The Olympic Games are unique; and athletes from across the world take part in them. Their achievements are followed, directly or from afar, by hundreds of millions of people.

Organised every four years, the Games are the largest sporting event by dint of the number of sports on the programme, the number of athletes and the number of individuals from various nations coming together at the same time in the same place. At the Winter Games, the athletes compete in sports on ice and snow, in both indoor and outdoor venues.

The Games are a one-off event, but they fit into the wider framework of the Olympic Movement. The mission of this Movement is to encourage the practice of sport worldwide and to promote its values.

Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin was the person behind this major project. Inspired by the Olympic Games of Antiquity, Baron de Coubertin decided to create the modern Olympic Games. He founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Paris in 1894 with the aim of organising the first Games of the modern era, which were held in 1896 in Athens.

Chamonix was the location of the first ever Olympic Winter Games in 1924. Until 1992, the Summer and Winter Games took place in the same year. This was then changed so that the Winter Games would be held on an alternating two-year basis with the Summer Games.
In 1921, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) granted patronage to a Winter Sports Week that was to take place in 1924 in Chamonix, France. The event attracted 10,004 spectators. In 1926, it was retrospectively named the first Olympic Winter Games.

American Charles JEWTRAW became the first Winter Games champion by winning the first event, the 500m speed skating.
A new sport made its debut at the Winter Games: the skeleton.

Aged just 15, Sonja HENIE of Norway caused a sensation by winning the women’s figure skating. Her record as the youngest winner of an individual event stood for 74 years. In the men’s event, Sweden’s Gillis GRAFSTRÖM won his third consecutive gold medal, despite suffering from a badly swollen knee.
For the first and only time in Olympic history, the American group race method – which involved mass starts – was used in the speed skating competition.

French pair Andrée and Pierre BRUNET defended their Olympic figure skating title.

American Eddie EAGAN achieved a unique feat by winning gold medals in both summer and winter sports. In 1920 in Antwerp, he had won the light-heavyweight boxing category at the Olympic Summer Games. In Lake Placid, 12 years later, he won in the four-man bobsleigh.

The first emblem of the Winter Games was created for global positioning: a map of the US showing Lake Placid.
For the first time at the Olympic Winter Games, a symbolic fire was lit in the stadium and Alpine skiing was included on the programme.

Ivar BALLANGRUD (NOR) won three speed skating golds in the 500m, 5,000m and 10,000m. He also claimed silver in the 1,500m, his seventh Olympic medal in total. His compatriot Sonja HENIE won her third consecutive Olympic gold medal in women’s figure skating.
After a 12-year break, caused by World War II, these Games were named the “Games of Renewal”.

French Alpine skier Henri OREILLER and cross-country skier Martin LUNDSTRÖM from Sweden won more than one gold medal each. Skier Gretchen FRASER secured the US its first gold medal in a women’s event.
The Games finally came to Norway, the home of modern skiing. The flame for the first relay in the history of the Olympic Winter Games was lit in Mørgedal at the home of Sondre NORDHEIM, a celebrated pioneer of modern skiing. The flame was then carried to Oslo solely by skiers.

Women took part in the 10km Nordic skiing event for the first time. Norwegian speed skater Hjalmar ANDERSEN won three gold medals. In front of over 115,000 spectators, Arnfinn BERGMANN of Norway won the ski jump competition.
The Olympic oath was taken by a female athlete for the first time.

Austrian Toni SAILER became the first Alpine skier to win three gold medals. Switzerland’s Madeleine BERTHOD celebrated her birthday by winning the downhill by an amazing margin of 4.7 seconds.

The Finnish team introduced a new style of ski jumping, whereby the skiers placed their arms at their sides.
Once again, the flame was lit at the home of Sondre NORDHEIM in Morgedal, Norway. It then crossed the Atlantic and made its way to Squaw Valley.

The men’s biathlon and women’s speed skating made their Olympic debut.

Finnish cross-country skier Veikko HAKULINEN, 35, added a medal of every colour to the haul of two golds and one silver he had won in 1952 and 1956.
For the first time, the flame was lit at Olympia for the Winter Games.

The organisers had to cope with serious problems concerning snow conditions. Soldiers from the Austrian army had to remove blocks of ice from the mountain side and transport them down to the luge and bobsleigh tracks. At the age of 18, France’s Marielle GOITSCHEL finished second in the women’s slalom, just behind her older sister Christine. Two days later, Marielle took her revenge and finished ahead of her sister to win the giant slalom.

