



Special Olympics

Sprinting Key Skills Checklist

Your Athlete Can
Perform a stand-up or block start
Maintain erect posture with hips tall
Push off the track with balls of feet
Move foot backward under body upon landing
Drive knees up so thigh is parallel (horizontal) to track
Maintain high heel recovery as drive foot leaves ground
Maintain tall posture, with slight forward body lean from ground, not from waist
Swing arms forward and back without rotating shoulders
Keep feet flexed, toes up
Sprint under control for entire race

Overview: The Sprints (100m-400m)

Power and coordination are important elements in producing speed. We can improve speed through good running mechanics and coordination. Read the "Basics of Running Mechanics" section for more information.

Speed is determined by two main factors. These are:

- Stride Length (Length of each step).
- Stride Frequency (How often steps are made).

A sprint has four main phases:

- The start.
- Acceleration.
- Maintaining momentum.
- The finish.

START PHASE

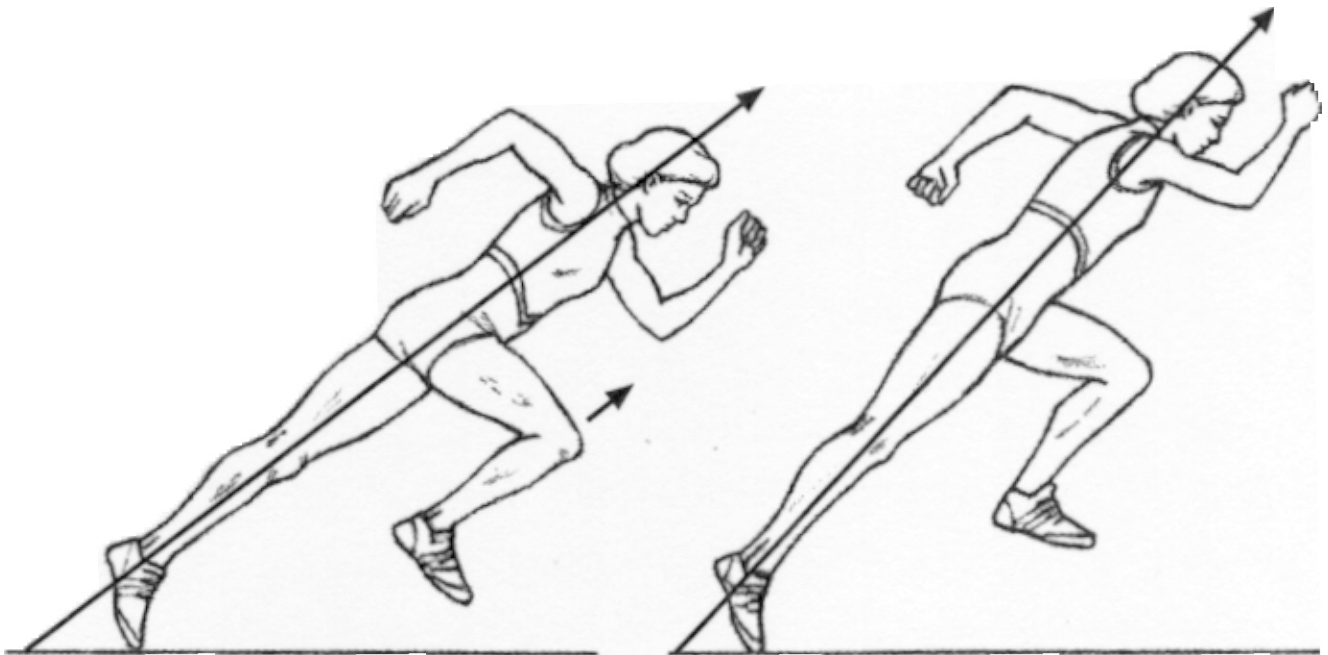
[Read the "Starts" section for more information.](#)

Coaching Points for Phases of Sprinting

COACHING POINTS - ACCELERATING PHASE

After the Start, the accelerating phase begins.

