various art forms, games with a mental focus, such as chess or card games, and even e-sports, have been suggested as possible new events. Supporters have argued that including non-sporting events will broaden the appeal of the Olympic Games and allow more people, and in the case of e-sports, more younger people, to become involved in the Olympic movement.

Those opposed to the idea suggest that including non-sporting events would be difficult to implement, given that judges would have to agree on an objective scoring system. Also, in order to make the Olympics affordable for host countries, limits have to be placed on the number of events and competitors attending each Games. It is argued that it would be unfair to include non-sporting events when even the number of sporting events is limited for this reason.

The International Olympic Committee has recognised some “mind sports” as legitimate sports, paving the way for possible inclusion in Olympic Games of the future.

Debate topic: The Olympic Games should include non-sporting events

Affirmative arguments

- The Olympics have included non-sporting events, such as painting, sculpture, architecture and music, in the past.
- Including non-sporting events would increase interest in the Games and allow a broader range of people to benefit from the Games.
- Cultural activities, such as dancing, painting or poetry, would assist in promoting diversity and understanding amongst different peoples and communities.
- E-sports and other “mind sports” have an enormous player base grounded in competition and could easily fit within the Olympic framework.
- Many non-sporting activities, including chess, card games, and e-sports require many of the same skills as sporting events, including strategy, teamwork, practice and mental effort. As such, they are good examples of Olympism – a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.
- Artistic sports, such as synchronised swimming, rhythmic gymnastics, breakdancing and equestrian dressage could be considered subjective, but have successfully developed an objective scoring system.

Negative arguments

- There is already enough competition between different sports vying to be included in the Olympics.
- Activities like chess, poker and board games have low spectator appeal and therefore would not draw new viewers to the Games.
- There are other international competitions and exhibitions that better serve arts and cultural communities than the Olympics.
- Including activities that are inherently about human expression, such as singing, art or dancing, in a competitive format such as the Olympics, could change the focus of these activities to winning/losing.
- The official vision of the International Olympic Committee is “building a better world through sport”. While other activities are worthwhile ways to develop skills and interpersonal connections, the Olympics is specifically about physical activities.
- It would be difficult to fairly judge some non-sporting activities, as many arts activities are subjective.

Web links

The Olympic Games should include non-sporting events	
Topic	Web link
Behind the News: BTN: <i>New Olympic Sports</i>	http://bit.ly/45Lbr5o
9 News Australia: <i>The push for Pokemon to be included at the Olympics</i>	http://bit.ly/472uACm
E-Sports World Cup	bit.ly/4oSpIGq
The Conversation: <i>It's Official!: The Olympic Esports Games will be held in 2025. Here's everything you need to know</i>	http://bit.ly/41g4WX3
ABC News: <i>ABC TV's The Art Of explores the surprising history of art competitions at the Olympics</i>	http://bit.ly/4mptFR9
Look to the past: When Olympic medals were awarded for architecture, music and literature	http://bit.ly/47Fcqgn
USA Today: <i>Olympics changing breaking in sport's debut as dancers must put scores above art</i>	http://bit.ly/45FZJsR
ABC Listen: <i>The Olympic poetry pentathlon</i>	http://bit.ly/3HJjyHQ
TeamGB: Breaking down the new Olympic sport	http://bit.ly/4msn2gZ
CGTN Sports Scene: <i>The First Olympic Esports Games: A New Era in Olympics</i>	http://bit.ly/4oITdKN
Ballet reign: <i>Ballet in the Olympics? Dancers speak out</i>	http://bit.ly/460riyl
FiveThirtyEightDebate Club: What Should Be the Next Olympic Sport?	http://bit.ly/45EpU4F
Here's How The Olympics Decide What Sports To Include – And Which To Leave Out	http://bit.ly/4fMnDII
Should Chess Be in the Olympics?	http://bit.ly/3JsCPxG



seriously social



An initiative of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.
Published August 2025.

Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia Inc
ABN: 59 957 839 703

3/95 Northbourne Ave Turner ACT 2612
GPO Box 1956, Canberra, ACT 2601

(02) 6249 1788
info@socialsciences.org.au
socialsciences.org.au

© Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, 2025. This resource is available for non-commercial distribution and adaptation with attribution under a CC BY-NC 4.0 International License.