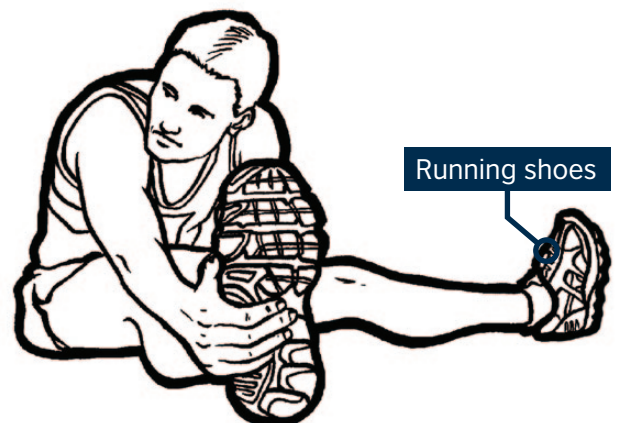
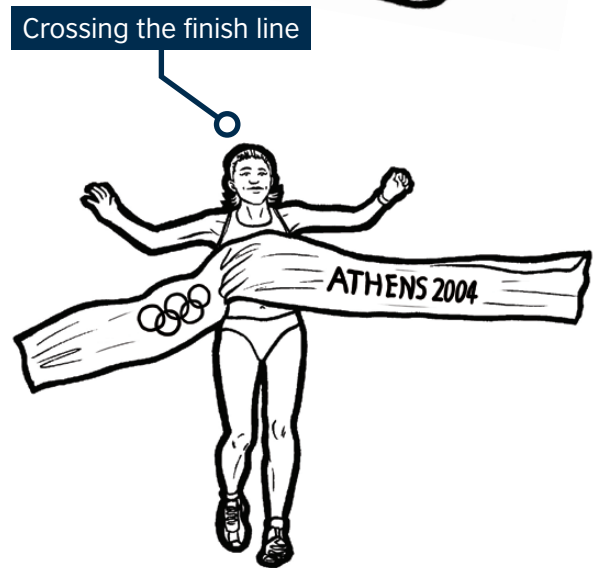
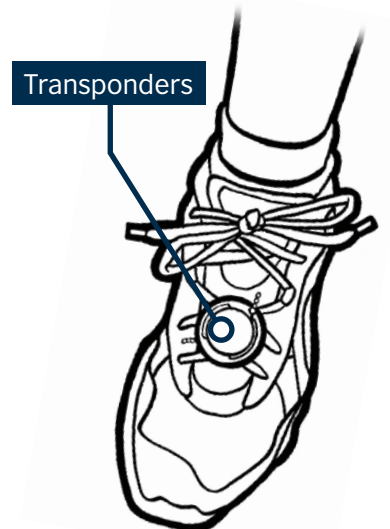


# Marathon

When athletes come together from around the world to compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, they are fulfilling their dreams and competing at the highest level. Billions of people across the globe join in; watching, listening to and reading about the greatest global celebration of sport. To celebrate the London 2012 Games, the British Council is making a wide range of classroom resources available for learners of English worldwide.

The name of this race comes from the legend of Pheidippides, a Greek messenger. According to the story, he ran 42 kilometres to tell the people of Athens about the defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Marathon. At the Olympic Games the marathon is traditionally the last event on the athletics programme. It takes place shortly before the closing ceremony. Have you ever run a marathon, or another long-distance race?



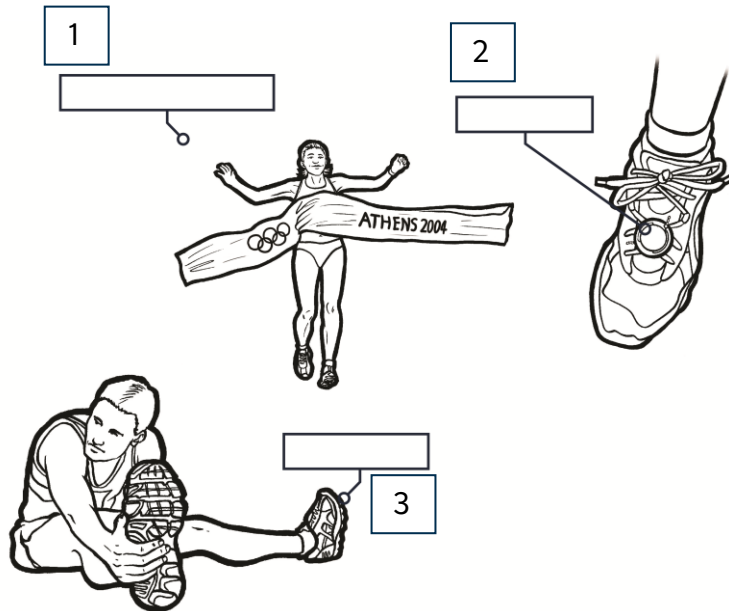
## 1. Vocabulary

a. Write the correct words in the spaces provided.

