

Overview: Paralympic Winter Games

The Paralympics are the Olympic Winter Games for athletes with physical disabilities. The word Paralympics is a combination of the word parallel, which means “similar” or “with” and the word Olympics. The athletes who compete in the Paralympic Winter Games are either visually impaired or physically disabled.



**SALT LAKE 2002
PARALYMPICS**

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The VIII Paralympic Winter Games will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, March 7-16, immediately following the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. Up to 1,100 athletes and team officials from 35 different countries will participate in these Games.

The events that will be held during the 2002 Paralympic Winter Games include alpine skiing, biathlon, cross-country skiing and ice sledge hockey.

In order to participate in these events, the athletes must make special adaptations. For example, skiers who are missing a single leg may use a single ski, ski crutches or artificial limbs. Visually impaired skiers will use sighted guides who lead them, by verbal directions, through the course.

Desire, Discipline and Determination

The Paralympics Games are often confused with the Special Olympics. The Special Olympics are games for people with mental and developmental disabilities. In these events, everyone wins. The world class athletes, selected to compete in the Paralympics, must qualify for competition using guidelines similar to those of the Olympic Winter Games. Both groups of athletes must follow tough training schedules and meet strict qualifying standards to be eligible for participation. Simply put, Paralympic athletes are the best of the best.

One of the goals of the Paralympic Games is to remind society of the capabilities, strengths and rights of disabled people. Many athletes who participate in these games feel that winning a medal is a secondary goal, first and foremost, they hope the Paralympics will help change how the world perceives people with disabilities.