

# ATHLETICS

Track and Field, term denoting a group of athletic events held as contests between individuals or teams at both indoor and outdoor meets. The basic categories of the sport are track events, comprising runs and walks, and field events, which include jumps and throws. Running events, which constitute the largest number of track and field sports, range from the indoor 50-m dash to the outdoor marathon, covering 42 km 195 m.

## Track events

### I DASHES

The shortest and swiftest running events are dashes, also known as sprints.

Runners may employ various strategies during dashes. In a 400-m contest a runner may achieve top speed in the first 200 m, "coast" or "float" for another 150 m, then finish the race in a final burst of speed.

### II HURDLING

Hurdling events are dashes in which competitors must clear a series of ten metal and wood (or metal and plastic) barriers called hurdles. Good hurdling form requires leaning far forward and clearing each barrier smoothly without breaking the rhythm of the running stride. Running speed, flexibility, and excellent coordination are important elements of success.

### III MIDDLE-DISTANCE RUNS

Races ranging from 600 m to 3000 m are known as middle-distance events. The most popular distances are the 800-m, 1500-m, and 3000-m runs. Competitors in the longer middle-distance runs must regulate their speed carefully in order to avoid premature exhaustion. Some middle-distance runners change their speed several times during a race, while others maintain an even pace throughout.

### IV DISTANCE RUNS

Runs longer than 3000 m are considered distance events. In the running style employed by the best distance runners, any excess motion is avoided. The knee action is slight, arm movements are reduced to a minimum, and the strides are shorter than those used in sprinting or middle-distance running. The most exhausting distance runs include the cross-country and marathon races.

### V RELAYS

Relay races are events for teams of four in which an athlete runs a given distance, called a leg, then passes a baton to the succeeding team member. In the 400- and 800-m relays the passer places the baton in the hand of the receiver while the receiver is facing forward. The receiver then continues the race. If the legs of a relay race vary in length, for example 800, 200, 200, and 400 m, the contest is called a medley relay.

### VI STEEPLECHASE

The steeplechase is an obstacle race, usually run over a 3000-m course containing hurdles, water jumps, and other hazards.

### VII WALKS

The walking events are usually held for distances ranging from 1500 to 50,000 m and are especially popular at meets in the United States. In race walking, the heel of the forward foot must touch the track before the toe of the trailing foot leaves the ground. The rule is designed to prevent the contestants from running.

TASKS:

1. What running strategies do runners employ in dashes, middle and long distance runs?

2. Match the words on the left with their collocations on the right:

Avoid	Hurdles
Even	Baton
Achieve	Relay
Clear	Pace
Lean	Exhaustion
Pass	Top speed
Running	Forward
Medley	Stride

## Field events

HIGH JUMP  
POLE VAULT  
LONG JUMP  
TRIPLE JUMP  
SHOT PUT  
DISCUS THROW  
HAMMER THROW  
JAVELIN THROW  
DECATHLON AND HEPTATHLON

TASKS:

1. Name the events combined in decathlon and heptathlon.

2. Which of the field events above are we probably talking about?

- a) The aim is to cover the greatest distance possible in a series of three quick leaps.
- b) The contestant is allowed three attempts to clear each height.
- c) The athlete's performance in the various events is rated against an ideal score of 10,000 points.
- d) Throwers compete by hurling a heavy ball attached to a length of wire that has a metal handle.
- e) While still in the air the jumper throws both feet far forward of the body to increase the distance and to prepare to land.
- f) The thrower typically takes an initial stance facing away from the direction of the throw. S/He then spins around one and a half times through the circle to build momentum, then releases the throw.
- g) At the end of the throw, the thrower must push the throwing arm straight from the neck, pushing the ball off the fingertips.
- h) The contestants grasp the spear near its centre of gravity and sprint toward a check line.