



Annual NCRTA Sports Tournament - June

Track and Field Rules and Information

Start:

The start of a race is marked by a white line 5 cm wide. In all races that are not run in lanes the start line must be curved, so that all the athletes start the same distance from the finish.

Starting blocks may be used for all races up to and including 400 m (including the first leg of the 4 x 100 m and 4 x 400 m) and may not be used for any other race. No part of the starting block may overlap the start line or extend into another lane.

All races must be started by the report of the starter's gun or approved starting apparatus fired upwards after he or she has ascertained that athletes are steady and in the correct starting position.

An athlete may not touch either the start line or the ground in front of it with his or her hands or feet when on his or her marks.

At most international competitions the commands of the starter in his or her own language, in English or in French, shall, in races up to and including 400 m, be "On your marks" and "Set". When all athletes are "set", the gun must be fired, or an approved starting apparatus must be activated. However, if the starter is not satisfied that all is ready to proceed, the athletes may be called out of the blocks and the process started over. There are different types of starts for races of different distances. Middle and long distance races mainly use the waterfall start. This is when all athletes begin on a curved line that moves farther out at the outer edge of the track. Competitors are allowed to move towards the inside lane right away, as long as it is safe to do so. For some middle distance races, such as 800m, each athlete starts in their own lane. Once the gun fires, they must run in the lane they begun in until markers on the track notify them it is time to move towards the inside lane. For sprint races, athletes begin in start blocks and must stay in their own lane for the entire race.

False start: An athlete, after assuming a final set position, may not commence his starting motion until after receiving the report of the gun, or approved starting apparatus. If, in the judgment of the starter or recallers, he does so any earlier, it is considered a false start. It is deemed a false start if, in the judgment of the starter an athlete fails to comply with the commands "on your marks" or "set" as appropriate after a reasonable time; or an athlete after the command "on your marks" disturbs other athletes in the race through sound or otherwise. If the runner is in the "set" position and moves, then the runner is also disqualified. As of 2010, any athlete making a false start is disqualified.

In International elite competition, electronically tethered starting blocks sense the reaction time of the athletes. If the athlete reacts in less than 0.1 second, an alert sounds for a recall starter and the offending athlete is guilty of a false start.



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Running the race

In all races run in lanes, each athlete must keep within his allocated lane from start to finish. This also applies to any portion of a race run in lanes. If an athlete leaves the track or steps on the line demarking the track, he/she should be disqualified. Also, any athlete who jostles or obstructs another athlete, in a way that impedes his progress, should be disqualified from that event. [However, if an athlete is pushed or forced by another person to run outside his lane, and if no material advantage is gained, the athlete should not be disqualified.

There are races that start in lanes and then at a "break" line, the competitors merge. Examples of this are the 800 metres, 4x400 relay and the indoor 400 metres. Variations on this, with alleys made up of multiple lanes on the track, are used to start large fields of distance runners.

The finish

The finish of a race is marked by a white line 5 cm wide. The finishing position of athletes is determined by the order in which any part of their torso (as distinguished from the head, neck, arms, legs, hands or feet) reaches the vertical plane of the nearer edge of the finish line. Fully automatic timing systems (photo timing) are becoming more and more common at increasingly lower levels of track meets, improving the accuracy, while eliminating the need for eagle-eyed officials on the finish line. Fully automatic timing (FAT) is required for high level meets and any time a (sprint) record is set (though distance records can be accepted if timed by three independent stopwatches).

With the accuracy of the timing systems, ties are rare. Ties between different athletes are resolved as follows: In determining whether there has been a tie in any round for a qualifying position for the next round based on time, a judge (called the chief photo finish judge) must consider the actual time recorded by the athletes to one thousandth of a second. If the judge decides that there has been a tie, the tying athletes must be placed in the next round or, if that is not practicable, lots must be drawn to determine who must be placed in the next round. In the case of a tie for first place in any final, the referee decides whether it is practicable to arrange for the athletes so tying to compete again. If he decides it is not, the result stands. Ties in other placings remain.