



OLYMPIC PICTOGRAMS IN THE CLASSROOM

Olympic pictograms appeared for the first time in 1964 at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. In order to reach out to people from across the world and communicate beyond words and writing, Japanese developed this universal language. Their graphic symbols, which were both effective and modern, were used to indicate the various events on the programme, but also all the services provided to the

spectators. This was a real change in perceptual habits that quickly caught on! Since 1964, each edition of the Games has produced its own set of pictograms and redefines the genre. In that respect, the Games have played a major role in disseminating these “picture signs”, which have become omnipresent in our lives.

A VARIED SUBJECT FOR TEACHERS AND THEIR STUDENTS

With the Olympic pictograms:

- many themes linked to school programmes can be addressed: sport, cultural diversity, languages, communication, art, graphic design, etc.
- various skills can be developed among the pupils; observing, describing and interpreting/discovering and identifying shapes/decoding visual symbols and becoming familiar one’s environment/learning about the universal use of the pictogram/communicating in a fun and creative way/producing a graphic language.

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This document is available in French, English and German.
It can be downloaded from www.olympic.org/pedagogie.

INSTRUCTIONS SHEET

For teachers, and devised by The Olympic Museum, this sheet is made up of five sections:

- “Did you know?”, which gives pupils the key elements to learn about the Olympic pictograms.
- “Olympic object”, which presents an item from the Olympic patrimony.
- activities to develop observational skills, knowledge and creativity for 6-10 years olds. Pupils can work on these tailor-made activities in class, alone or in small groups.
- activities on the same principle, for ages 11-15
- “Resources” with additional documents for teachers (books, articles, educational support, etc.).

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1964, for the Olympic Games in Tokyo (Japan), the organisers had a difficult problem on their hands: how could they make the events programme understood by everyone? The athletes were from different countries, and so were the spectators. Should they use a common language? But English is not spoken everywhere and by everyone. The Japanese came up with a brilliant idea: to use pictograms, little pictures that replaced words. Clever, right?



Olympic torch relay pictogram on a mountainside in Lillehammer.

WHAT IS A PICTOGRAM?

The word pictogram is formed from “picto”, which means “picture, drawing” (in Latin), and “gramma”, which means “letter” or written “sign” (in Greek). Simply put, a pictogram is a picture sign, a drawing that speaks and delivers a message. For example, here is the pictogram which, in 1984, was used to symbolise the cycling events at the Olympic Games in Los Angeles (USA). And next to it, those for swimming and football. Do you understand the principle?



Three pictograms of the Los Angeles Summer Olympics in 1984.

A PREHISTORIC FORM OF SMS?

Drawing to communicate with people or make them understand something is nothing new! It all began... in prehistoric times. Our ancestors painted or engraved animal shapes, already forming a real language. These first pictograms sometimes inspire those used today! Very famous rock paintings in Norway that are thousands of years old served as the basis for the pictograms of the 1994 Winter Games in Lillehammer (Norway).



Speed skating pictogram of the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics.

DID YOU KNOW?



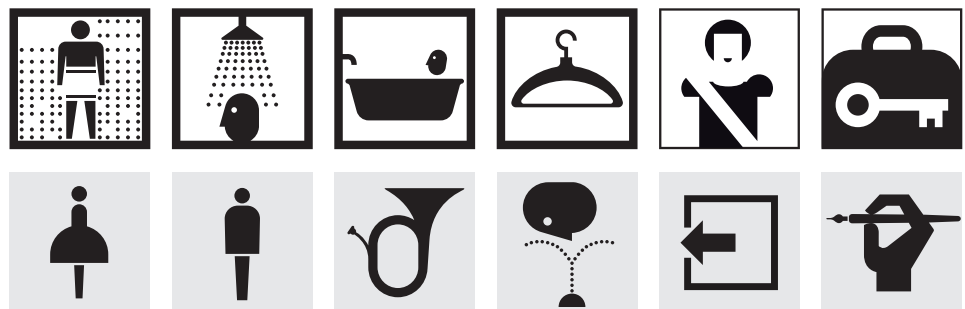
Service pictograms of different editions of the Olympic Games.

PICTOMANIA

We live today in a world of picture signs! They are in schools, in transports, along the roads, and on mobile phones and computers. These designs serve to give us information, mark a location or tell us not to do something. They greatly facilitate communication, as they are clear for all users, whatever their language or level of education – there's no need to be able to read to figure them out. They can even help us express emotions! The proof of this are emojis, which have taken over the planet.