During the bobsleigh event, Italy’s Eugenio MONTI made a name for himself when he lent the British pair Tony NASH and Robin DIXON the bolt off his sled when theirs failed. He was awarded the first edition of the Pierre de Coubertin medal for his act of fair play.
These Games were the first to include doping tests, and the first to be broadcasted in colour. An unofficial mascot called Shuss – a little man on skis – was created for this edition.

France’s Jean-Claude KILLY swept the board in the men’s Alpine skiing events. Sweden’s Toini GUSTAFSSON starred in the women’s cross-country skiing, winning both individual races and earning a silver medal in the relay.

Vladimir BELOUSSOV from the Soviet Union took gold in the large hill ski jump, becoming the first person to jump further than 100m at the Games.
Asia hosted the Olympic Winter Games for the first time. Yukio Kasaya – who won Japan’s first ever gold medal at the Winter Games – and Akitsugu Konno and Seiji Aochi secured a Japanese clean sweep in the ski jump in front of the home crowd.

Ard Schenk of the Netherlands won three speed skating golds in convincing fashion.

The biggest surprise of the Games was the victory of 21-year-old “Paquito” Fernández Ochoa, who won the slalom by a full second. His gold medal was the first ever to be won by a Spanish athlete at the Olympic Winter Games.
Innsbruck hosted the Winter Games for the second time. The Bergisel Stadium therefore had two cauldrons – one for 1964 and the other for 1976.

The most memorable image of the Games was Austria’s national hero Franz KLAMMER flying wildly down the downhill course, barely in control, on his way to a gold medal. Rosi MITTERMAIER of West Germany won two of the three Alpine skiing events.

British figure skater John CURRY combined his natural elegance with a series of stunning jumps and was rewarded with a points total of 105.9 out of a possible 108.

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Lake Placid hosted the Winter Games for a second time, having already done so in 1932.

American Eric HEIDEN won all five speed skating events from 500m all the way up to 10,000m, setting an Olympic record in each of them. Swedish skiing great Ingemar STENMARK ruled supreme in the giant slalom and slalom events.
The first Games to be held under the IOC presidency of Juan Antonio SAMARANCH went off smoothly, with no indication of the terrible war to come eight years later.

Jure FRANKO claimed silver in the giant slalom to win Yugoslavia’s first ever medal at the Olympic Winter Games.

Finland’s Marja-Liisa KIRVESNIEMI became the only woman to have competed in six editions of the Olympic Winter Games. She dominated all three women’s cross-country skiing events.

The British skaters, Jayne TORVILL and Christopher DEAN mesmerised the judges with their interpretation of Maurice Ravel’s *Boléro*, and were awarded perfect scores.
East Germany’s Christa LUDING-ROTHENBURGER won the 1,000m speed skating title. Seven months later she earned a silver medal in cycling to become the only athlete ever to win medals in the Olympic Winter and Summer Games in the same year.

Katarina WITT of East Germany added another gold to her medal haul.

Charismatic Italian skier Alberto TOMBA made the most of his Olympic debut, winning both the giant slalom and the slalom.
These were the last Winter Games to be held in the same year as the Summer Games. A number of former Soviet Union countries competed as the Unified Team (EUN).

In cross-country skiing, Norwegians Björn DAEHLIE and Vegard ULVANG each won three gold medals. At just 16, Finland’s Toni NIEMINEN won the men’s ski jump title to become the youngest male winner of a winter event.

Speed skater Bonnie BLAIR (USA) became the first American woman to win three medals at the Winter Games.
LILLEHAMMER 1994

From Lillehammer onwards, the Winter and Summer Games would be held alternately every two years.

These Games in Norway placed a special focus on respect for the environment, leading IOC President SAMARANCH to dub them the "White-Green Games".

National hero Johann Olav KOSS (NOR) won three speed skating events and set a world record in each of them. Vreni SCHNEIDER of Switzerland won a complete set of medals in Alpine skiing, and Manuela DI CENTA of Italy earned medals in all five cross-country events.
Snowboarding and women’s ice hockey made their debut on the Olympic programme, while curling returned after a 74-year absence.