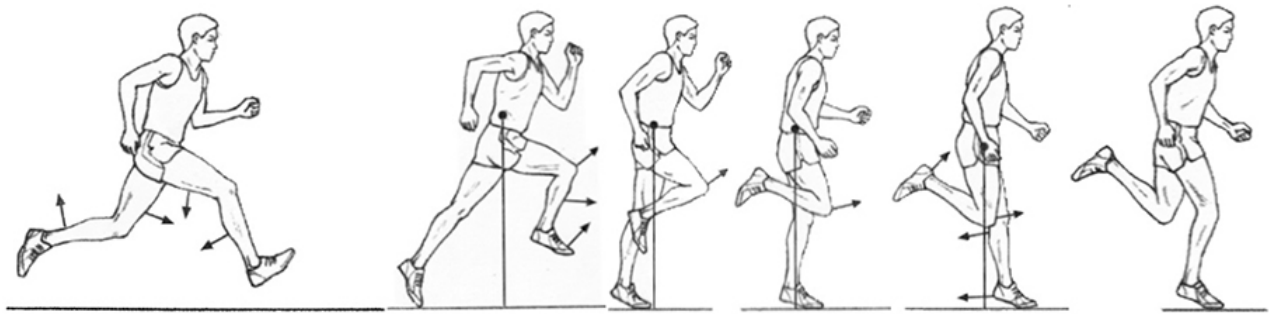
1. Acceleration is created by driving or pushing with the drive leg until it is straight.
2. The free leg drives low and fast. Then place the foot under the body's centre of gravity.
3. The athlete must lean forward. The more the athlete leans forward, the more acceleration they create.
4. Vigorous arm action helps keep balance, rhythm and relaxation.
5. It is helpful to show athletes a good demonstration, photos or videos of this skill. This can help them to better understand what they must do.



COACHING POINTS - MAINTAINING MOMENTUM PHASE

In this phase, the focus is on maintaining speed.

1. The athlete must combine good basic mechanics with the speed they created in the accelerating phase.
2. The key focus areas are as follows:
 - a. Posture/Body Position.
 - b. Head Position.
 - c. Arm Action.
 - d. Leg Action.



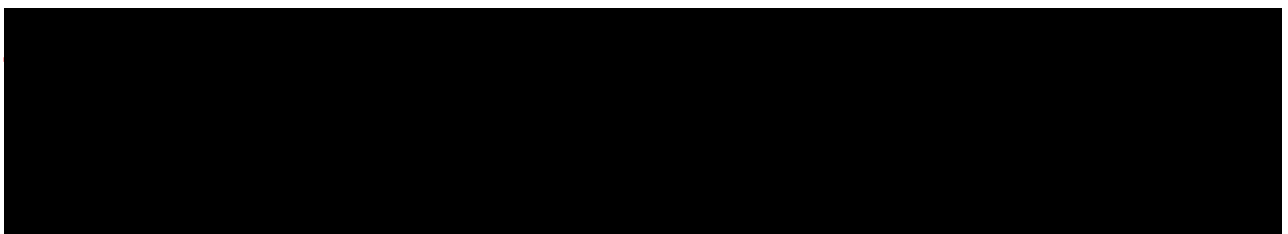
COACHING POINTS - FINISH PHASE

This is a very important skill to practice. The point at which the athlete's chest crosses the line determines their final time. While sprinting toward the finish line, the athlete should have good running posture and a normal stride action.

In the final strides of the race:

- The athlete should run through and not to the finish line. Coaches can help athletes to learn this by asking athletes to pretend that the finish is a few meters beyond where it really is. This encourages them to maintain their momentum.
- The athlete should lunge forward and lean through finish line.
- Coaches can create different scenarios to help learning. E.g. Place people standing in different areas at the finish line. This helps athletes to experience the reality of a race finish and to practice in a competition like situation.

