

The Track Events

Sprints: 50 meters, 100 meters, 200 meters, 400 meters (1 lap)

Middle Distance: 800 meters (1/2 mile), 1600 meters (1 mile)

Distance: 3,000 meters (1.86 miles)

Hurdles: 100 meters, 400 meters

Relays: 4 x 100 meters relay, 4 x 400 meters relay, 4 x 800 meters relay

Field Events: High Jump, Long Jump, Triple Jump, Shot Put, Hammer Throw/Softball Throw, Javelin Throw

- 50m** This event is essentially an all-out sprint from the gun to the finish line. Frequently reserved for the youngest athletes.
- 100m** This event is essentially an all-out sprint from the gun to the finish line. Perfecting the start is essential as is learning to run at top speed while staying relaxed. It is run on the straightaway of the track.
- 200m** Very similar to the 100m, but success in this event requires additional strength to enable the athlete to maintain a fast pace over the entire 200 meter distance. The majority of short sprinters compete in both events. It covers ½ of the oval.
- 400m** The long sprint. This event requires a combination of speed, strength and tolerance for pain. The fast pace the athletes run usually results in the formation of lactic acid by the 300 meter mark, which causes a sensation of burning and fatigue in the muscles. It is one full lap of a standard size outdoor track.
- 800m** A "tweener" event. There are 800m specialists but athletes in this event usually either are good sprinters who can run both the 400m and 800m, or they have good endurance and can run both the 800m and 1500m well. This event requires excellent natural endurance, as well as good speed for a strong finish. It is two laps around a standard outdoor track.
- 1600m** The mile. The relationship between the 1600m and the 800m is very similar to that between the 200m and 100m. It requires the same basic skill set with some added strength and endurance to cover the additional distance. Athletes must have the endurance to maintain a demanding pace for a full mile, but must be prepared to sprint home with a strong finish over the final lap of this 4 lap race.
- 3000m** This 7 1/2 lap race is equivalent to 1.86 miles of running at a hard pace. Exceptional endurance is required, as is a healthy amount of speed for the intense race to the finish line frequently seen in 3k races.
- 100mh** An all-out sprint while traversing 10 hurdles placed between the start and the finish.

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400mh Also known as the intermediate hurdles, this event requires the speed of a sprinter, the strength of an 800 meter runner and the technical skill of a 100 or 110 meter hurdler. This race also involves ten hurdles, but unlike the short hurdle race where runners will use the same lead leg and trail leg over each hurdle, in the intermediate hurdles they must be able to use either leg as their lead leg.

**4 x 100m Relay/
400m Relay** Four athletes each run approximately 100m or one quarter of the track. It is not just the speed of the runners, but the precision of their baton passes that determines how well the team does. Each baton exchange must be made within a marked zone on the track. Failure to exchange the baton in the zone results in disqualification. For the 4 x 100m, the baton pass is usually "blind" meaning that the outgoing runner does not look at the baton but extends her hand back to receive it while running close to maximum speed and facing forward.

**4 x 400m Relay/
1600m** Relay Traditionally, this is the last event contested at most track meets. Each athlete runs one full lap and exchanges the baton in a zone near the finish line. For this relay the outgoing athlete generally turns his face and watches the baton exchange. The incoming athlete, who is finishing the final meters of a tough 400m, is usually quite tired so the outgoing athlete has to accelerate to racing speed while being cautious not to go too fast before getting the baton.

The Field Events

Horizontal Jumps: Long Jump, Triple Jump

Vertical Jumps: High Jump, Pole Vault

Throws: Discus Throw, Javelin Throw, Hammer Throw, Shot Put

Long Jump Who can jump the farthest? That is what the Long Jump boils down to. Jumpers start at one end of the runway and take a flying leap in to a pit of sand. A board, 20 cm wide, near the end of the runway, marks the take off point and the distance jumped is measured from the end of the board to the spot where the athlete first breaks the sand. If any part of the jumper's feet goes beyond the board during takeoff, the jump is ruled a foul and will not be measured or counted.

Triple Jump This event requires exceptional abdominal strength as the jumper must use the momentum from her run-up to make three separate jumps before landing in the sand pit. The jumper first takes off and lands with the same foot (the hop phase), takes off again from that same foot and lands on the opposite foot (skip phase), and then takes off from that landing foot to leap into the

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sand. Maintaining correct body position and alignment in the air during the three phases is a crucial component to completing a lengthy jump.

High Jump Who can jump the highest? (Well, the highest, without a pole). That is the point of the high jump. High jumpers run a curved approach, then, at a precise spot, translate that forward motion in to vertical motion as they drive their arms, shoulders, hips and opposite leg in to the air to get as much height as possible. They lay first their head, then shoulders, back, hips and legs over the bar. Having impeccable technique to put all of these steps together is crucial, but being naturally long and lean is a big plus as well. Athletes have three misses at each height before being eliminated from the competition. Whoever clears the highest bar wins, although ties are frequent in the HJ.

Pole Vault Athletes sprint down the runway carrying a long pole. At the end of the runway they plant the pole in to a box, bend the pole down and catapult themselves over the bar. An event not suited to those with a fear of flying, but those with a background in gymnastics have done well transitioning to the vault. The same rules as the high jump apply: each athlete has three attempts to successfully clear a height in order to remain in the competition.

The Throws

The name of the game in all of the throwing events is distance. The farthest throw wins. Amongst the throwing events the other similarities that they share is: 1) the athlete's feet must remain within a designated area to launch the throw; and 2) the implement must land within a designated area, the sector, to be considered a fair throw that will be measured.

Discus Throw The discus requires ballet-like footwork as the athlete rotates through a series of spins to build momentum to hurl the discus nearly the entire length of the track. The disc is thrown out of a high-sided steel mesh cage that protects bystanders from errant throws. In the cage is a circle that designates the throwing area. Stepping out of the circle during a throw constitutes a foul and the throw will not be measured. Each competitor is allowed three initial throws with the longest distance determining her place in the standings. After the first three throws the competition can be narrowed to allow only a set number of the top placers in the standings to take an additional three throws to determine the final order of finish.

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Hammer Throw/Softball Throw The Hammer shares many similarities with the discus including the cage, the circle and the spinning approach to the throw. The major difference is that the implement being thrown is a steel ball on the end of a wire. Distances achieved are also similar to that of the discus.

For younger track participants, a softball throw is substituted for the hammer throw.

Javelin Throw The javelin is a long, spear-like implement with a sharp tip on the end. Athletes take a running approach before launching their javelins, and often their bodies, in to the air. The trick is to get the maximum forward motion on the approach without stepping over the line. As in the other throws, if the athlete steps over the designated throwing line, the result is a foul and an unmeasured throw. Another tricky thing about the Javelin is that it must land tip down to be considered fair. The small country of Finland is the cradle of this event and has consistently produced the most accomplished practitioners.

Shot Put The shot is a steel ball, and the competition is to see who can put, or throw it the farthest. As in the Discus and Hammer a circle delineates the fair area from which the put must be launched. There are two techniques for generating the momentum to get maximum distance on one's put. The glide involves starting in a crouched position, shot tucked between neck and shoulder under the chin, then taking a large, powerful stride backwards towards the launching point while turning the body and uncoiling the legs to release the put up and out towards the landing area. New putters usually master the glide technique before graduating to the spin. Spinners will do one to 1 ½ rotations before releasing the shot from the edge of the circle and, often, hopping around on tiptoe to keep themselves from over-rotating out of the circle thereby fouling and nullifying their puts.