

Sport and the disabled

A) The Paralympic Games

The **Paralympic Games** are a multi-sport event for athletes with physical, mental and sensorial disabilities. The Paralympic Games are held every four years, following the Olympic Games, and are governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

The name derives from the Greek "para" ("beside" or "alongside") and thus refers to a competition held in parallel with the Olympic Games.

Sir Ludwig Guttman organized a sports competition in 1948 which became known as the Stoke Mandeville Games. The first Olympic-style games for athletes with a disability were held in Rome in 1960, these are considered to be the first Paralympic Games. The first Winter Paralympics were held in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden in 1976.

Since 1988, the Summer Paralympics have been held in conjunction with the Olympic Games in the same host city. This practice was adopted in 1992 for the Winter Paralympics, and became an official policy of the International Olympic Committee and the IPC following a June 19, 2001 agreement. The Games take place three weeks after the closing of the Olympics, in the same host city and using the same facilities.

Education of Students with Physical Disabilities

- I. In the field of special education, physical disabilities refer to a wide **variety of conditions** that may **interfere** with a child's ability to perform everyday activities. Such conditions include problems with **muscles**, such as muscular **dystrophy**; problems involving the **central nervous system**, problems with the structure of the **skeleton**, and health problems, such as heart disorders. For some children, physical disabilities are simply structural or health problems that **do not require** special **educational facilities** or services. For other children, however, the physical disabilities may interfere with their ability to walk, write, speak, or take care of their personal needs.
- II. Some special **residential** schools for students with physical disabilities were developed in Europe and the United States in the 19th century, but most of these schools had closed by the 1970s. Today a higher number of conventional school buildings are designed to be "barrier-free." Many students with physical disabilities attend their regular neighborhood schools. Specialists travel to those schools to provide whatever special services and equipment the students may need.
- II. Most adaptive aids for students with physical disabilities are designed to fit their physical size, abilities, and needs. The aids many children use are not very noticeable or unusual, such as **pencils** with specially designed handles for children with **impaired** motor skills. Other children, however, may need elaborate aids to perform any activity. These include aids to allow for greater mobility, such as **electric or manually operated wheelchairs**, specially designed seats, adaptive aids for turning pages, eating; and **communication** aids. Aids to assist in communication include materials and equipment ranging from simple **books** of pictures to **sophisticated computer-based** devices.
- III. IV. While many students with physical disabilities have the same ability to learn as other students, some of them also have learning **disorders**, mental retardation, or

other conditions that require special services. In these cases, specialists work together with the child's family to design a program for the child's unique situation.