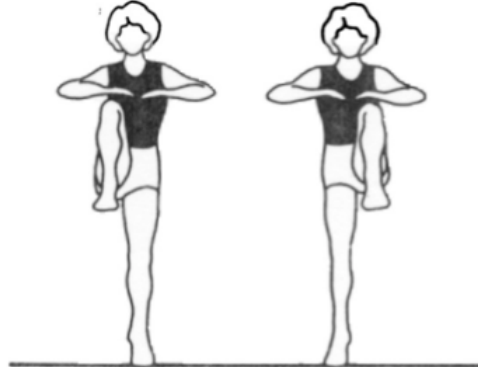




Drill	Skips	Purpose	Develop quick leg action Develop consistency in proper foot strike
Reps:	3x30m	When to Use	Warm Up
Teaching Points			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take hips tall position2. Bend and drive one leg up3. Extend leg from knee4. Drive leg down on ball of foot.5. Alternate legs every other skip.6. Jog back to start7. Repeat.			
Points of Emphasis			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heel drive to buttocks			

Drill	Quick Step Running	Purpose	Develop quick leg action over distance
Reps:	3x30m	When to Use	Warm Up
Teaching Points			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take hips tall position 2. Run in place, bringing heels up and under buttocks. 3. Run forward using medium length strides 4. Use low knee lift. 5. Carry upper body erect. Slight forward lean. 6. Hold head level, slightly forward. 7. Keep relaxed arm action. 8. Maintain a smooth pace throughout run. 9. Walking lunges back to the start point. 10. Repeat. 			
Points of Emphasis			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead with knee then extend leg • Foot is flexed • Leg drive down is very fast 			

Drill	Fast Leg Drill	Purpose	Develop quick foot and leg action
Reps:	3 x 10-15 seconds	When to Use	Warm Up
Teaching Points			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take hips tall position. 2. Quickly alternate driving knees up. 			
Points of Emphasis			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickness in legs and arms • Little ground time. 			

Drill	Knee Claps	Purpose	Develop straight forward running position Develop proper body balance
Reps:	3x30m	When to Use	Warm Up
Teaching Points			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take hips tall position.2. Hand raised chest high. Palms open, facing down with elbows bent.3. Drive knee to palm with quick leg action.4. Alternate legs5. Walking lunges back to starting point.			
Points of Emphasis			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use short steps – little distance covered with each step• Maintain slight lean forward.• Do not lean back when driving knee to chest.			

TRAINING TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE - SPRINTING

Observation	Correction by coach	Drill/Test
Arms and shoulders rotate	Keep torso parallel to direction of running	Practice while running on the spot. Sit on ground, leg stretched out in front and do running arm action.
Athlete not running in upright position	Make sure drive leg is being fully extended (push off)	Bounding and Strides
Athlete is tense (Fists clenched, shoulders high)	Practice running relaxed. Emphasize correct breathing	Practice relaxation and breathing techniques
Athlete weaves in lane	Feet should be parallel to lane lines	Run on lane lines and between cones/pylons

TOP TIPS FOR COACHING SPRINTING (SKILL DEVELOPMENT)

1. Practice the correct arm movement:
 - a. By standing in front of the athlete and asking them to hit your hands with their hands while making the correct arm action, while running on the spot.
 - b. By sitting on the ground with legs stretching in front. By sitting it is more difficult to rotate the trunk. This encourages the correct arm movements.
2. Stand in front of the athlete and ask them to run in place hitting your hands with their knees. This helps them to develop the correct knee lift.
3. Practice running in different lanes. Ensure your athletes can run from any lane.
4. Remind athletes that everyone must stay in their designated lanes during

sprint races. Use pylons or cones to help guide athletes to remain in their correct lane. Remember that they cannot be used in competition. Athletes should be able to remain in lane before entering a competition.

5. Practice sprinting form on straight-aways and curves.
6. Ask your athlete to focus on finish line. Practice with people standing in different areas of the finish area.

TOP TIPS FOR SPRINTING AT COMPETITION

Remind your athletes to:

1. Relax.
2. Focus on their technique.
3. Lean through finish line.

Hurdles Key Skills Checklist

Your Athlete Can
Perform a stand-up or block start
Maintain erect posture with hips tall
Run from blocks to first hurdle using proper sprint form
Drive lead knee up first, then extend slightly bent lead leg over hurdle
Drive trail leg over top of hurdle, turning knee and foot outward
Keep trail-leg knee higher than foot, toes higher than heel
Continue rotating knee to chest
Drive lead leg down to ball of foot
Bring trail leg through with foot directly striking track on ball of foot
Sprint between hurdles consistently, using three- or five-step rhythm
Sprint from last hurdle to finish line
Sprint under control for entire race

Overview: Hurdles

Hurdles races require good technique in both sprinting and hurdling. Athletes who can clear a hurdle quickly and efficiently and continue sprinting, run faster times.

