

Olympic Weightlifting

Olympic weightlifting, or weightlifting, is an athletic discipline in the modern Olympic programme in which the athlete attempts a maximum-weight single lift of a barbell loaded with weight plates.

Qualifying – the road to Rio

Qualification is based on the results of the 2014 and 2015 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) World Championships and the 2016 Continental Championships. No more than six men and four women can qualify per country, with a maximum of two athletes per event.

Brazil, as host country, is guaranteed five quota places, three for men and two for women.

No New Zealand weightlifters have qualified for Rio as yet. The best chance for qualification for our weightlifters is via the Oceania qualifying event being held in Fiji in early 2016. At this event qualifying is based on team results, not individuals. Teams must place in the top three for women to gain one Olympic spot, and men must place in the top four to gain a spot. A women's team has seven members and a men's team has eight.

If the New Zealand teams are successful at this qualification event in gaining places at the Rio Games, then our selectors will choose one male weightlifter and one female weightlifter to go (in agreement with the NZOC).

Rio 2016 Weightlifting

When: Competition will take place over 10 days from 7-14 August 2016 (with no competition on 15 August).

Where: Riocentro – Pavilion 2.

Men will compete in eight events based on athlete weight categories, from under 56kg to the super-heavyweights at over 105kg. Women compete for seven gold medals, from under 48kg to over 75kg.

Each weight category is an event and all competitions are finals.





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| MEN'S WEIGHT CLASSES | WOMEN'S WEIGHT CLASSES |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 56kg | 48kg |
| 62kg | 53kg |
| 69kg | 58kg |
| 77kg | 63kg |
| 85kg | 69kg |
| 94kg | 75kg |
| 105kg | +75kg |
| +105kg | |

“Every four years the Olympic Stage presents a pinnacle platform for every elite weightlifter around the world to deliver a performance. Hours upon hours of training, tons of weight shifted, all in anticipation of delivering six lifts, a total of less than 10 seconds work to claim the title of Olympian.

New Zealand has a proud history of representatives to the Olympic Games and it will continue to be a dream for many in the wider community. Rio 2016 will be an opportunity for yet more athletes to fulfil that dream.” – Richie Patterson, New Zealand Olympic Weightlifter, Beijing 2008 and London 2012

How are the events run?

For each weight category (event) there are two competition lifts – the snatch and the clean and jerk. Each weightlifter receives three attempts in each, and the combined total of the highest two successful lifts determines the overall result within a bodyweight category.

The barbell is loaded in progression, with the competitor taking the lowest weight lifting first.

Athletes/coaches have to announce the next weight that the athlete will lift and this can be modified twice before lifting. Automatic progression after any successful attempt for the same athlete must be a minimum of 1kg.

Athletes have 1 minute to perform (or 2 minutes taking consecutive attempts). After the snatch there is a 10 minute break before the clean and jerk starts.

A lifter who fails to complete at least one successful snatch and one successful clean and jerk also fails to total, and therefore receives an ‘incomplete’ entry for the competition.

Types of lifts

In the snatch, athletes lift the bar to arm's length above their head in one movement.

In the clean and jerk, they lift the bar to their shoulders, stand up straight, and then jerk the bar to arm's length above their head.

Referee light system

The three referees give their decision about the correctness and validity of each lift by pressing white or red light buttons on a small device in front of them. As soon as a referee has judged a lift as correctly completed, they will press the white light button or, if the attempt is incorrect or missed, the red light button.

The Stars of Olympic Weightlifting

The best in the world

At the beginning of the century, Austria, Germany and France were the most successful nations. However in the 1950s, the Soviet Union's weightlifters rose to prominence and stayed there until the 1990s when China, Turkey, Greece and Iran catapulted to the lead. In the women's field, China has been dominant but other countries, notably North Korea, have strengthened in recent years.

Recent world champions to watch out for at Rio include Ilya Ilyin from Kazakhstan, double Olympic champion and world record-holder in the men's 105kg, Kianoush Rostami from Iran who won the 85kg category, Guoshun Zhong and Liu Xiaojun (77kg) and Hui Liao from China (69kg), and the North Koreans Un Guk Kim and Yun Chol Om in the lighter weight categories.

