

Olympic Games

Opening and Closing Ceremonies at the Olympic Games



There is nothing more exciting and spectacular than to watch the opening ceremony that begins the Olympic Games. Many of the rituals performed were established at the 1920 Summer Olympics. The opening ceremony begins with the raising of the host country's flag while its national anthem is being played. Spectators are then entertained with artistic displays of music, singing, dancing, and theater that represents the culture of the host country. Each year these presentations have become larger and more grand as each host country tries to provide a more memorable ceremony than the previous host countries have. These ceremonies often cost millions of dollars to organize and costume.

After the entertainment, the most important part of the ceremony begins. This event is called the "Parade of Nations" and during it most of the participating athletes

march into the stadium country by country. Greece enters first due to its historical importance as the ancestors of the Olympics. The other countries enter in alphabetical order according to the host country's alphabet. The host country enters last. This is a very exciting event to witness as each country's delegation is led by a sign bearing the country's name followed by its national flag. The athletes are usually dressed in outfits that represent their country's colours and style of dress. The flag bearer is usually one of the country's most notable athletes competing in the Olympic Games.

Once all of the countries have assembled in the stadium, the president of the organizing committee makes a speech which is then followed by the IOC president's speech. The IOC president then asks the host country's official representative to declare the Games open by reciting the following words:

"I declare open the Games of (host city) celebrating (number of the Olympiad) Olympiad of the modern era (number of Olympics) Olympic Games."

The Olympic Flag is then carried out horizontally into the stadium and raised as the Olympic Anthem is played. For the entire duration of the Olympic Games, the Olympic flag flies on a flagpole placed in a prominent position in the main stadium. The flag bearers then circle a platform where one athlete and one judge stand to say the Olympic Oath, declaring they will compete and judge according to the rules.

At the end of the ceremony, the Olympic Torch is carried into the stadium and passed from athlete to athlete until it reaches the last carrier. The athlete chosen to light the Olympic Flame in the stadium's cauldron is usually a well-known and successful athlete from the host nation. The flame is lit and the games begin.

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The closing ceremony is held after all the sporting competitions have taken place. This ceremony is not as formal as the opening ceremony. The flag bearers from all the competing nations enter the stadium single file and behind them all of the athletes flow in mixing with other countries together. This tradition began at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics as a way to bring athletes together as one nation.

Three national flags are raised on flagpoles while each country's national anthem is played. The flag of Greece is raised first on the middle pole to honour the birthplace of the Olympics Games. The

flag of the host country is raised next on the lefthand pole and the flag of the country to host the next Summer or Winter Olympics is raised on the righthand pole.

The president of the organizing committee makes his closing speech. The IOC president then follows with this statement to close the Olympic Games:

"I declare the Games of the (ordinal number) Olympiad (ordinal number) Olympic Winter/Summer Games closed and, in accordance with tradition, I call upon the youth of the world to assemble four years from now in (name of host city) to celebrate the Games of the (ordinal number) Olympiad (ordinal number) Olympic Winter/Summer Games."

The Olympic Flame is extinguished while the Olympic Anthem is played. The Olympic Flag is then lowered from the flagpole and carried horizontally out of the stadium. Then, the transfer of the special Olympic Flag takes place. The mayor of the city that organized the Games gives the Special Olympic Flag to the president of the IOC. The president then passes the flag to the mayor of the city hosting the next Olympic Games. The mayor receiving the flag waves it eight times. After this ceremony, the next host nation has a special artistic display of dance and theater representative of the country's culture. At the end of the ceremony, the athletes and spectators leave with wonderful memories of their visit to the Olympic Games.



In which ceremony may each of the following events take place?

Opening Ceremony or **Closing Ceremony**

1. I stood and watched as the Olympic Flag was slowly and reverently carried into the stadium by ten men and women dressed in military uniforms.

2. The stadium grew dark and a sadness swept over the athletes and the spectators as they watched the Olympic Flame slowly die out.

3. Each country happily marched into the stadium behind their sign and flag bearers.

4. A hush fell over the audience and the athletes in the stadium while the Olympic oath was said.

5. The flags of three countries were raised on flag poles one at a time while their national anthems were being played.

6. The music began to play and suddenly, the stadium floor was filled with flag bearers and athletes from various countries walking everywhere.

7. The IOC president declared that the Olympic Games were over and the Olympic Flag was lowered and carried out.

8. The night sky lit up with exploding fireworks. Music was being played, while children and adults performed on the huge stage before the athletes were to enter.

9. Greece always leads the way during the *Parade of Nations* into the Olympic stadium.

10. The Olympic Flag is raised, the Olympic Oath is said, and the Olympic Torch is lit.

Answer Key

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1. Opening Ceremony 2. Closing Ceremony 3. Opening Ceremony 4. Opening Ceremony 5. Closing Ceremony 6. Closing Ceremony 7. Closing Ceremony 8. Opening Ceremony 9. Opening Ceremony 10. Opening Ceremony