mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson: “What are some of the weirdest sports in the Olympics?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Hi, it's Doug! So, not only am I a big fan of the Olympics, but I'm also a big fan of flags. In fact, one of my favorite things to do is to watch the opening ceremony of the Olympics, and I like to guess which countries are competing by just looking at their flags.

Someone named Ja'Kehis has a question about the Olympics. Let's give him a call now.

[Video Call]
- Hi, Doug!
- Hi, Ja'Kehis!
- I have a question for you. What are some of the weirdest sports in the Olympics?
- That's a great question.

You've probably watched the Olympics and seen sports like this—this is swimming. Or, here's running, and here's gymnastics—these are in the Summer Olympics. But you know there's also the Winter Olympic sports, like snowboarding, and here's figure skating.

Sometimes though, you'll see a sport come on that you've never seen before, and you'll think, "What is this? This is so weird, what are they doing?" What you're seeing right here is a real Olympic sport though. In fact, it's pretty intense. This one is called synchronized swimming.

Now, you might think a sport seems weird, but it's probably just because you're not used to seeing it. Keep in mind, what seems weird to you might not be weird to someone else. Synchronized swimming started in the country of Germany. Now, it's become an Olympic sport and there's even an American team.

The Olympics involve countries from all over the world. So, I'll bet there are probably lots of sports that seem weird to you because you're not used to seeing them.

In the spirit of the Olympics today, I want to challenge you to a competition. I'm going to show you four different sports that you might not have seen very much before. See if you can guess which of these sports are part of the Olympics and which ones aren't.

Are you ready?

Okay. Here's sport number one. This is the sport of tug-of-war. Now, in this sport, two teams pull on either end of a rope to get the rope onto their side. What do you think? Is tug-of-war a sport in the Olympics? For now, just quietly guess and keep the answer to yourself. We'll pause after I show you all four.

Okay, here's sport number two. Racers on your mark, get set, now walk really fast! This sport is called race walking. These athletes are racing each other, but it's not a race where you run. In fact, running is not allowed, they can only walk. They have to keep one foot touching the ground at all times. What do you think? Is race walking a sport in the Olympics?

All right, let's go on to sport number three. This one is called curling. In curling, players slide a big piece of stone across the ice while the teammates sweep the ice in front of the stone with

brooms. You can see I'm not making this up, they're trying to get it to stop on the target on the other side. What do you think, is curling an Olympic sport? Think about that, and quietly keep the guess in your mind.

On we go now. The last one—sport number four. Now at first, this looks like skiing. But watch—it's not skiing. This sport is a dancing sport. It's a little bit more like figure skating but with skis on. It's called ski ballet. What do you think, is ski ballet an Olympic sport?

Well, now would be a good time to pause the video if you want to write down your guesses about each of these four sports. Which ones are part of the Olympics? Tug-of-war, race walking, curling, and ski ballet. Go ahead and pause the video now.

Okay. You ready?

Well, believe it or not, all four of these sports have been Olympic sports. Race walking and curling are currently sports in the Olympics. But at one point, tug-of-war and ski ballet were Olympic sports too.

This is a picture of one of the last times that tug-of-war was in the Olympics. Now, you can guess from this photograph that it was a pretty long time ago—it was back in the early 1900s.

Ski ballet may be one of the least-known sports ever. It's no longer a common sport, but athletes from all over the world competed in ski ballet in two different Winter Olympic games.

The modern Olympics have been going for over 120 years now, and sports have changed a lot over time. And who knows, sports you might find even weirder than these might be added to the Olympics in the future.

So in summary, there are lots of different sports in the Olympics because there are countries from all over the world competing. Some sports are ones you already know, and others might seem weird to you. The Olympics is a chance to learn about them.

That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Ja'Kehis, for asking it!