In the **women's** competition Tatiana Kashirina from Russia is expected to be a star performer, after setting five world records on her way to victory in the women's super-heavyweight category, and China's Wei Deng in the 63kg and Mengrong Deng in the 58kg categories (both gold medalists at the 2014 World Championships) will be vying for medals.

New Zealand success

New Zealand weightlifting success has been achieved at Commonwealth Games level, starting with Harold Cleghorn at the 1950 British and Empire Games and Don Oliver at the 1966 Games. Tony Ebert and Graham May made New Zealand sporting history, winning gold at the Christchurch Games in 1974, and Precious McKenzie became a household name with his gold medal performance at the 1978 Edmonton Games. Darren Liddel and Nigel Avery added their names to the hall of fame when they won gold at the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Games and 2002 Manchester Games respectively.

Our latest gold medallist, Richard Patterson, carried on the tradition at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Did you know?

- The lifts performed at the Olympic Games, and in particular component lifts (eg, squats, deadlifts, cleans), are commonly used by elite athletes in other sports to train for both explosive and functional strength.
- Super-heavyweight lifters normally claim the title of World's Strongest Man or Woman. However, kilo for kilo, the lightest weightlifter is often the strongest.
- At the first Olympic Games in 1896 a distinction was drawn between lifting with 'one hand' only and lifting with 'two hands'. The winner of the 'one hand' competition in 1896 was Launceston Elliot, while the winner of the 'two hands' event was Viggo Jensen of Denmark.
- The apparent simplicity of lifting the barbell from the ground and over the head in one or two movements is deceptive. Weightlifting is a highly technical sport that demands speed and mobility, as well as raw strength.
- A randomly generated lot number is drawn for each competitor, which then generates the order of the weigh-ins.

Weightlifting terminology

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| Attempt | Each competitor has three attempts at the snatch and three at the clean and jerk at weights requested and specified by the rules. In order to qualify for a total, the athlete must perform at least one successful attempt in the snatch. |
| Snatch | One of the two types of movements/lifts which constitute the weightlifting competition. A continuous, swift movement in which the athlete lifts the barbell with both hands from the platform to extended arm's length above the head, finishing with an upright body. The snatch is performed in the first half of the competition. |
| Clean and jerk | One of the two types of movements/lifts which constitute the weightlifting competition. A two-phase movement during which the athlete first pulls the barbell with both hands to shoulder height, performing a squat and then standing up (clean), then jerks the weight overhead in a fast movement, finishing with arms fully extended and an upright body (jerk). |
| Split | To drop while bending the legs, one forward and one straight back. |
| Sleeve | The end parts of the bar where the weights are attached. |
| Bodyweight | The exact weight of the athlete (to the nearest 10g) registered by the officials at the weigh-in, which begins 2 hours before the athlete's competition. In the event of identical results, having a lighter bodyweight will give the advantage in the ranking. |
| No lift | An attempt judged as unsuccessful by at least two of the three referees. |



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- Press-out** An illegal move where a lifter bends the arms while holding the bar overhead, then presses out to make them straight. The most common mistake, which leads to the referees declaring the attempt is a 'no lift'.
- Competition platform** A square platform measuring 4m along each side and 100mm high, made of a solid and non-slippery material, on which the competitors must execute the lifts.
- Technical officials** Referees and any person who controls the play of a competition by applying the rules and regulations of the sport to make judgments on rule infringement, performance, time or score. Weightlifting has three referees with white (good lift) and red (failed lift) buttons on a keypad on their tables. Two white lights constitute a GOOD lift, while two red lights constitute a FAILED lift.

Timeline

As a means to measure strength and power, weightlifting was practised both by ancient Egyptian and Greek societies. The modern sport of weightlifting traces its origins to the European competitions of the 19th century.

- 1896** Men's weightlifting featured at the first modern Olympic Games in Athens and has been on the programme of every Games since (except the 1900, 1908 and 1912 editions).
- 1920** At the Antwerp Games in 1920, weightlifting became an event in its own right. Originally, weightlifting was included in the field events of the predecessor to today's track-and-field or athletics event.
- 1924** Games weight classes were introduced, instead of requiring all competitors to compete against each other regardless of size.
- 1932** Weightlifting was divided into five weight divisions.
- 2000** Women's weightlifting made its debut at the Sydney Games.