Parent’s Guide to Track and Field

What is Track and Field?

Track and Field is a team sport consisting of 14 individual events and 4 relays.

These are divided into 6 field and 12 running (i.e. track) events.

Track & Field Events at the High School Level

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ORDER OF EVENTS FOR ALL OUTDOOR TRACK & FIELD MEETS

4x800m Relay
100m high Hurdles (girls)
110m high hurdles (boys)

At times there will be prelims in the sprints which will precede the 4x800m relay and then finals will follow the relay

1600m Run
4x200m Relay
400m Dash
4x100m relay
300m low hurdles (girls)
300m intermediate hurdles (boys)

800m run
200m dash
3200m run
4x400m relay

Field Events will be individually scheduled and the girls and boys will flip flop from time to time so that each event will differ in terms of the order in which it comes within a meet

Shot Put
Discus
High Jump
Long Jump
Triple jump
pole vault

How is a meet scored?

It depends on how many teams are in the meet. If there are more then five teams then points are scored as follows.

1st place 2nd place 3rd place 4th place 5th place 6th place 7th place 8th place
The points are totaled as the meet progresses.

After all events are completed, the team with the most points wins.

**Indoor Season**

The indoor season officially begins with practices starting during the first week in March. Meets begin the second week in March and run for approximately 6 weeks. As the name implies, all meets are held indoors. Depending on the size of the facility and the number of teams competing, indoor meets can take up to 5+ hours to complete!

**Outdoor Season**

The outdoor season begins right after the completion of the indoor season. Given that we live in Wisconsin, it’s best to keep your winter jackets, hats, gloves, scarves, hand warmers, boots and such readily available. It’s not unusual for snow to fly during these early season outdoor meets! For JV, the outdoor season comes to an end at the Woodland JV Conference Outdoor Championships during mid-May. Because of the make up of the season it is possible for an athlete that was on JV to compete on Varsity after the JV season is over. Varsity athletes compete in the conference championships during the third week in May, but then move on to two qualifying meets (regionals and sectionals) for the state championships held at the very end of May or first weekend in June, depending on the calendar.
Which athletes compete at the meets?

The coaching staff strives to place our athletes in a competitive setting that fits their needs best. We will place an athlete in a meet where we feel there is competition at their level so that each athlete will reach their potential and will compete in a competitive manner for our team. This may vary throughout the season as athletes learn and perfect skills and develop a stronger level of fitness. Due to limitations in entries (mostly 2-3 in each event per meet) we cannot race every athlete in every race during every meet. Also we must follow WIAA guidelines for how many running and field events an athlete can compete in.

Definitions

2-Command start: Runners take your mark, followed by the gun. Used mostly in the distance events and in sprint races when no participant is using starting blocks.

3-Command start: Runners to your mark, set, followed by the gun. Used whenever any or all participants are using starting blocks.
**Starting blocks:** A device that consists of two metal blocks mounted on either side of an adjustable frame. Blocks are secured to the track and used to provide the runner with a rigid surface against which to brace his feet at the start of the race.

**Lanes:** A section of the track where an athlete starts or runs his entire race. A typical outdoor track has eight lanes. The lanes are numbered from the inside out with lane 1 being the inside lane and lane 8 being the outside lane. In sprints, hurdles, and sprint relay events the athlete or team runs the entire race in the same lane. In distance and distance relay events the athlete or team can use any lane.

**Staggered Start:** A staggered start is used in running events where each participant or relay team must run the entire race in the same lane. Because the distance covered from start to finish in lanes 2 through 8 increases with the circumference of the turns, the participants in lanes 2 through 8 start the race ahead of the athlete in lane 1. The amount of the head start is determined by the lane and the number of turns in the race.

Staggered starts are used in the 200M dash, 400M dash, 300M intermediate hurdles, 400M relay, 800M relay and 1600M relay. A staggered start is also used in the 800M run and 3200M relay. In these races the stagger is only for the first turn, after which the athlete can move to the inside lane.

**Waterfall Start:** A waterfall start is typically used for the 1600M and 3200M runs. The athletes in lanes 1 and 2 begin on the normal starting line. Those athletes in lanes 3 through 8 are afforded a 2 to 5 meter start advantage.
**Relays:** A single race where each of 4 team members runs an equal and specific distance. There are 4 relay events in a standard track meet.