Austria’s Hermann MAIER took a spectacular fall in the downhill but recovered to earn gold medals in both the super-G and the giant slalom. Björn DAEHLIE of Norway scooped three gold medals in Nordic skiing and became the first athlete to earn eight career Winter Olympic gold medals and 12 medals in total. American Tara LIPINSKI, 15, was crowned Olympic figure skating champion.
The Games saw the expansion of the Olympic programme to 78 events, including the return of skeleton and the introduction of women’s bobsleigh.

In a series of dominant performances, Olympic scholarship holder Janica KOSTELIC of Croatia became the first female skier to win four medals – three gold and one silver – at the same Games.

By taking the silver medal in singles luge, Georg HACKL of Germany became the first person in Olympic history to earn a medal in the same individual event five times in a row. Swiss ski jumper Simon AMMANN rose from obscurity to win on the normal hill (K90) and the large hill (K120).
Germany’s Claudia PECHSTEIN became the first speed skater to earn nine career medals. With his victory in the super-G, Kjetil Andre AAMODT of Norway became the first Alpine skier to earn four medals in the same event, and the first to win four gold medals in total.

For the first time, live video coverage of the Games was available on mobile phones. Video coverage was available in 18 countries on five continents. These Games were also the most rigorous to date in terms of doping controls, with a record number of 1,219 tests conducted.
There were a range of Games venue locations, from Richmond and the ski resort of Whistler, continuing to the city centre of Vancouver.

On home soil, Canadian Alexandre BILODEAU took gold in the moguls freestyle skiing event. American Shaun WHITE won his second Olympic halfpipe gold thanks to a flawless run that saw him reach a height of 8 metres and perform a *Double McTwist 1260°* manoeuvre. Just as they had done in 2002 in Salt Lake City, the Canadian men’s ice hockey team won the gold-medal game against the USA, thanks to a goal from Sidney CROSBY in over time.
A unique feature of these Games was that they were organised in two clusters: a coastal cluster for the ice events in Sochi, and a mountain cluster located in the Krasnaya Polyana Mountains. Travel time between the two clusters was only 30 minutes.

Norwegian biathlete Ole Einar BJØRNDALEN brought his medal count, which started at the Nagano Games in 1998, to 13 (8 gold, 4 silver and 1 bronze), overtaking his compatriot, cross-country skier Bjørn DAEHLIE, to become the Olympic Winter Games athlete with the most medals.

Japan’s Ayumu HIRANO, at 15, became the youngest ever medallist on the snow in the history of the Games, when he won the silver medal in the snowboard halfpipe competition. His compatriot, ski jumper Noriaki KASAI, won silver and bronze, 20 years after his first silver medal in Lillehammer.
PyeongChang broke the record for the most events at a Winter Games edition, with eight new additions to the programme.

With her 15th Olympic medal – gold in the 30km classical cross-country skiing – Marit BJØRGEN of Norway became the most decorated Winter Games athlete ever.

Ester LEDECKÁ of the Czech Republic was crowned Olympic champion in the super-G and then, one week later, in the snowboard parallel giant slalom – an unprecedented feat.

With seven Olympic medals – five gold and two silver won at Vancouver 2010, Sochi 2014 and PyeongChang 2018 – Martin FOURCADE became the most decorated French Olympian of all time, Summer and Winter Games combined.
Beijing is the first city in the world to host both the Olympic Summer and Winter Games, in 2008 and 2022. Five iconic venues from 2008 were re-used, thus reducing the carbon impact.

In front of her home crowd, Ailing Eileen GU (CHN) did not disappoint. In what were her first Games, she won three medals in freestyle skiing: gold in the halfpipe and the new big air event, and silver in slopestyle.

One of the greatest stories of these Games was that of snowboarder Max PARROT (CAN). Having had cancer in 2018, he overcame this terrible illness and won gold in the slopestyle and bronze in the big air.

Johannes THINGNES BOE (NOR) and Quentin FILLON MAILLET (FRA) excelled in the biathlon events, winning 10 medals: four gold and one bronze for the Norwegian; and two gold and three silver medals for the Frenchman.

Chloe KIM (USA) successfully defended her Olympic title in the snowboard halfpipe.

The “Water Cube”, the famous pool from Beijing 2008, was transformed into the “Ice Cube” for Beijing 2022 and was fuelled by renewable energy.