a. transponders

b. crossing the finishing line

c. running shoes



## 2. The rules of the Marathon

- The Marathon is a road race over 26 miles and 385 yards – or 42.195 kilometres. The course must be quite flat, with a maximum of one metre up or down per kilometre.
- Before the Olympics, there are many "Trials" qualifying events, where runners must meet standards before they can enter the Olympic Marathon.
- After a five-minute warning, the race starts.
- Runners have a transponder or "chip" in their shoe which means that the exact time between the runner crossing the starting and finishing lines is measured electronically.
- The race normally finishes in the Olympic stadium, but often starts outside.
- On the route there are signs telling the runners how far they have run.
- Every five kilometres there are official refreshment stations where the runners can eat or drink. In between the refreshment stations there are drinking or sponging stations, where they can get water or a wet sponge.
- If somebody helps a runner, or if a runner leaves the course without permission, the runner is out of the race. They must also leave the race if one of the official medical team tells them to.

### a. Match the words in the table with their definitions below.

a. drinking station	b. net time	c. warning	d. road race
e. sponge	f. transponder	g. refreshment station	

1. A place where the runner can find food and drink.
2. A place where the runner can find water.
3. A race that is not run on a track or across countryside.
4. An electronic device that receives and transmits information.
5. Material that can hold a lot of water.
6. The time it takes to run from the starting line to the finishing line.
7. Telling someone that something negative will happen if their behaviour doesn't change.

### 3. Questions & Answers

**Isn't there an ancient Greek legend about Pheidippides and the marathon? Was he a Greek god of speed or victory?**

No, that was Nike. The legend says Pheidippides was the Greek messenger who ran all the way from Marathon to Athens to tell people that Athens had defeated the great Persian army.

**Did he get a reward?**

No, actually he dropped dead as soon as he delivered the news. It was a distance of 26 miles (41 km), after all...

**... so that's the distance of the modern marathon!**

Err, no. No, it's 42.195 kilometres or 26 miles and 385 yards.

**Why the difference?**

Well, one story is that, in the 1908 London Olympics, the Royal Box – where the King sat – couldn't be opposite the finishing line. So they extended the race a bit.

**That's not fair – it's already long enough!**

Exactly. The winner, Dorando Pietri from Italy, was so exhausted that people helped him across the finishing line. Johnny Hayes (USA) was made the winner.

**Isn't that illegal?**

It is, and he was disqualified but you can see why some people might want some help.

**Help?**

Yes, in 1900, American Fred Lorz used a car for part of the race, ran for the last part and crossed the winning line first. The organisers found out and made another American, Thomas Hicks, the winner.

**Who is the best Olympic Marathoner, then?**

Difficult to say, but perhaps the most amazing was Emil Zatopek from Czechoslovakia. In 1952 he won the 10,000 gold in a new Olympic record time, then won the 5000 another Olympic record time. Then he ran his first ever marathon...

**... and he won that too, in a new Olympic record time**

Yes! How did you know?

**Lucky guess.**

**a. Choose the correct answer.**

1. "Marathon" was the name of a Greek god.  
a. True  
b. False
2. Pheidippides died after his long run.  
a. True  
b. False
3. The Royal Box was moved so the King could watch the end of the race.  
a. True  
b. False
4. The 1908 marathon was the first one to be 26 miles 385 yards long.  
a. True  
b. False
5. The winner of the 1908 marathon was American.  
a. True  
b. False
6. Gold medallist Thomas Hicks crossed the winning line second.  
a. True  
b. False
7. The organisers gave Fred Lorz the gold medal.  
a. True  
b. False
8. Zatopek took three gold medals home in 1952.  
a. True  
b. False

**b. Arrange the following events from the text into chronological order.**

1. Lorz gets out of the car.
2. The organisers extend the Marathon course.
3. Pheidippides died.
4. Zatopek crosses the 5000 metre finishing line.
5. Thomas Hicks crosses the finishing line.
6. Dorando Pietri crosses the finishing line.
7. Johnny Hayes crosses the finishing line.
8. Fred Lorz crosses the finishing line.
9. Athens defeats the great Persian army.
10. Zatopek starts his first marathon.

## 4. Solution

### Exercise 1a

1. b; 2. a; 3. c

### Exercise 2a

1. g; 2. a; 3. d; 4. f; 5. e; 6. b; 7, c

### Exercise 3a

1. False (F); 2. True (T); 3. F; 4. T; 5. T; 6. T; 7. F; 8. T

### Exercise 3b

- (9) Athens defeats the great Persian army.
- (3) Pheidippides died.
- (1) Lorz gets out of the car.
- (8) Fred Lorz crosses the fishing line.
- (5) Thomas Hicks crosses the finishing line.
- (2) The organisers extend the Marathon course.
- (6) Dorando Pietri crosses the finishing line.
- (7) Johnny Hayes crosses the finishing line.
- (4) Zatopek crosses the 5000 metre finishing line.
- (10) Zatopek starts his first marathon.