

The **Winter Olympic Games** are a winter multi-sport event held every four years. The competitors from all over the world come and compete in 20 different disciplines. They feature winter sports held on snow or ice, such as alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, figure skating, and ice hockey. These sports along with Nordic combined, ski jumping, and speed skating have been competed at every Winter Olympics since 1924. Other events have been added as the Games have progressed.

The first international multi-sport events specifically for winter sports were the Nordic Games. The Nordic Games were organized by General Viktor Gustaf Balck, who was a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). He attempted to have winter sports added to the Olympic program. Balck was unsuccessful until the 1908 Summer Olympics in London, which included four figure skating events.

Three years later an Italian proposed that the IOC stage a week with winter sports as part of the 1912 Summer Olympics. The organizers opposed this idea and their reasoning was two-fold: they desired to protect the integrity of the Nordic Games; and they were concerned about a lack of facilities that could accommodate winter sports. The idea was resurrected for the 1916 Games, which were to be held in Berlin. A winter sports week was planned, but this Olympics were cancelled after the outbreak of World War I.

The first Olympics after the war included figure skating and ice hockey. At the IOC Congress held the following year, it was decided that the organizers of the 1924 Summer Olympics, France, would also host a separate "International Winter Sports Week", under the patronage of the IOC. This "week" which it actually lasted 11 days of events in Chamonix proved to be a great success. More than 250 athletes from 16 nations competed in 16 events. In 1925 the IOC decided to create a separate Olympic Winter Games, and the 1924 Games in Chamonix were retroactively designated as the first Winter Olympics.

St. Moritz was appointed by the IOC to host the second Olympic Winter Games in 1928.

The Olympics in 1932 were the first to be hosted outside of Europe. Fewer athletes participated than in 1928, as the journey to Lake Placid, United States, was a long and expensive for most competitors, and there was little money for sports in the middle of the Great Depression. Then the 1936 marked the last year that the Summer and Winter Olympics were held in the same country.

The Second World War interrupted the celebration of the Winter Olympics. For four years the Olympics' destination was moving from country to country, because of the invasions in the War. After the World War II. the Olympics were holding place every four years. In 1986, the IOC decided to separate the Summer and Winter Games on separate years. Instead of holding both Games in the same calendar year, it was decided to alternate them every two years. Both Games would still be held on four-year cycles. The rationale given by the IOC for this change was in order to give more prominence to the Winter Olympic Games. The Winter Games have made significant changes since their inception. The rise of television as a global medium for communication has enhanced the profile of the Games. It has also created an income stream in the form of the sale of broadcast rights and advertising, which has become very lucrative for the International Olympic Committee. This has allowed outside interests, such as television companies and corporate sponsors, to influence various aspects of the Games. The IOC has had to address several internal scandals, and the use of interdiction drugs by Winter Olympians. Only China has boycotted the Winter Olympics. Nations have also used the Winter Games to their own political ends, and to showcase the claimed superiority of their political systems. The last Olympics were this year in Vancouver, Canada. The competitors were competing in 15 different disciplines. The next Olympics will be in Sochi, Russia. This will be the first time for Russia to host the Olympics. The Winter Olympics have been hosted in three continents, but never in a country in the southern hemisphere. The United States has hosted the Games four times, more than any other country.

The Winter Olympics are, the same as the Summer Olympics, the symbol of peace and connection among peoples.