PICTOGRAMS – THE CHAMPIONS OF THE GAMES

It all began in 1964, in Tokyo (Japan). A team of Japanese designers developed whole sets of pictograms, featuring not only the sports disciplines, but also all the services available for spectators and tourists (railway stations, restaurants, hotels, banks, post offices, etc.). This picture language was a great success. Since then, for each edition of the Games, new pictograms have been created. By whom? By real professionals, trained in communication and graphic design, as delivering a message using a simple diagram is far from easy. Perhaps you have experienced this when playing "Pictionary": a straightforward sketch to you may in fact be unclear to the other players! In Tokyo in 1964, over 30 designers contributed to ensure that everything was perfect.

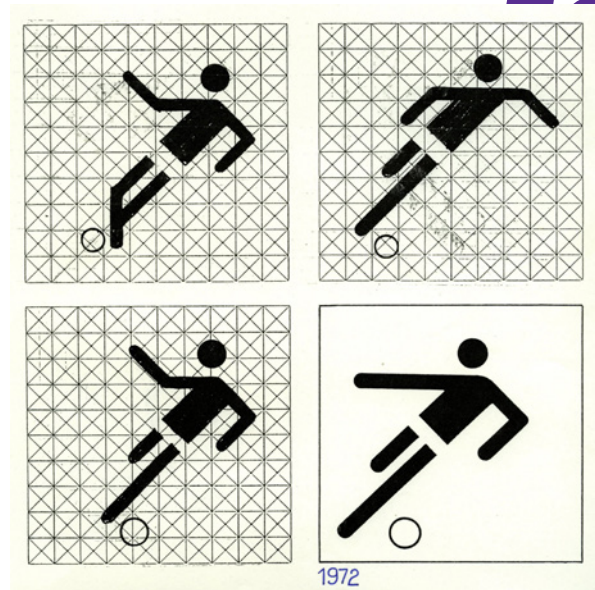


The first service pictograms for the Olympic Games in Tokyo 1964.

DID YOU KNOW?

IS IT SERIOUS, DOCTOR?

Here are the pictograms for the 1972 Games in Munich (Germany). They are made up of only a few elements – a circle for the head and straight lines for the limbs – but graphic designer Gerhard Joksch managed to portray 21 sports. The style is effective and modern! But why do his athletes have thin stick-like bodies? Joksch said that, to create his characters, he based them on “tongue depressors”, those small flat sticks that doctors use to check your throat. This series was a great success and influenced later editions for almost 15 years!



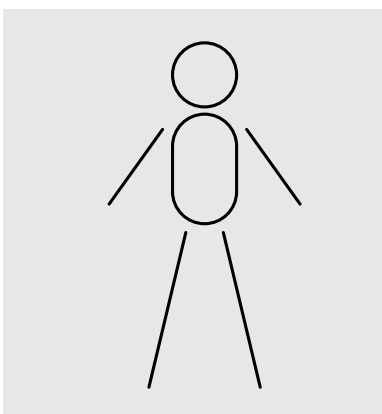
Visual studies for the football pictogram by Gerhard Joksch.

THREE “PRO” TIPS

To make an Olympic pictogram, you need to:

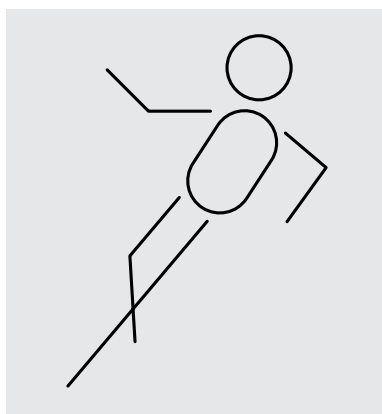
1

Simplify the athlete’s body as much as possible, by excluding useless details. E.g. use a circle for the head, an oval for the body, and four lines for the arms and legs.



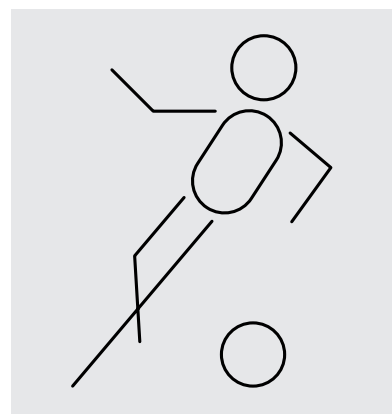
2

Show the athlete moving, in a proactive position. E.g. silhouette of a player in action for football, judoka throwing an opponent on the floor for judo, etc.



