

# THE EVENTS

A resource to provide teachers with a brief overview of each event relevant to the primary school system.



# Australian Little Athletics

## The Events

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teachers with a brief and basic overview  
of each event relevant to the primary school system**

This resource has been created by Darren Wensor on behalf of Australian Little Athletics.

Graphic design by Nicole Duffey.

Photos of skill sequences courtesy of Phillipe Penel.

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# Introduction

This section aims to provide teachers with a brief and basic overview of each event relevant to the primary school system.

Athletics is often seen by many as a very technical sport to teach. The following pages attempt to demystify the sport by providing the "bare bones" facts and the most important information that a teacher needs to successfully teach an athletics unit in a class situation with confidence and authority. Use the section as an introduction to the sport or as quick revision prior to taking a class outside. The following information is dealt with for each event:



## THE WORKING MODEL:

What is the simplest movement pattern that will allow a child to complete an event within the rules and with some success?

The working models featured aim to create an understanding of the key features of a target technique suitable for the primary school aged child. The working model for each event presented in the following pages deals with suggested basic teaching points to be used when instructing children in primary schools. This is not to be confused with a technical model, often featured in books and videos, which is far more specific and more suitable to performers at higher levels.

An intricate technical knowledge of each event is not needed to successfully teach athletics skills to young people. Familiarization with the working model provides the teacher with enough information to sufficiently introduce events to young athletes.



## COMMON FAULTS:

What are the common errors that beginners will invariably exhibit when they are in the early stages of learning how to perform athletics skills?

The information contained under this heading on the following pages aims to assist teachers with the detection and correction of the most common faults that young people demonstrate.

Most of the faults that young people exhibit are predictable and generally opposite to the features of a good working model. Understanding common faults makes it easier to understand the target technique.



## BASIC RULES:

What are the basic rules that teachers need to know so that they can properly teach the events?

Under this heading, the rules most basic to the correct execution of the skills and participation in the event are listed. Only the "Priority A" rules for teachers are listed here. More specific rules that officials at formal competitions are required to know are dealt with in a later section.



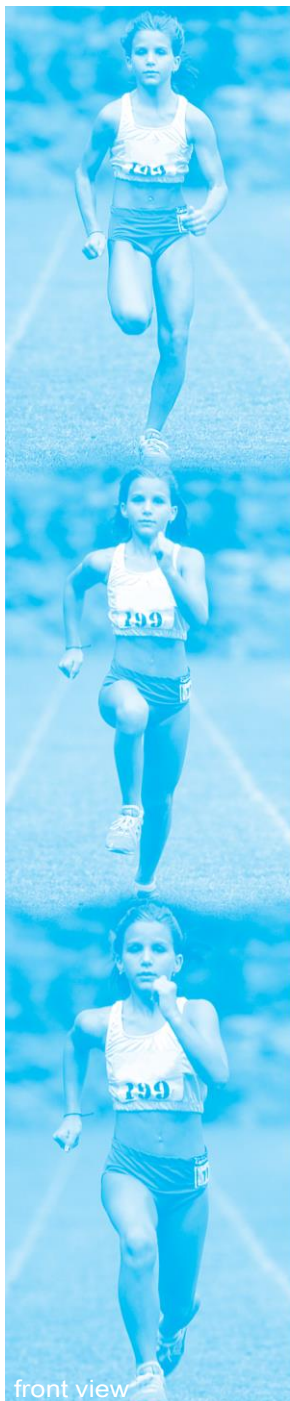


# Sprinting

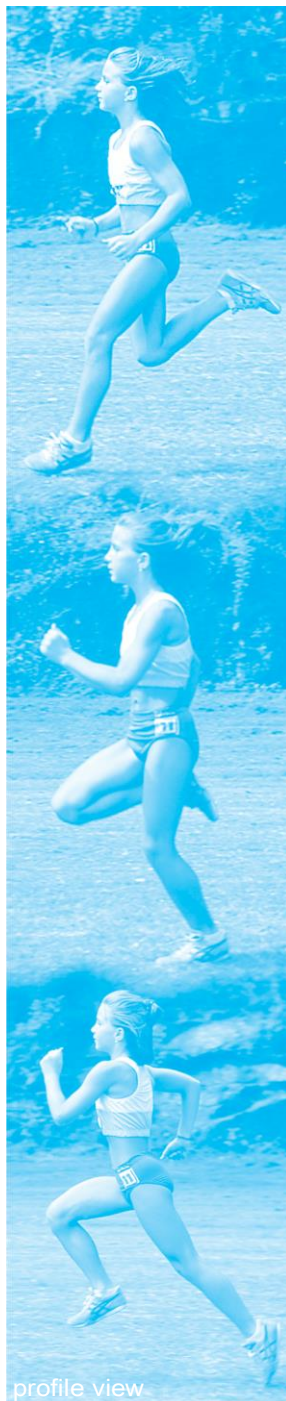
Traditionally, it is considered that the sprinting events are those running races that are held over a distance of up to and including 400m. It is worth remembering, however, that a 400m race to many children is a distance, not a sprint event.