These are:

4x100M – Each athlete runs 100 meters

4x200M – Each athlete runs 200 meters

4x400M – Each athlete runs 400 meters

4x800M – Each athlete runs 800 meters

**Exchange zone:** 25 meter length of the track in which team members in a relay race must pass the baton. The beginning and end of the exchange zone is painted on the track in each lane. The number and location of the exchange zone(s) depends on the event and the stagger.

**Exchange zone judge:** Person who watches the exchange of the baton by each team in a specific exchange zone. If all exchanges are legal a white flag is held up for the meet officials to see. If an illegal pass has taken place, a yellow flag is held up. A team will be disqualified if the baton is passed outside of the exchange zone.

**Splits:** A split is defined as the time one of the four relay team members takes to run their “leg” of the relay race. Splits in a relay do not accurately reflect the time that an athlete can run in the same distance in an open event, this is largely due to the fact that the athlete has a running start in a relay race as opposed to a still start in an open event. The correct method of taking the split of athletes during a race depends upon the relay race
distance. Typically it is most widely accepted among track coaches to take
the splits for a relay with more than a 3 turn stagger in the middle of the
exchange zone. This makes it a fair record of the time taken for the athlete
to cover the distance that they have run. For example, in the 4x400m and
4x800m relays the exchange zone begins before the start/finish line. If a
runner receives the baton before crossing the finish line that means the
previous runner did not cross the finish line and did not in fact run a full leg
of their relay. The split must reflect the moment the baton crosses the
middle of the zone to make the splits an accurate reflection of the runner's
race time. Also, be certain to start your stopwatch when you see the
smoke of the starting pistol otherwise if you wait for the sound of the pistol
you have started your watch too late, therefore your time will be too fast
and will not accurately reflect what the runner ran. Note, your hand time
will be approximately .5 of 1 second faster than an FAT (fully automatic
timing) system. Do not be surprised if you see your daughters time is .5
slower than what you may have timed them at while you viewed their race.

Seeds: As part of the registration process in large meets, coaches must
submit times, distances and heights to the host school so that competitors
can be grouped.

With respect to running events, seed times represent either an athlete’s
best performance time to date or perhaps a specific running time that the
coach believes the athlete is realistically capable of.

For field events, seeds represent the athlete’s best height or distance to
date or that which the coach believes the athlete is realistically capable of.

Flights: Grouping of competing athletes in the same field event who have
achieved similar heights (pole vault, high jump) or distances (long jump,
triple jump, shot put, discus). Previous performance determines flight
assignment.
**Heats:** A heat is a grouping of athletes with similar times competing in the same running event. In large meets not all of the athletes in a particular event can compete on the track at the same time. Each race is then broken down into heats. The number of heats is determined by the number of athletes in the event divided by the number that can compete simultaneously.

Seed times determine how athletes are assigned to a heat. In sprint events, the fastest seeds are split up over the total number of heats so that the faster athletes do not compete against each other until the semi-finals or finals.

For distance events, the slower seed times are generally in the first heats. The faster seed times in the last heat.

**Description of Running Events**

**Sprints and Sprint Relays**

Sprints are divided into 4 races:

- 55 meter dash (indoor season only)
- 100 meter dash
- 200 meter dash
- 400 meter dash

Competitors are assigned to heats and lanes based on seed times. The fastest seeds are positioned in the center lanes (4 & 5). From there, the next fastest
8 seeds are in lanes 3, 6, 2, 7, 1 & 8. Sprinters remain in their assigned lanes for the entire race. Most of the time, preliminary heats of the 55 meter, 100 meter and 200 meter dashes are run prior to the actual start of a track meet. The “prelims” ascertain the top 8 athletes within each event. It is these athletes who then compete in the finals of the 55, 100 and 200 meter dashes when these events come up in the normal running order of the meet.

**Sprint Relays** are divided into:

• • •

400 meter relay
800 meter relay
1600 meter relay

There are 4 members to each relay team. Each member runs a distance equal to \( 1/4 \) of the total relay distance. For the 400 & 800 Meter Relays each team runs the entire event in the same lane and a staggered start is used.

As with the 3200 meter relay, a cylindrical baton is passed or exchanged from runner to runner, all within a specified set of marks on the track. Again, failing to pass the baton within the approved exchange zone can cause disqualification.