Good hurdlers develop the skill of stepping rather than jumping over the hurdles. Rhythm is the crucial. Athletes must clear the hurdles with as little change to their stride as possible. Athletes should try to use the same number of steps between each hurdle. Basic foot speed is also important for becoming a good hurdler.

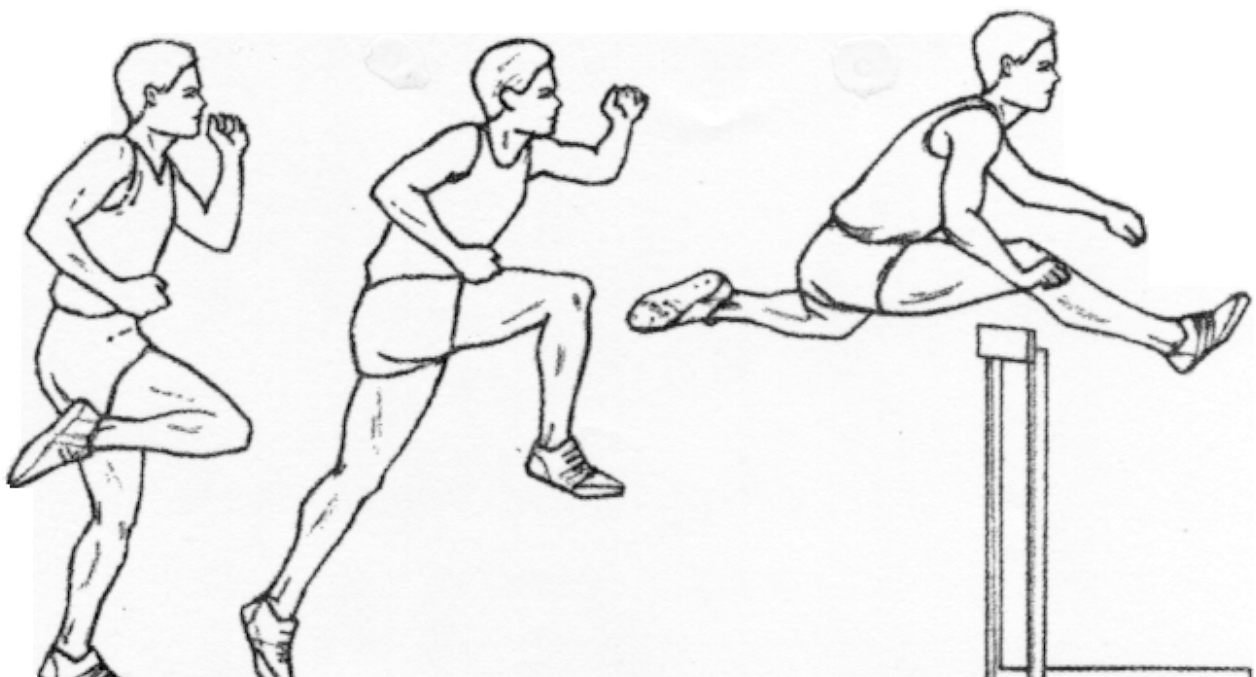
Training hurdles are great for learning correct technique. They are lightweight, collapsible and/or adjustable in height. They are ideal for introducing hurdle skills and for indoor training.

Before a coach introduces hurdles, they must assess the athlete's physical ability. Ensure your athlete has the mobility and flexibility to learn how to hurdle correctly. This will reduce their risk of injury. Remember! Mobility and flexibility can often be improved with training.

COACHING POINTS - HURDLES

1. Take Block Start Position. Foot of Lead Leg in rear block.
2. On start signal, sprint from blocks to first hurdle. Keep body erect using good sprint form. Athlete should take 8 strides to first hurdle.
3. Extend slightly bent lead leg over hurdle and lift up on ball of the foot of the lead leg, using opposite elbow and lower arm for balance.
4. Drive trail leg over top of hurdle by turning knee and foot outward. Keep the knee higher than the foot and toes higher than then heel.
5. Continue rotation until knee is up to chest.
6. Drive lead leg down to ball of foot.
7. Bring trail leg through with foot directly striking track on ball of foot.
8. Sprint between hurdles.
9. Maintain a consistent number of strides between hurdles.
10. Sprint from last hurdle to finish line.