A basic sprint action requires:



front view



profile view

The head to be kept level; vision to the front.

The trunk and shoulders to be held square to the front.

The head and trunk to be held upright.

The hips to be held under the body.

Movement of feet and limbs in a straight path.

The arms pivoting about the shoulder joint and remaining bent at the elbow at approximately 90 degrees.

The knees lifted high.

The recovery leg to be bent to at least 90 degrees.

Landing on the front part (or ball) of the foot.

Light, quick movements of feet, legs and arms.

A generally coordinated, rhythmical action.

# Sprinting



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Move their head excessively.
- Have a poor running posture (Leaning back/forward; head down/back).
- Allow their hips to fall backwards, resulting in a "sitting" position.
- Rotate/twist their torso from side to side when they run.
- Swing their arms across their body.
- Straighten their arms on the backwards swing.
- Run with a low knee lift (do no "pick their feet up").
- Plant their feet inwards or outwards.
- Run with a heel plant or flat-footed.
- Use a heavy foot plant.



- When in a sprint race, competitors must run in their own lane.
- The winner of a race is the athlete whose torso crosses the finish line first.

# Standing Start

The standing start is the most appropriate technique for young novice athletes to use at the beginning of a race.



The features of a basic standing start are:



"On your marks"

One foot is placed forward - behind, not on the line - pointed directly down the track.

The other foot is placed back (about one foot space); pointed directly down the track, the heel is lifted.

The feet are approximately shoulder-width apart.

"Set" (Not "Get Set")

Bend forward at the hips and knees.

The opposite arm and leg are forward.

Vision is at the ground, about one metre in front of the feet.

"Go"

Drive the arms and legs.

Step through with the back foot first.



# Standing Start

YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Point one or both feet to the side ("Speed skater").
- Place their feet too far apart.
- Go straight into a "set" position when called to "on your marks".
- Look at the starter.
- Put the same arm and leg forward.
- Lift their front foot, or step back with their back foot on "Go".



The starting commands are: "On your marks"; "Set" (not "Get Set"); followed by the starting gun (or other appropriate signal).

- The children must be steady before the starter gives the next command or fires the starting gun.



# Crouch Start

The crouch start is an advanced technique and should only be encouraged if done correctly and if it provides some advantage.



The basic features of a crouch start are:



"On your marks"

The front foot is placed a forearm's length behind the line.

One knee is placed on the ground, level with the front foot.

The hands are placed shoulder-width apart, behind, not on the line.

"Set" (Not "Get Set")

The hips are raised slightly higher than the shoulders.

Both legs remain bent (front leg approximately 90 degrees, back leg approximately 120 degrees).

"Go"

Drive the rear leg forward.

The arms move vigorously.

# Crouch Start

## Common Faults



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Place their feet too far apart or too far behind the starting line.
- Sit their weight back in the "set" position.
- Straighten their back leg in the "set" position.
- Leave their hands behind on the starting line on "go".



The starting commands are: "On your marks"; "Set" (not "Get Set"); followed by the starting gun (or other appropriate signal).

- The children must be steady before the starter gives the next command or fires the starting gun.

# Shuttle Relay

The shuttle relay provides children with a fun and simple introduction to relay running in a straight line.



The basic features of shuttle relay running are:



All runners use a normal running action. The baton is held at the bottom end.

The incoming runner holds the baton vertically with an extended arm when nearing the receiver.

The recipient receives the baton with their arms extended at chest level (not at face level, to avoid injury) and with hands held together in a "butterfly" position.

The incoming runner approaches slightly to the side of the outgoing runner to avoid interference/collisions.



# Shuttle Relay



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Hold the middle section of baton.
- Run the whole way with the baton extended (common with very young athletes).
- Attempt to receive the baton with one hand, or with hands apart.
- As an incoming runner, run directly at the recipient, blocking their way.



