

Olympics 2012: value for money?

The price of tickets for the 2012 Olympic Games in London has been announced. Are the ticket prices fair, or are they over-priced?

1 Match each of the words below (1-4) to its correct definition (a-d).

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| (1) gimmick (n) | (a) person who illegally re-sells tickets for more money |
| (2) bid (n) | (b) something that is more expensive than it should be |
| (3) rip-off (informal) | (c) an offer to do work in return for an amount of money |
| (4) tout (n) | (d) something intended to impress you but is really not useful |

2 Practise saying the numbers in the box.

£725	£2,012	£20.12p	£3 billion	£9 billion
125,000	2012	100	75	8.8 million

3 Scan the article and add the figures in the gaps (1-10). Use the numbers from exercise 2.

Olympic ticket prices: are they fair?

Ticket prices for the (1) Olympic Games in London have just been announced. The range of prices is incredibly wide. At the lower end of the scale, a quarter of the tickets will cost around the £20 mark. At the top end of the scale, if you fancy watching the men's (2)..... metres final, then you will need to pay anywhere between £50 and (3)..... If you have money to burn, why not apply to go to the opening ceremony: the highest priced ticket is a staggering (4).....

There are (5) seats available for the 2012 Games. The media has of course focused on the most expensive seats, whereas the Olympic committee points out that 90% of tickets will cost £100 or less; a third will cost under £50. The committee have explained that they are not trying to make a profit, but high prices are necessary to meet the spiralling costs of the Games. It began as a bid for a project costing around (6), but hosting the Games is now expected to be nearer (7)! What the organisers fear most are stadiums with empty, unsold seats.

The announcement of the ticket prices has brought mixed reactions. Lots of people do expect to pay a significant amount for a once-in-a-lifetime event. Many like the proposal to put aside (8)..... tickets for school children, who will have to achieve something to earn their tickets. On the other hand, there is a lot of anger about the higher-priced tickets, including those for the finals, which have been described as a 'rip-off'. Even setting the lowest priced ticket at (9), which like the highest price was chosen to match the year of the Games, has been criticised for being a marketing gimmick.

Can we expect the usual problems connected with all-ticket events? VIP seats being reserved for the sponsors and big businesses, so real sport fans have trouble getting tickets; people failing to get tickets as they are over-subscribed; companies on the net buying up tickets and selling them at inflated prices. The touts are looking forward to big profits! London itself is hardly cheap, so making the long trek there from abroad could be expensive for many genuine fans. (10)% of tickets become available to the general public from March next year, but you'll have to move fast to get any.

4 Read the complete article. What are the two views about the ticket prices described in the article?

5 Decide which word (a-e) does not form a strong word partnership with the word at the end of each line.

5.1	(a) increased	(b) spiralling	(c) growing	(d) organised	(e) rising	COSTS PRICES
5.2	(a) inflated	(b) attractive	(c) subscribed	(d) ridiculous	(e) competitive	

6 Discuss the questions in small groups. Be ready to report back on your discussion to the whole class.

- (a) What do you think about the structure of ticket prices for the 2012 Olympic Games? Is it fair or not?
- (b) Would you consider going to the 2012 Olympics? Give reasons for your answer.
- (c) What is the approximate ticket price for a final of a sporting event in your country? Is it value for money?