When trying to decide who runs which leg of a relay, coaches look at the individual strengths of their relay runners. Some athletes can run the turns better than others. Some are very quick at getting out of the starting blocks; these athletes tend to lead off. Many times, the fastest relay runner runs the 4th or anchor leg. Sprint relays are interspersed throughout track meets.
Hurdles

During a track meet there are two hurdle races. One is called 100 meter high hurdles where the top of the hurdle is set 32 inches above the ground. The other is the 300 meter low hurdles where the top of the hurdle is 32 inches above the ground.

Indoors, the length of the hurdle races is 55 or 200 meters. The athlete stays in his lane for the entire race. The 300 intermediate hurdle race includes one turn on the track and uses a staggered start. As the race progresses, the competitor who reaches each hurdle first is in the lead.

Distance Events

800 Meter Run

Athletes competing in the 800 meter run (half mile) begin the race with a staggered boxed start. Typically, 3 runners are assigned to a box with one box using 2 lanes. The half-milers run the first turn in their assigned lane and are allowed to “cut in” to lane 1 at the 100 meter mark. As the lead runner begins the second or last lap, the starter will fire the gun or a bell is rung.

1600 Meter Run / 3200 Meter Run

Competitors in the 1600 meter run begin at the start line. The runners are lined up via seed times with the fastest runners securing the inside lane positions and the slower seed times positioned on the outside. Depending on the size of the meet there may be two to three heats of the 1600M run. Lane assignments at the beginning of the 1600 and 3200 races are only used to line up the competitors and a waterfall start is used if there are
many competitors in the same heat. Runners are given a 2 command start. Once the gun goes off, athletes are free to jockey for position and are not required to remain in their assigned lane. There may be some pushing and shoving at the start of the race. Due to intense jockeying for position after the gun is fired, it is possible that some athletes might fall in the first 50-100 meters of the race. If that happens, the race will be stopped and restarted.

Runners must not hinder another athlete’s progress. Stepping on a competitor, kicking a competitor or causing him to break stride is a reason for disqualification. As the race progresses, inside runners move quickly to lead “the pack”. Runners on the outside carefully work their way to the front of the pack while trying not to get boxed in. Boxed in refers to athletes surrounding each other such that the runners have a difficult time passing. Outdoors, 1600 meters constitutes 4 complete laps of the track. As the lead runner begins the last lap, the starting official will fire his gun or a bell is rung.

3200 Meter Relay

The 4 x 800 meter relay begins with teams assigned to a specific lane. The first runner is in possession of the baton and like the open 800M run, must stay in his assigned lane for the first 200 meters of the race. After this, runners can converge into lane 1. Converging into lane 1 must not hinder another runner’s progress. Again, stepping on a competitor, kicking a competitor or causing him to break stride is a reason for disqualification. During the 4 x 800 meter relay, each runner within a 4-man relay team runs 2 laps (1/2 mile) before passing the baton on to the next runner. Runners #2, 3 & 4 are encouraged to run their laps in lane 1. Those athletes waiting to run will usually line up against the track fence. A referee will call them to the line and the beginning of the baton exchange zone. Rules stipulate that the baton must be exchanged from one runner to the next within a specified set of marks on the track. Relay teams can be disqualified for failing to do so.
Description of Field Events

Jumps

Four events fall under the category of Jumps. These are the high jump, long jump, triple jump and pole vault.

High Jump

In the high jump, competitors must jump over a horizontal bar. The bar is supported on either end by stanchions that can be adjusted vertically. The athlete takes a running start to approach the bar, leaps over the bar and lands on padded cushions referred to as the pit. Each competitor is allowed three attempts to clear a given height.

If the athlete clears the height on the first attempt, he is scored as clearing the height with zero misses and continues in the competition as the bar is raised. If he misses, he may immediately try again or wait for his turn in the next rotation. If the height is cleared on the second attempt, he is scored as having cleared the height with one miss. If he misses on the second attempt and clears on the third attempt, he is scored as having cleared the height with two misses and continues in the competition when the bar is raised.

The bar is raised in 2-inch increments until only six competitors remain. After that, the bar is raised by 1-inch increments.

The competition continues until the bar has reached a height where all of the remaining athletes have missed three times. The scoring is determined
by the height achieved. First place goes to the highest height achieved, second place to the second highest, etc. In the case of a tie, the number of misses is used as the tie breaker.