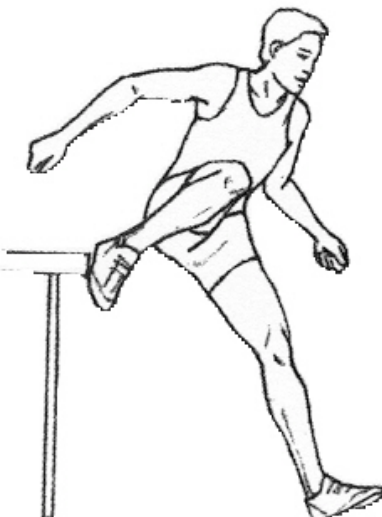
TAKE OFF



CLEARANCE



LANDING



TRAINING TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE - HURDLES

Observation	Correction by coach	Drill/Test
Trail knee/foot hits hurdle	Trail leg must be parallel to hurdle. Foot should hang down. This requires strong hip flexors	Flexibility exercises for hip and surrounding muscles
Athlete lands too far away from hurdle	Adjust stride length to athlete takes off farther from hurdle	Practice with adjusted stride length – bring lead leg downward aggressively
Approach to first hurdle is irregular	Build confidence Build power and increase effectiveness from starting blocks. Stay low, focus on first hurdle	Practice alongside hurdles Focus on stride length and pacing.

TRAINING DRILLS FOR HURDLES

Drill	High Knee Lifts	Purpose	Develop knee drive Develop coordination
Reps:	3 x 30m	When to Use	Warm Up
Teaching Points			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take hips tall position 2. Alternating legs, drive knees up as high as possible while walking 3. Gradually increase pace from walking to jogging 4. Jog/Skip back to start 			
Points of Emphasis			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay on balls of feet • Maintain a slight forward body lean 			

Drill	Skips	Purpose	Develop quick leg action Develop consistency in proper foot strike Develop hurdling rhythm
Reps:	2 reps each leg	When to Use	Warm Up (Can be done with or without hurdles)
Teaching Points			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place 8-10 hurdles about 1.8-2.4m apart 2. Take hips tall position 3. Begin skipping 1m from first hurdle 4. Drive bent leg up, atop hurdle. 5. Extend leg from knee 6. Drive leg down on ball of foot. 7. Go over hurdle with every other skip. 8. Jog back to start 9. Repeat with other leg. 			
Points of Emphasis			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead with knee then extend leg • Foot is flexed • Leg drive down is very fast 			

TOP TIPS FOR COACHING HURDLES (SKILL DEVELOPMENT)

1. Demonstrate clearing trail leg to help your athletes visualize this skill. Do this by standing with lead-leg foot on ground 3cm in front of the hurdle crossbar.
2. Let athletes practice by walking beside hurdle and clearing lead leg only.
Then repeat, this time clearing the trail leg only.

3. Practice alongside hurdles focusing on stride length and pacing.
4. Practice with three hurdles at first to master clearing both lead leg and trail leg.
5. As your athlete improves, introduce a five-step stride between hurdles. When your athlete has mastered this, progress to a three-step stride between hurdles.
6. Use photos or videos of good hurdling technique. Look for images that show the full sequence of the skill: Approach, takeoff, layout, trail leg clearance, and landing.
7. Remember! Hurdling is a running motion, not a jump.
8. Practice using both legs as lead and trail leg until the athlete reaches consistency in 3 or 5 step stride.
9. Encourage athletes who need to improve their flexibility to do extra stretching at home.
10. Focus on building your athletes' confidence.

TOP TIPS FOR HURDLES AT COMPETITION

Remind your athlete to:

1. Take two or three starts to first hurdle when on track warming up.
2. Use visual imagery to practice going over hurdles and maintaining three- or five-step stride pattern between hurdles.
3. Remember! A hurdler is a sprinter and should warm up like one.

