



□□□ Tokyo 2020 is proposing an original process to choose the Olympic and Paralympic mascots. A national competition open to all people living in Japan was presented on 22 May. A shortlist drawn up by a panel of experts will then be submitted to all of the country's schoolchildren, who will vote to decide upon the winners!

In Rio in 2016, a public vote was organised to choose the name of the Olympic and Paralympic mascots. For the Olympic Games, over 320,000 voters were registered, and "Vinicius" was chosen in homage to Brazilian musician Vinicius de Moraes. Vinicius was a mix of various animals from Brazilian fauna. His design was inspired by pop culture and characters from video games and animation. With his Paralympic Games counterpart, Vinicius represented the diversity of the Brazilian culture and people, as well as its abundant nature.

But Tokyo 2020 is going even further! Indeed, the official mascot of the Games of the XXXII Olympiad will be the subject of a national design competition, presented on Monday 22 May 2017. In addition to professional illustrators and designers, the whole of Japan is invited to put

forward their personal creations through websites in Japanese and English. A creative brief with a full set of design guidelines and criteria is available to the candidates, who will be asked to propose their designs for Olympic and Paralympic mascots. A group of experts will then draw up a shortlist, which will be put to... primary school children across the country!

Each primary school class in Japan will be able to vote for the designs of their choice, and those with the most votes will become the mascots for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020. Yoshiko Ikoma, the Vice Chairperson of the mascot selection process panel, explained: "Given the importance of mascots in modern Japanese culture, we always knew there would be huge public interest in the selection of the Tokyo 2020 mascot. We think this process gives the public – and especially schoolchildren – a unique opportunity to participate in the design and selection process."

The entry period will run from 1 to 14 August 2017 through a dedicated website. In 2018, the panel of experts will draw up its shortlist, which will then be put to Japanese schoolchildren. Once a choice has been made, the panel of experts will decide on the names of the Olympic and Paralympic mascots.

Tokyo 2020 The history of Olympic mascots since 1972

The very first official mascot of the Olympic Games appeared in Munich in 1972. His name was Waldi and he was a dachshund, a very popular breed of dog in Bavaria known for its resistance, tenacity and agility. The mascot was multi-coloured: his head and tail were light blue, while his body was striped with three of the six Olympic colours. The route of the 1972 Olympic marathon corresponded to the shape of the mascot.

Later, various animals linked to local traditions were chosen as mascots: Amik the beaver for Montreal 1976, Misha the bear for Moscow 1980, Sam the eagle for Los Angeles 1984, Hodori the tiger for Seoul 1988 and Cobi the (stylised) Catalan sheepdog for Barcelona 1992. For Atlanta 1996 mascot Izzy (a contraction of "what is it?") was unusual because it was the first computer-generated mascot. Three native Australian animals were chosen for Sydney 2000: Olly the kookaburra, Syd the duck-billed platypus and Millie the echidna. Athens 2004 provided a physical representation of Ancient Greek gods, with brother and sister Phevos and Athena as its mascots, forming the link between Ancient Greece and the modern Olympic Games. Beijing 2008 saw a new innovation: five little characters, the "fuwa": Beibei, Jingjing, Huanhuan, Yingying and Nini – a fish, a panda, a Tibetan antelope, a swallow and the Olympic flame – were chosen as mascots.

Finally, the character of Wenlock, whose name came from the Much Wenlock Olympian Games in 1850, which inspired Pierre de Coubertin to re-establish the Olympic Games, was the mascot for the London 2012 Games. Wenlock's metallic sheen was explained by the fact that he was made from the last droplets of steel used to build the Olympic Stadium in London. The light on his head was inspired by the lights found on London's famous black cabs. The shape of his head was identical to that of the Olympic Stadium roof. His eye was a camera lens, which filmed everything he saw. He wore on his wrists five bracelets in the colours of the Olympic rings. Finally, the three points on his head represented the three steps on the podium for the winners to receive their medals.

The choice of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic mascots was also the subject of a competition, launched in 2008. Over 100 designers, artists and agencies submitted their plans. Eighty-four 2.30m-high sculptures of Wenlock and Mandeville (the Paralympic mascot), each weighing one tonne, were placed around streets, parks and Tube stations in the city of London to guide tourists during the Games.

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