Outgoing runners cannot leave their mark until they have received the baton.



# Circular Relays 4x100m

Circular relays generally involve teams of four exchanging a baton within marked zones, while racing around a circular track.



A downward pass, during which the incoming runner places the baton firmly down into the recipient's upturned hand, is the preferred baton exchange method.

The basic relay baton exchange requires:



Ideally, both runners at maximum speed during the baton exchange.

The incoming runner to place the baton, in a downwards motion, firmly into the outgoing runner's hand.

The outgoing runner to keep their arm extended, hand flat and steady, palm up, vision forward.

Which hand? - Ideally, a runner should not swap the baton from hand to hand whilst running. The first runner should carry the baton in their right hand; the second runner takes and carries the baton in their left hand; the third runner takes and carries the baton in their right hand; and the fourth runner takes and carries the baton in their left hand.

Check marks - As the incoming runner reaches a predetermined check mark, the receiving runner takes off, with his or her hand extended behind. The incoming runner passes the baton down into the hand of the receiver. Check marks should be placed to allow the baton exchange to take place within the changeover zone while both runners are at a maximum speed.



# Circular Relays 4x100m



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

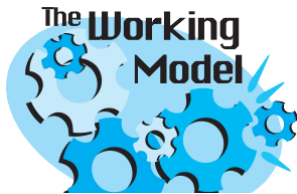
- Slow or stop to pass the baton.
- As an incoming runner, fail to firmly place the baton in the outgoing runner's hand.
- As an outgoing runner, look behind, snatch at the baton, not keep their hand steady.



- The 4 x 100m relay is run entirely within lanes.
- The baton must be exchanged within a twenty-metre changeover zone.
- Some competitions allow the outgoing runner to use a 10 metre acceleration zone before the changeover zone. The outgoing runner may start in and accelerate within this area, but the baton exchange may not take place until the changeover zone is reached.

# Long Jump

The Long Jump is an event suitable for most ages, simply requiring the competitor to run up and jump as far as possible into a sand-filled landing pit.



The basic long jump requires:



profile view



front view

A fast, controlled, accurate run-up (11-15 strides).

A one foot take off.

A drive of the free knee and arms high into the air.

An upright take off position - vision elevated or to the front.

A landing, in which the feet are close together, and bending occurs at the hips and knees.

# Long Jump

## Common Faults



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Take a run up that is too long.
- Not drive their knee up or use their arms.
- Look at the ground on take off.
- Land straight-legged with feet apart; bending at the hips, but not at the knees.



A competitor records a foul if he or she touches the ground beyond the take off line with any part of his or her body, whether running up without jumping or in the act of jumping.

- A competitor records a foul if, after a completed jump, they walk back through the landing area.
- When using a take off board, all jumps are measured from the nearest break in the landing area made by any part of the body or limbs, to the take off line. The measurement is taken perpendicular to the take off line or its extension.
- When using a sand-covered mat, all jumps are measured from the nearest break in the landing area made by any part of the body or limbs, to the imprint made on the take off mat by the take off foot.

# High Jump

When teaching high jump to children, especially to beginners, it is highly recommended that the scissors technique be used. The scissors technique is safer, easier for beginners to master and forms a solid learning base from which the more advanced "Fosbury Flop" technique can later be mastered.



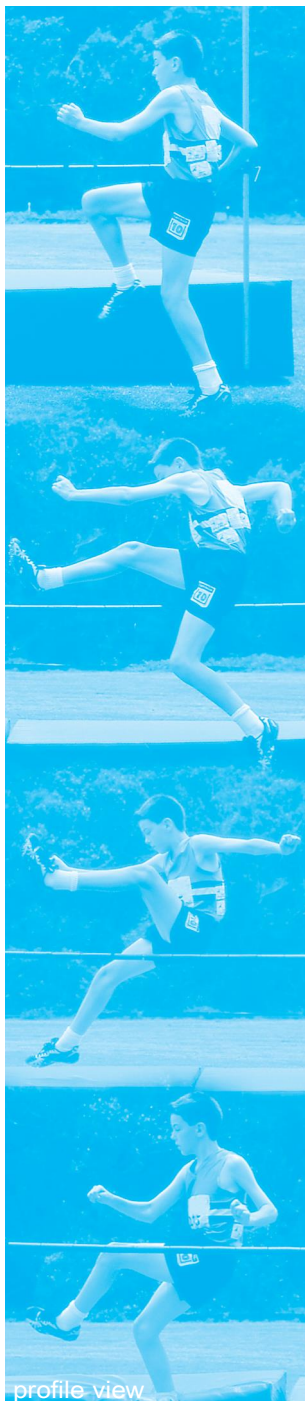
A basic scissors high jump technique requires:

A straight run up, at approximately 30 degrees to the bar, being of 8-10 strides.