3

Don’t forget your champion’s sports equipment: ball, boxing gloves, weights, canoe paddle, etc.



OVER TO YOU!

Activities for 6-10 year olds



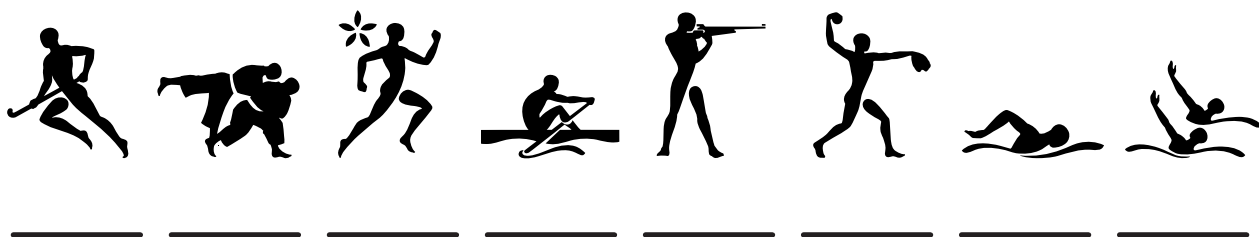
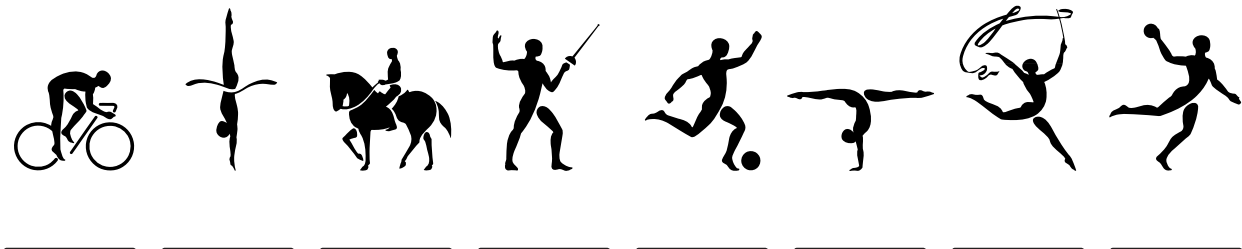
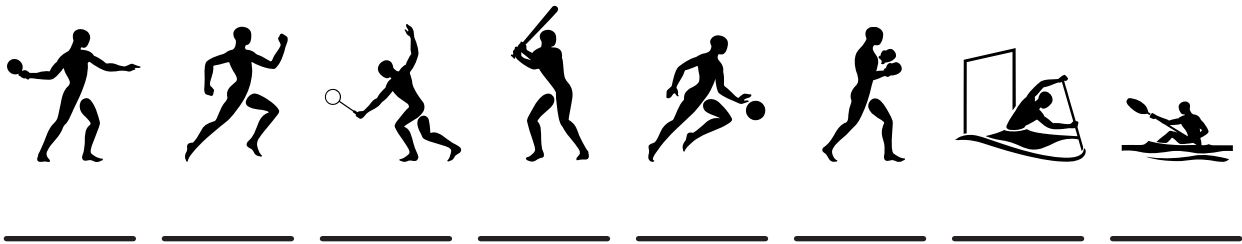
1. WHO DOES WHAT?

Here are some of the sports on the programme of the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996. Under the name of each pictogram, write the name of the discipline concerned.

Ein Beispiel:



Archery



OVER TO YOU!

Activities for 6-10 year olds



2. SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT

Four odd-ones-out are hiding amongst the pictograms of the Tokyo 1964 Summer Games.

Look at the example below and search for the three other winter sports. Once you have found them, draw a red circle around them.

Which sports do you think these drawings represent? Put your answer under the odd-ones-out.

Biathlon

OVER TO YOU!

Activities for 6-10 year olds



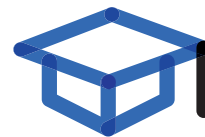
3. DRAW YOUR OWN PICTOGRAM!

Do you have a favourite sport? Just for fun, draw the pictogram of this discipline, following the advice on page 5.