Relays Key Skills Checklist

Your Athlete Can
First Leg
Perform a block start or stand-up start
Hold baton in hand while running
Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground
Run the curve, staying in lane
Pass baton in exchange zone with designated technique
Second Leg
Receive baton in exchange zone with designated technique
Hold baton in hand while running
Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground
Run the straightaway
Pass baton in exchange zone with designated technique
Third Leg
Receive baton in exchange zone with designated technique
Hold baton in hand while running
Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground
Run the curve in lane if 4x100
Pass baton in exchange zone with designated technique
Fourth “Anchor” Leg
Receive baton in exchange zone with designated technique
Hold baton in hand while running
Sprint under control with hips tall, erect posture, slight forward body lean from ground
Run the curve
Lunge forward and lean through finish line

Overview: Relays

Relay passing/Baton exchange is one of the most difficult concepts to teach.

Coaches must include relay passing into regular training sessions. Place athletes in order according to their strengths. Some athletes are better at handing off than receiving a baton. Each position in the order requires its own skills (see table below). Official Special Olympics Athletics rules list all the relay events offered in competition.

BEGINNING AND ADVANCED EXCHANGES

Beginning exchanges: The baton carrier has baton in the right hand. The baton receiver accepts the baton in the left hand. He/She immediately moves it to the

right hand. There is a risk that athletes could drop the baton when changing hands or that this switch could impact their running action.

Advanced exchanges: The baton receiver does not switch the baton from one hand to the other. The runners exchange as follows:

Leg	Athlete Role
Lead-off Leg	carries baton in right hand
Second Leg	receives in left hand, carries in left hand and passes with left hand, stands closer to right in lane
Third Leg	receives in right hand, carries in right hand and passes with right hand, stands closer to left in lane
Fourth Leg or "Anchor" Leg	receives in left hand, carries in left hand, stands closer to right in lane

When possible, it is recommended to teach athletes the advanced exchange.

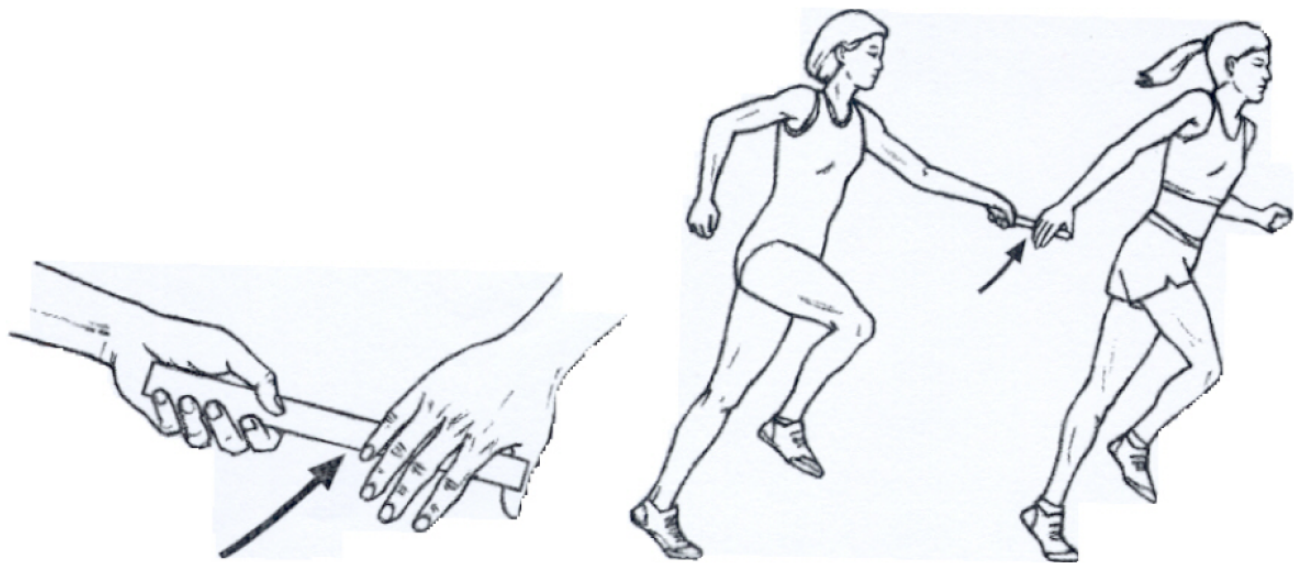
The baton must be placed firmly into the waiting runner's palm. There are two common ways to teach this exchange.

- Up-sweep exchange.
- Down-sweep exchange.