The leg closest to the bar is driven up and over the bar first.

Both legs are lifted forward in a scissors action over the bar.

The jumper lands on their feet (preferred) or sitting in an upright position (NOT on their back).



# High Jump



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Think that they can all do the "Fosbury Flop". THEY CAN'T!!
- Use a run in that is too long.
- Take off from the wrong foot and/or run in from the wrong side.
- Land in a lying position on their back.



- A competitor must take off from one foot.
- Knocking the bar off the supports with any part of the body, without clearing the bar results in a failure.



- There is a mistaken idea prevalent that provided the jumper scrambles out of the landing area before the bar falls it does not count as a failure.  
**This is quite wrong and there is no rule to this effect.**



# Shot Put

The Shot Put is a throwing event that requires a pushing or "putting" action. The most suitable technique for novices involves the standing put.



A basic shot action requires:



profile view



rear view

The shot is held at the base of the fingers (not touching the palm) with three fingers behind, and the thumb and small finger to each side of the shot.

A balanced preparatory stance (avoiding placing the front foot hard up against the stop board. This limits the thrower's ability to pivot).

The shot to be held touching or close the the neck with the elbow of the throwing arm raised to the rear.

The non-throwing arm to point in the direction of the throw (novice) or "wrap" around the body (advanced).

The feet, hips, chest and shoulders to swing to the front on delivery as the weight shifts from back to front foot.

From a "tall" delivery position, the throwing to arm extend in a powerful "punching" action, pushing the shot away from the neck.

The thrower's vision to follow the shot.

# Shot Put

## Common Faults



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Hold the shot on the palm of the hand or too high in the fingers.
- Hold or pull the shot away from the neck prior to delivery.
- Throw the implement across their body instead of turning fully to face the front.
- Have poor weight transference from back to front foot.
- Bend their legs or body forward during delivery causing a "low" delivery position.
- Place their front foot hard up against the stop board, limiting their ability to pivot.



- The shot must be putted with one hand only.
- Prior to delivery, the shot must be placed touching or close to the neck, under the jaw, in front of the ear. (Next to the "wind pipe").
- The shot must not be dropped down or pulled back from the starting position prior to the forward push.
- The shot must land entirely within the sector; on the line is out.

# Discus

The Discus is a throwing event that requires a slinging action. A standing discus throw is the most suitable technique for the novice.



A basic discus standing throw requires:



profile view



rear view

The discus to be held flat against the palm; the edge of the discus sits on the pads of the first joints of the fingers; the thumb rests on the back of the discus.

A balanced preparatory stance. The discus is held up in front of the eyes; throwing hand on top of the discus; non-throwing hand underneath for support.

Keeping the discus flat and the throwing hand on top while swinging the discus back off the supporting hand in a wide arc.

The feet, hips, chest and shoulders to swing to the front on delivery as the weight shifts from back to front foot.

From a "tall" delivery position, the delivery arm follows a wide slinging motion, with the discus being released off the index finger (out of the front of the hand) in a flat spin.

# Discus

## Common Faults



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Hold the discus incorrectly - eg. thumb over the edge; fingers too far over the edge ("choke" the discus).
- Throw across their body instead of turning fully to face the front.
- Have poor weight transference from back to front foot.
- Bend their legs or body forward during delivery causing a "low" delivery position.
- Release the discus out of the back of the hand, or over all of the fingers resulting in poor discus flight.



The discus must land entirely within the sector. On the line is out.