To help you, put your drawing in the boxes below. The first two are for practice, the third one is for your final drawing.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN A WORKOUT! -----

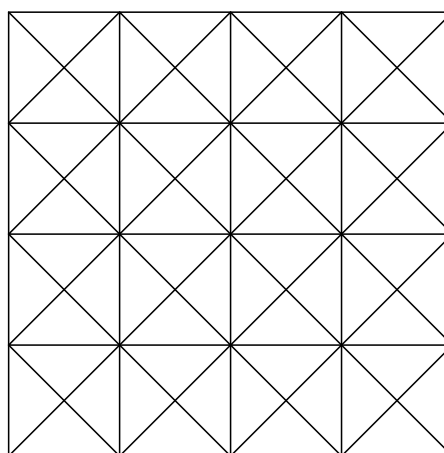
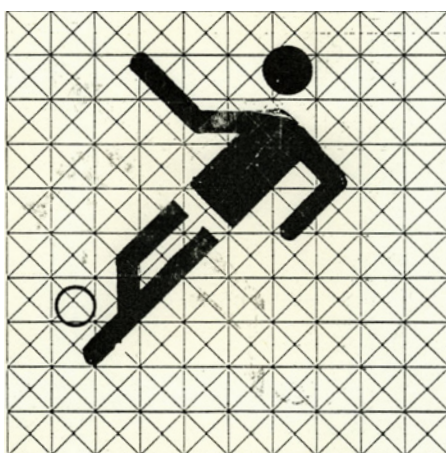
Activities for 11-15 year olds



1. BECOME A PICTO PRO!

What is your favourite sport? Get inspired by Gerhard Joksch, the creator of the pictograms for the Munich 1972 Games, by using a grid to produce your own pictogram.

Need help? Read the tips on page 5.



2. TAKE A LOOK AND WORK IT OUT

Olympic pictograms often pay tribute to the countries hosting the Games.

Their style refers to the culture, art or traditions of the host country.

The pictograms for Sydney in 2000, for example, incorporated a typical item from Australian culture.

It is a -----



GIVE YOUR BRAIN A WORKOUT!

Activities for 11-15 year olds

3. SEARCH AND FIND

The pictograms produced for the Athens 2004 Games are based on Ancient Greek art.

In your opinion, is their style inspired by (tick those that apply):

- Greek vases painted with black figures?
- ancient statuettes ("Cycladic idols")
- fragments of ancient vases?
- the Venus de Milo?



In the batches below, can you identify the pictograms for the Beijing 2008 Games, the loose style of which is a nod to traditional Chinese calligraphy?

And the ones from Lillehammer (1994, Norway), whose skiers are inspired by ancient rock carvings?

Put a **green** circle around the Beijing ones and a **blue** one around the Lillehammer ones.



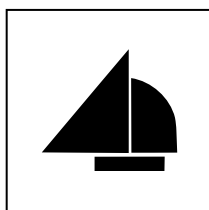
GIVE YOUR BRAIN A WORKOUT!

Activities for 11-15 year olds

4. OVER TO YOU!

Here are different ways of representing SAILING.

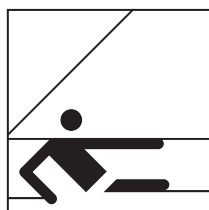
In the last box, come up with a new drawing for the Games that will take place in Tokyo in 2020.