Coaches should choose the method best suited for their athletes. The Down-Sweep exchange is more popular and easier for athletes to learn. It allows the runner to see where they are placing the baton.

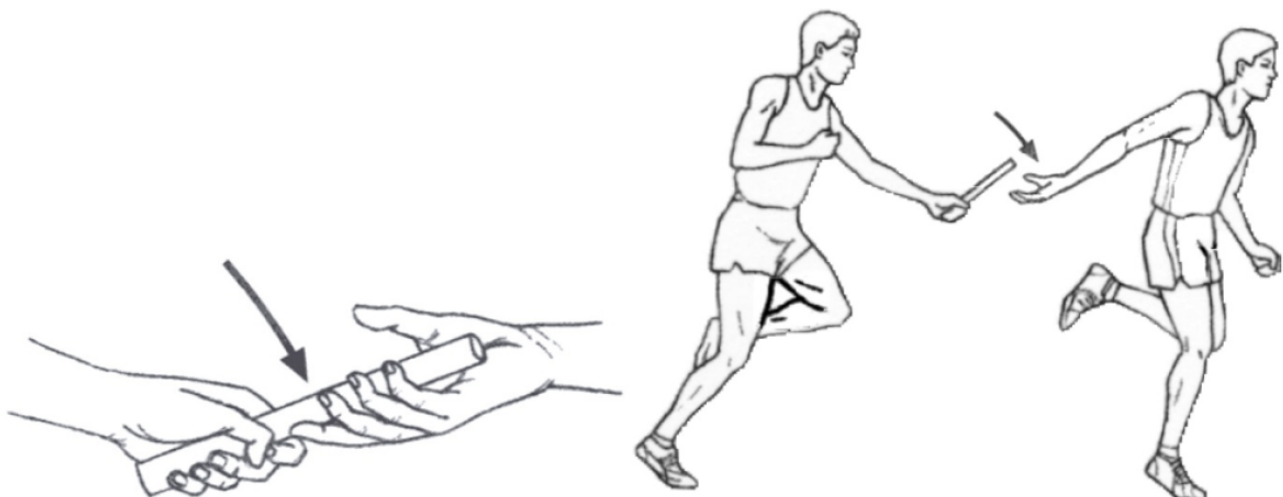
COACHING POINTS UP-SWEEP BATON EXCHANGE

1. Outgoing runner begins to sprint at the signal from the incoming runner.
2. Outgoing runner reaches back with receiving hand – forming an inverted V (see image).
3. Incoming runner places baton into outgoing runners hand, in an upward sweeping motion.
4. Outgoing runner takes the baton from incoming runner and sprints.



COACHING POINTS DOWN-SWEEP BATON EXCHANGE

1. Outgoing runner begins to sprint at the signal from the incoming runner.
2. Outgoing runner reaches back with receiving hand – almost parallel to the track.
3. Outgoing runner's palm is facing up, forming a V with thumb towards torso.
4. Incoming runner places baton into outgoing runners hand, in downward sweeping motion.
5. Outgoing runner takes the baton from incoming runner and sprints.



COACHING POINTS - RECEIVING A VISUAL PASS

1. Receiving athlete stands in front of first zone line (nearest start line) to the right side of lane.
2. Place power foot forward. Look back over the left shoulder.
3. Hold left hand back. Keep body weight slightly forward.
4. Look back over left shoulder for incoming runner.
5. Begin running forward when incoming runner reaches a point 4-5 meters from exchange zone.
6. Keep left hand back, fingers pointing to left, thumb pointing down and palm up.
7. Watch incoming runner pass baton overhand into left hand.
8. Turn to look forward, continue running and move baton to right hand.

4 X 100M RELAY

All runners in the 4x100m and 4x200m relays must stay in their designated lanes the entire race.

Leg	Baton Ability	Athlete Strengths
Lead-off Leg	Passes baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good starter, with good acceleration and balance • Can run the curve, staying in the lane
Second Leg	Receives baton Passes baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very fast runner • Ability to run strong straightaway • Excellent speed and endurance
Third Leg	Receives baton Passes baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can run the curve, staying in the lane
Fourth Leg or "Anchor" Leg	Receives baton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most competitive runner • Ability to catch and pass runners • Consistent finisher

TOP TIPS FOR COACHING 4X100M RELAY BATON EXCHANGE (SKILL DEVELOPMENT)

1. Holding baton:

Use a piece of tape around the baton, indicating where the athletes should hold it.