**Long Jump**

In the long jump competitors sprint down a runway and jump as far as they can off of a wooden board into a pit filled with finely ground gravel or sand. The distance traveled by a jumper is often referred to as the “mark,” because it is the distance to which the first mark is made in the sand. More specifically, a mark is the minimum distance from the edge of the takeoff board, nearest the landing pit, to the first indentation made by the competitor.

If the competitor starts the leap with any part of the foot in front of the board, the judge calls scratch, the jump is declared illegal and no distance is recorded.

In the preliminary rounds, each athlete is allowed three jumps. Once an athlete completes his first jump, he can immediately jump again, become the third person in line, go to the end of the line or jump later while the pit is open. All three jumps must be completed during the “open pit” time frame or the athlete’s jumps are forfeited.

In meets with finals the athletes with the longest to ninth longest jumps qualify for the finals. Again each athlete is allowed three jumps with the competitors jumping in reverse order, last to first.

The finals competition continues until each athlete has completed three jumps. The scoring is determined by the length of the jump.

**Triple Jump**

Triple jump could also be referred to as a "hop, step and jump", since
those are
the actions taken to compete in the event. Like the long jump, the athlete runs
down a runway until he reaches a designated mark, from which the jump is measured. The takeoff mark is a board. The first landing has to be done with the
takeoff foot. The next phase is a step, landing on the opposite foot, and is followed by the jump, into the pit.

Judging, number of jumps, preliminary, finals and scoring are the same as the
long jump.

**Pole Vault**

Like the high jump, competitors in this event must clear a horizontal bar that is supported on either end by stanchions that can be adjusted vertically.

The athlete takes a running start to approach, but uses a fiberglass pole to vault over the bar. The athlete lands on padded cushions again referred to as the pit.

Each competitor is allowed three attempts to clear a given height. If the athlete clears the height on the first attempt, he is scored as clearing the height with zero misses and continues in the competition when the bar is raised. If he misses, he may immediately try again or wait for his turn in the next rotation. If the height is cleared on the second attempt, he is scored as having cleared the height with one miss. If he misses on the second attempt and clears on the third attempt, he is scored as having cleared the
The bar is raised in 6-inch increments until only six competitors remain. After that, the bar is raised in 3-inch increments.

The competition continues until the bar has reached a height where all of the remaining athletes have missed three times. The scoring is determined by the height achieved. In the case of a tie, the number of misses is used as the tie breaker.

**Throws**

Two events fall under the category of throws. These are the shot put and discus.

**Shot Put**

In this competition, as the name implies, competitors put (or throw in a pushing motion) the shot (a 8 pound solid metal ball) as far as possible.

Competitors take their throws from inside a 7-foot diameter circle with a 4-inch high toe board located at the front of the circle. The shot must land inside the throw area that is indicated by painted lines radiating out from the throwing circle. The distance thrown is measured from the inside the circumference of the circle to where the shot lands or at the disturbance of the soil nearest the circle (outdoors).

A foul is called and the throw is disqualified if the athlete:
• does not leave from the rear half of the circle
• steps out of the circle before the judge calls the mark
• touches the top of the toe board
• the shot lands outside the throw area

In the preliminary round, each athlete is allowed three throws. The athlete may take all three attempts in the first round, make take the second attempt in the first round and the final attempt in the second round or one attempt in each of three rounds. All three attempts must be completed during the “open pit” time frame or the athlete’s throws are forfeited.

The athletes with the longest to ninth longest throws qualify for the finals. Again each athlete is allowed three throws with the competitors throwing in reverse order, last to first.

The finals competition continues until each athlete has completed his throws. Scoring is determined by the length of the throw.

**Discus**

The discus a lenticular disc, 220 mm (8.66 inches) in diameter and weighs 1.61 kilograms (3lb. 9oz.).

Competitors take their throws from inside a concrete surfaced circle 8’-2” in diameter. The thrower typically takes an initial stance facing away from the direction of the throw. She then spins around one and a half times through the circle to build momentum and then releases his throw. The discus must
land within a 40-degree or 60-degree arc marked by lines on the landing zone, and the competitor must not exit the circle until the discus has landed. She must wait for the judge to give clearance to exit the ring from the rear half. The distance from the front edge of the circle to where the discus lands is measured. Distances are rounded down to the nearest half-inch.

Judging, number of throws, preliminaries, finals and scoring are the same as the shot put.