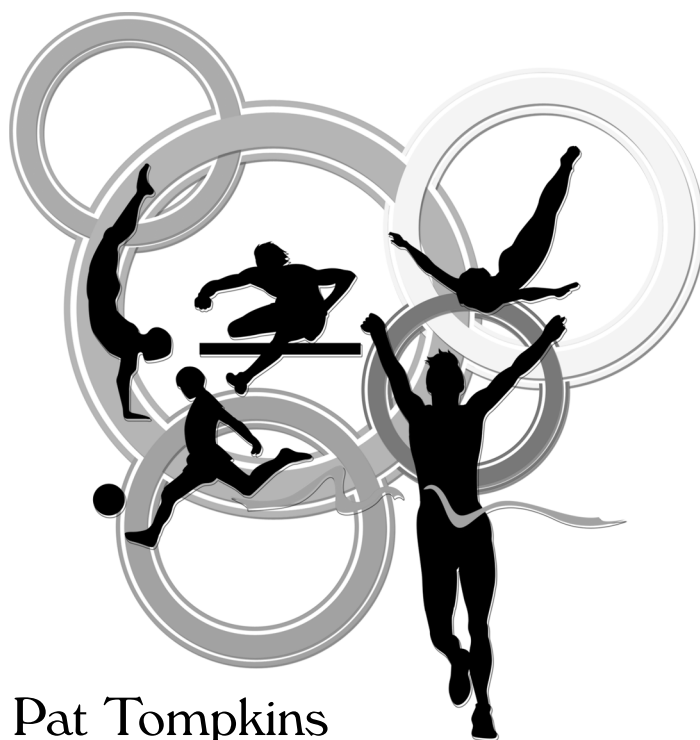


**Revised
Edition**

How to be an **Olympic Athlete**

Step into a champion's shoes!
Activities, maps, pictures, facts, fill-ins,
quizzes, tips and more.



Pat Tompkins

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INTRODUCTION

There's a sport, game or activity for everybody. Whatever your size, interests or abilities, you can be an athlete. The word *athlete* comes from the Greeks, who started the Olympic Games. It means 'one who competes for a prize'. Whenever you play to win, you're an athlete.

Chances to go to the Olympics as an athlete keep increasing. New events continue to be added. More people from more countries participate. And now, because the Summer and Winter Olympics no longer take place during the same year, there are only two years, instead of four, between the exciting competitions. Even if we don't participate, we can all go to the Olympics via TV.

How to Be an Olympic Athlete draws from the history of the modern Olympic Games. It includes a wide range of activities and guidelines to help readers improve their fitness. With this book you'll learn how to use your mind and body to enjoy sport. The accent is on fun ways to explore the active life.

The book has six parts, plus a Resources section:

1. *Explore possibilities* introduces the Olympic games, modern and ancient. It also includes ways for readers to test their skills.
2. *Choose a sport* looks at the many different sports people play.
3. *Practise your sport* includes ways to improve fitness.
4. *Be body-wise* explores the role of food in fitness. In addition, it covers safety guidelines all active people need to know.
5. *Use your head* looks at the importance of mental training in sport.
6. *Go to the Olympics* focuses on experiencing the games.

Each part also puts a particular Olympic sport in the spotlight – from diving to snowboarding. Outstanding Olympians are also featured.

Even though we can't all be Olympic athletes, we can all be 'try-athletes'. The stories of the athletes in this book will inspire and motivate you to move and improve.



Test your skills: Endurance and speed

Most sports involve some combination of strength, endurance, flexibility and speed. Record your results from these simple tests. In a month or two, take the tests again. See if you've improved.

Try this: You'll need a watch that shows seconds. For the first two tests, it's also useful to have someone act as timekeeper. If you can, use the track or football ground at a local school for running. Or use an indoor gym or basketball court.

1. Get a skipping rope. How long can you jump before you're tired? Jumping takes lots of energy. Don't be surprised if you last only a few minutes.

2. Go to a track or football ground. Run 100 metres as fast as you can. Have someone tell you when to start and record your time. If you run indoors, run 50 metres. You can also run across a large room. The distance or location isn't important. Test yourself again later. Then you can evaluate your progress.

3. Go to a track. Start by jogging, not running. See if you can jog a whole kilometre. If you get out of breath, alternate walking and jogging. How many minutes do you need to cover the distance? You can adapt this test for indoors.



The right sport

When you first try a sport, your reaction may be:

- This is much harder than it looks.
- If I practise, I'll get better.
- I'd rather try something else.
- There's a lot to learn, but it's fun to learn new things.

We all enjoy things we're good at. But no one is instantly a great gymnast or skater. You'll spend a lot of time practising your sport. So pick something you like.

Try this: Choose an athlete you admire and read about their early life. Find out why and when that person began playing sport. Write about what you learn from your athlete's childhood.

Did you know?

An accident caused Shane Gould to start swimming at age three. She spilled boiling tea on herself. To recover from the burns, doctors recommended swimming. As a member of the Australian swimming team, Gould won five medals in 1972.

Things to consider

- Do you play the sport indoors or outdoors?
- Is the sport affordable and can you play it nearby?
- Do you play it alone or with a team?
- Is the sport played in summer or winter?
- How popular is the sport?

The popularity of a sport depends partly on where you live. Skiing isn't popular in most of Africa. Handball isn't played much in Australia. Judo is big in Japan, but not in France.

