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### **The Olympic Flame**

Every four years, the Summer Olympic Games kick off with an elaborate opening ceremony that welcomes athletes from every competing nation. However, preparations and celebrations for the Olympic Games start long before the opening ceremony. The true beginning of the Olympic celebration is the lighting of the Olympic torch and the relay that carries the flame to the host city.

The Olympic torch is lit at a ceremony in Olympia, Greece, where the ancient games were held. One requirement for the Olympic flame is that it must be created using only sunlight and a mirror. The flame is lit months before the games, and the first runner begins the great relay among the ruins of the ancient Olympic stadium.

The first modern Olympic torch relay took place in Berlin, in the summer of 1936. At the beginning, runners were mainly selected from the Olympic athletes, but later, regular citizens — including children, old people, and people with disabilities — began to participate as well. Carrying the torch is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and a great honor.

Traditionally, the torch is carried on foot. However, sometimes other kinds of transport are needed. When the torch must go overseas, it is sent on a private plane. The torch has also been carried underwater. For the Sydney Summer Games in 2000, a diver swam with the torch!

At the end of the relay, the flame is used to light a giant pot. The light, a symbol of the Olympic spirit, burns throughout the games.

In 2020, Tokyo will be hosting the Summer Olympic Games. The torch relay is planning to pass through all 47 prefectures. The concept for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay across Japan will be “Hope Lights Our Way”, uniting the Japanese people around a message of supporting, accepting and encouraging one another. Why don't you participate in this historic event?

(310 words)