



Swimming

Swimming can be dated back to the Stone Age, but did not truly become an organised sport until the early 19th century.

An ancient discipline

Prehistoric man learnt to swim in order to cross rivers and lakes – we know this because cave paintings from the Stone Age depicting swimmers have been found in Egypt.

Swimming was also referred to in Greek mythology.

Dawn of a sport

Swimming was not widely practised until the early 19th century, when the National Swimming Society of Great Britain began to hold competitions. Most early swimmers used the breaststroke, or a form of it.

Discovering the crawl

Based on a stroke used by native South Americans, the first version of the crawl featured a scissor kick. In the late 1880s, an Englishman named Frederick Cavill traveled to the South Seas, where he saw the natives performing a crawl with a flutter kick. Cavill settled in Australia, where he taught the stroke that was to become the famous Australian crawl.

Expanding repertoire

Swimming has featured in every edition of the Games since 1896. Early Olympic events were conducted in freestyle (crawl) or breaststroke. Backstroke was added as of 1904. In the 1940s, breaststrokers discovered they could go much faster by bringing both arms overhead together. This was soon banned in the breaststroke, but became the butterfly stroke, which is now the fourth stroke used in competitive swimming.

For more information please refer to IOC official website

Source: IOC website