

# LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

Don't leave your Olympic and Paralympic-themed lesson planning until the last minute, urges Jonathan Lear. Start now and make the most of this once in a lifetime opportunity...

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The excitement about next year's Olympic and Paralympic Games has been building now for quite some time. It's such a massive event I can't imagine there'll be a school in the land that doesn't join in with the celebrations in some form or another. As with most things, planning is everything; to wait until June before hastily cobbling together an Olympic and Paralympic-themed sports day doesn't do this huge national event justice.

The last time London hosted the Olympic Games was over sixty years ago. Much has been made of the 'legacy' of the Olympics. For me, it's as much to do with the stories that will be remembered as the facilities and stadium that are left behind. If, in another sixty years' time, our children can sit with their grandchildren and speak in hushed tones about how the magnificent Mo Farah battled

for gold with the African distance runners, or how Jessica Ennis took on the world in not one, but seven events, we will have left a true legacy.

However, we can't assume our children will be interested just because it's the Olympic and Paralympic Games, or just because it's in London. It's up to us to make it real, to allow them to enjoy the richness of the event and to leave them with lasting memories. If this means ditching another topic for a year, then so be it. I'd take the Olympic and Paralympic Games over the Tudors any day of the week.

### **Plan your own Games**

One of the challenges of trying to involve our children in the Olympic and Paralympic Games is that, as with most global events, they don't automatically feel part

of it. They can watch it on the television, and some might be fortunate enough to see some of it live, but it helps if it is contextualised. I work in Sheffield and teach lots of children for whom London is as remote as Paris or New York. It's a place they've heard of but it may as well be in a different country. To overcome this, perhaps we can bring the Olympic and Paralympic Games a lot closer to home.

This topic is centred on a school event based on the Olympic and Paralympic Games, with the children taking the role of planners, designers, organisers, ambassadors, coaches, and competitors. Whilst the main focus of the unit is not about doing sports or competing, having the children design and run their own Olympic and Paralympic-themed sports day or similar event would provide the opportunity for a final celebration of all their work.





**AREAS THAT THE NEWLY FORMED COMMITTEE MIGHT EXPLORE COULD INCLUDE:**

**1 Develop a brand**

The school olympics will need an identity; a brand to help people identify with it. The committee may decide to work on creating names, slogans, logos, or mascots by themselves. Equally, they may prefer to organise competitions that the rest of the school could enter. One of the key elements children need to be clear about is that the games are a school event and they are working as a team to ensure that it is memorable for all.

Explain to the children that everything about the Olympic and Paralympic Games links back to a set of really important Values. The Olympic Values are friendship, excellence and respect, and the Paralympic Values are courage, determination, equality and inspiration. How many of these are the same as your school values? How can your mascots, slogans and logos reflect the values of your Games?

**Tip**

London 2012's Get Set Network for schools has an image bank that can support lesson activities and help you to set the scene for your topic. Visit [getset.london2012.com/en/the-games/image-bank](http://getset.london2012.com/en/the-games/image-bank)

To begin, talk to the children about London 2012 to gauge how much they know. At this stage generating excitement about the project is more important than being focused on any one thing. Think out loud about how great it would be to have the Games a little bit closer: "Perhaps they could even be at our school? What if we had our own school Olympic and Paralympic Games? It would take a lot of work though, we'd need to plan it, organise it, who's going to do all of that?" (Cue a roomful of volunteers!)

Introduce the idea of a pupil committee: a group of people responsible for hosting your Olympic and Paralympic-themed Games. Tell the children that they will all become ambassadors for the games and work on the different elements needed to make the games a success.

It is likely that children will initially focus on the sport elements of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This is obviously the most important part of any Games but there are many other aspects that, in terms of our project, will be equally, if not more, important. (See the panel to the right and over the page for some suggested activities.)

**2 Tell the Olympic story**

A group could work on an exhibition based on the history of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Older members of the community, parents, and grandparents could be invited to share their favourite Olympic memories. Interviews could be combined with film clips (YouTube) and living exhibits (children dressed as famous athletes) so that information is presented in a wide variety of forms.

**3 Let children**

There may be adults in school that are able to coach particular sports; it would also be a good idea for the children to see what coaching was available within their local community. The ideal scenario would involve coaches coming in with the aim of teaching children some simple activities they could later deliver to other pupils in school. From their expert input, the children could create instructions for games that would enable them to set up playtime or lunchtime activities.