

Sustainable development through the Olympic Games

Olympic educational themes: Balance, respect for others

Context for activity

The IOC has identified three key priorities as part of its commitment to sustainable development: social equity, economic efficiency and environmental issues. Read the examples of how recent Olympic Games have incorporated these themes. The following activities suggest ways in which students can increase their understanding of the importance of sustainability and carry out initiatives to support these priorities.

Adaptations for different age groups

Primary ages 5–8

Create a “Green Team”. Students will create and lead a recycling or composting programme. They will design posters and give speeches that promote this programme. They will be acting as leaders and role models.

Start a rainwater collection programme. Use this water as necessary to hydrate plants and vegetables in a school garden.

Intermediate ages 9–11

In preparation for hosting the Olympic Games, Sydney (in 2000) and London (in 2012) cleaned up old industrial areas. As a consequence, nature started returning to these previously inhospitable areas: birds started to nest, fish returned, plants began to thrive. Select an area of your community that you can rehabilitate. Make sure you receive professional advice to ensure students are safe from hazardous materials.

Middle ages 12–14

You are tasked with designing a “One Planet Olympics”. The Olympic Games London 2012 used five themes: biodiversity, climate change, waste, inclusion and healthy living. Take these themes and, in groups, discuss how you would incorporate them into your games. Are there any other themes that you would add?

Take a theme and share what you have learned from these discussions. You could use many media—digital media, art, dance, song and speech—to present your ideas.

Senior ages 15–18

Create a plan to protect an endangered species. Identify the issues that put this species in danger of extinction. Create and implement an awareness campaign using technological tools. What will be the consequences for this species (and others) if your plan is successful? What barriers to implementation might you experience? How will you overcome them? How will you promote your success? How will you ensure that this initiative is linked to the Olympic Games?

Learning outcome

Understanding the need to respect the environment.

Suggested teaching strategies and learning skills

Inquiry, constructivism, project-based learning, journals, response journals, blogs, creative thinking, problem-solving.

Suggested equipment

Environmental supplies as needed (rain buckets, compost bins, etc.).

The Resource Library reference

- “*The Olympic Movement and the environment: University lecture on the Olympics*” Centre d’Estudis Olímpics (UAB), International Chair in Olympism (IOC-UAB), Tarradellas, J., 2010. 02/Good Practices.
- “*Sustainability Through Sport: Implementing the Olympic Movement’s Agenda 21 – 2012*” International Olympic Committee (IOC). 01/Advocacy.
- “*Tunza magazine: Sport and the environment*” United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2012. 03/Publications.
- “*Tunza magazine: The 4Rs – A way of life*” United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2013. 03/Publications.