Tokyo 64



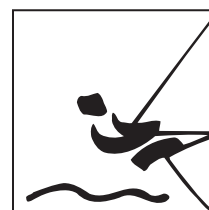
Mexico City 68



Munich 72



Moscow 80



Barcelona 92



Atlanta 96



Sydney 2000



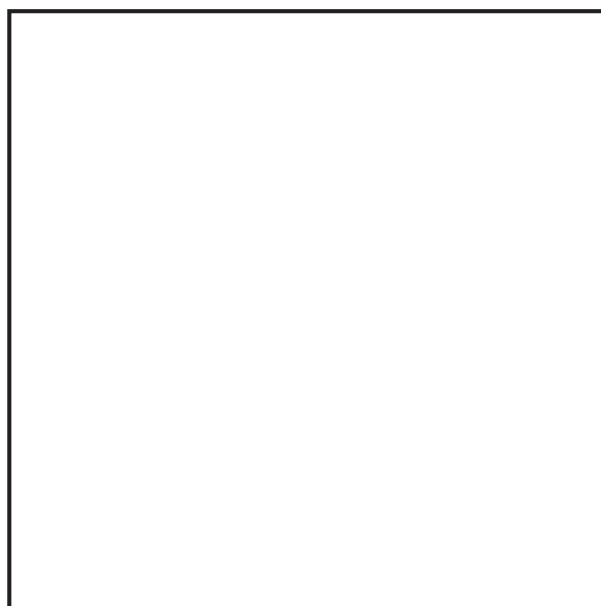
Athens 2004



London 2012



Rio 2016





ARTEFACT N° 106405 Collections of The Olympic Museum

Lillehammer 1994, tie with sports pictograms

1994

Clothing et accessories, tie

Width x Lenght: 10 x 142 cm. Weight: 40g

Blue: Polychrome

Silk

Lillehammer Organising Olympic Committee

Key words: Winter Olympic Games, Lillehammer 1994, Man, Pictogram, Olympic symbol

Collection of Artefacts

OLYMPIC OBJECT

This tie belongs to The Museum's collections. Take a good look at it before answering the questions below.



Description:

Can you describe this item in a few words (shape, colour, pattern)?

Materials:

What is it made of?

Size:

What are its dimensions?

Period:

When was it made?

Type:

Which family of items does it belong to?

Function:

What is it used for? Is it strictly a practical item?

Conservation location:

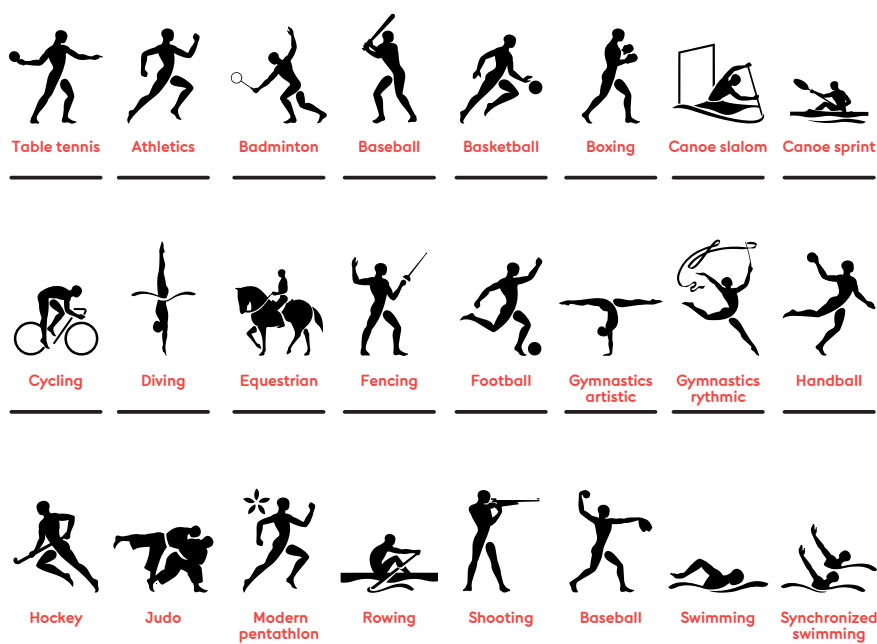
In your opinion, why is it at The Museum?

RESOURCES









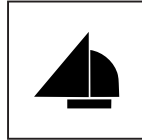
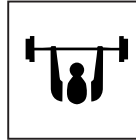







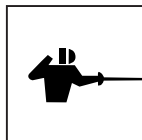
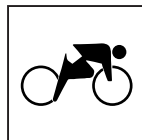

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Available online : <https://library.olympic.org/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/161826>
- The Olympic Studies Centre, « The sports pictograms of the Olympic Summer Games from Tokyo 1964 to Rio 2016 », Lausanne : The Olympic Studies Centre, 2017.
Available online : <https://library.olympic.org/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/161824>

EXERCISE CORRECTIONS

1. WHO DOES WHAT?



2. SPOT THE ODD ONE OUT

				
			Ski	
				
	Bobsleigh			
				
		Biathlon		
				
	Ice hockey			

2. TAKE A LOOK AND WORK IT OUT

It is a Boomerang

3. SEARCH AND FIND

- Greek vases painted with black figures?
- ancient statuettes ("Cycladic idols")?
- fragments of ancient vases?
- the Venus de Milo?