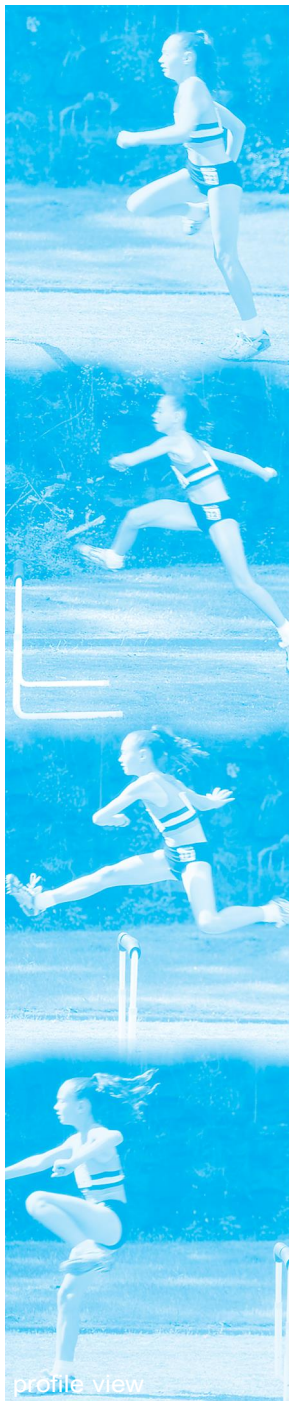


# Hurdles

The Hurdles event is a sprint race during which participants clear obstacles on their way to the finish line.



A basic hurdling action requires:



A clearance of the hurdle that interferes as little as possible with the running action.

Smooth, fast running between the hurdles.

Lead leg (the first leg over the hurdle) - Straight knee lift, lower leg extension, foot plant in a straight line on landing.

Trail leg (follows the lead leg) - Leg lifted to the side, heel to buttocks; toes pulled up; knee pulled through to chest; foot plant in direction of run (Note: Done properly, this is a very advanced skill).



# Hurdles

## Common Faults



YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Slow/take small, hesitant steps between the hurdles.
- When clearing the hurdle - stop, prop and jump.
- Lead leg - Swing leg over hurdle rather than drive it over the hurdle.
- Trail leg - Tuck their foot under their body or lift their heel higher than their knee.

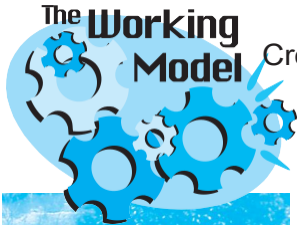


A competitor is not permitted to purposely knock down a hurdle with their hand or foot.

- Unintentional knocking down of hurdles does not result in a disqualification, regardless of the number of hurdles knocked down.

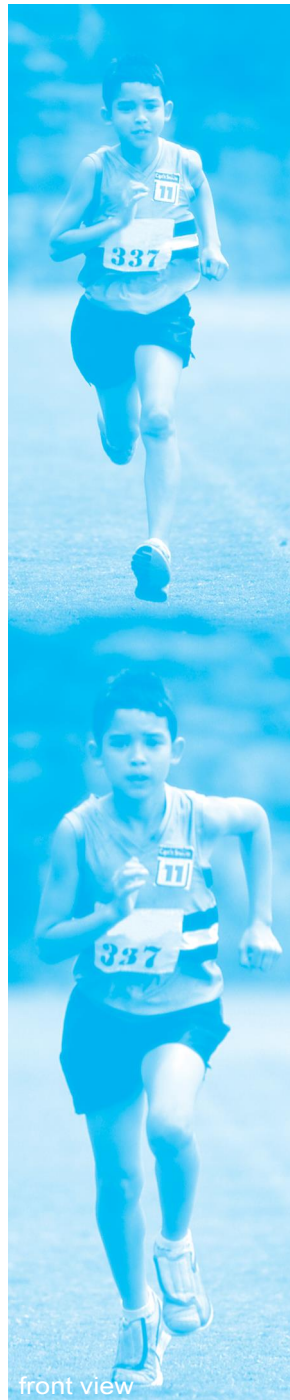
# Middle Distance/Cross Country

Traditionally, it is considered that the middle distance events are those races that are held over a distance of above and including 800m. It must be noted, however, that a middle distance race to many children, depending on their age, may be as short as 200m.



Cross-country is a middle or long distance race held over natural terrain.

A basic distance running action requires:



A relaxed running style - eyes straight ahead; chest, abdomen, and hips square to the front; shoulder movement kept to a minimum.

A low relaxed arm action; relaxed shoulders.

A lower knee lift than sprinting.



# Middle Distance/Cross Country

YOUNG ATHLETES OFTEN:

- Run too fast at the start, leaving no energy for the finish.
- Run too slowly in the early stages and throughout the race, leaving lots of energy left at the finish.
- Run in alternating bursts of fast and slower speeds.



- Jostling or impeding another competitor is not permitted.
- The starting commands are "On your marks", followed by the starting signal.  
(Note: There is no "Set" command).