2. Receiving baton:

Identify all the 20m exchange zones with athletes. Practice holding the recovery hand back. The receiving hand depends on what type of exchange is chosen.

4 X 400M RELAY

A visual pass is often used for the 4x400m relay. This technique can also be used for the 400m (4x100m) relay. However, the exchange may take longer.

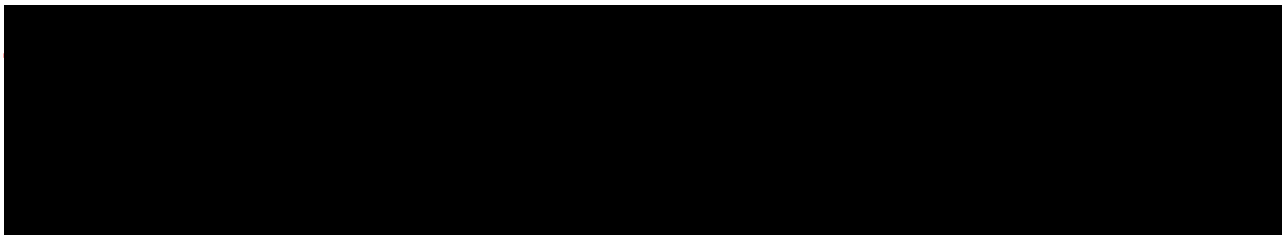
In the 4x400m relay, the lead-off (first) runner must stay in lane the entire lap. The 2nd runner may break for lane 1 after running around the first turn. The 3rd and 4th runners may break for lane 1 after receiving the baton. However, they must not impede another runner.

Leg	Athlete Role
Lead-off Leg	Get the team out in front. Must be aggressive and strong, and have a good sense of pace. Ability to run in lane the entire lap.
Second Leg	Keep the team in the race. Must be physically strong, able to handle bumping. Must be able to negotiate the breakpoint. If the team is not in first place, job is to get team in first place.
Third Leg	Put team in a position to win. Must be able to run well from behind or maintain a lead and build upon it. Often, this is second best possible anchor on team.
Fourth Leg or "Anchor" Leg	Secures the victory, puts the relay away. Must be able to run well from behind or maintain a lead. Ability to catch and pass runners. Often, the strongest/fastest leg – the "horse."

TRAINING TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE - RELAYS

Observation	Correction by coach	Drill/Test
Incoming runner runs into outgoing runner	Outgoing runner may need to start running sooner. Outgoing runner may not be standing close to the correct side of the lane	Correction of starting position. Repetitive practice building to full speed.
Exchange happens outside of zone	Outgoing runner may need to start running later	Practice with incoming runner shouting command at same spot. Tip: Use a mark on the track.
Incoming runner has difficulty putting baton in outgoing runner's hand	Receiving arm position must be at correct height and angle Athlete practices holding the receiving arm steady.	Outgoing runner needs to be aware of how the arm is held using proper form. Outgoing runner can focus on strengthening exercises to hold arm in correct position.

BATON HANDOFF DRILL



3. Demonstrate ready position for outgoing (receiving) runner.
4. Practice hand-off while walking and jogging, and in race conditions.
5. Emphasize making the exchange as quickly as possible.
6. Demonstrate hand-off between all legs of the relay.
7. Establish running order as soon as possible.
8. Remind athletes that the incoming runner must remain in lane at all times.
This includes after exchange has been made. Nothing they do should interfere with other runners.
9. Encourage relay runners carry the baton during other parts of the session.
E.g. conditioning, sprint drills. This will help them to become comfortable and confident in holding the baton.
10. Remind the incoming runner to run through the pass. This means they should not slow down in the exchange zone. Encourage them call out to the outgoing runner if he/she is running too fast or too soon to complete the exchange in the zone.

11. Place strip of tape on the track to indicate incoming/outgoing runner marks

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TOP TIP FOR RELAYS AT COMPETITION

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1. Remind your athletes to be confident and avoid nervousness. Lack of confidence and focus leads to errors in exchanges.