

Purpose

To determine the start for all track events are fair according to the rules.

Equipment

- ✓ Starting system, e.g. starting gun, electronic starting device, clap board
- ✓ Hearing protection
- ✓ Flash unit or sight board
- ✓ Program of track events
- ✓ Two-way radios or flags (1 red and 1 white) for communication between Officials
- ✓ Starting blocks
- ✓ Relay batons, if required

Optional equipment

- ✓ Amplifying device
- ✓ Elevated stand

Safety

- Hearing protection must be worn.
- The starting gun is loaded only when required for a start.
- Starting caps must be stored in a cool, dry container, **not** in a pocket.
- All guns and caps should be stored separately in an unloaded state.
- Officials must be over the age of 18 years to use a starting cap gun.
- The start and nearby areas must be clear of obstructions and hazards.
- Athletes are **never** allowed to jump the hurdles from the wrong direction. This is most likely to occur after athletes have been allowed a practice jump prior to the event.



Where to assist

Starter: to start the race according to the rules, recall the athletes by a second firing of the gun/starting device if the start does not comply and the only person permitted to warn or disqualify an athlete at the start of a race.

Starter's Assistant/Start Marshal: to place athletes in lanes/heats, indicate to the Starter when ready to proceed and assemble athletes again if the race is recalled.

Recallers: to recall the athletes by a second firing of the gun/starting device if the start does not comply and report to the Starter any irregularities, infringements or reason for the recall.

Where to stand

The Starter stands:

- on the inside of the track for events starting on a straight line across the track, e.g. 100m or sprint hurdles, for a full view of athletes in one line of vision.
- at the back of the athletes on the inside or outside of the track for events starting on staggered lines, e.g. 200m or 400m, for a full view of athletes in one line of vision.
- on the inside of the track for events starting on a curve line, e.g. 1500m or Race Walking events, for a full view of athletes in one line of vision.

What to do – starting procedure

- Check with the Track Referee and/or Chief Timekeeper that all track Officials are ready before the starting procedure begins. This is usually done by two-way radio, a white flag or hand signal.
- Check all athletes are ready, standing on the assembly line and the track is clear before starting any race.
- For events up to and including 400m and all relay events:
 - call 'On Your Marks', allow athletes time to settle,
 - when movements cease, raise the gun/starting device and call 'Set',
 - when athletes are steady, fire the gun/starting device.
- For events longer than 400m:
 - call 'On Your Marks', allow athletes time to settle,
 - raise the gun/starting device,
 - when athletes are steady, fire the gun/starting device.
- If the Starter is not satisfied all athletes are ready for the start to proceed, taking too long to settle or unsteady, in either the 'On Your Marks' or 'Set' position, the Starter can order the athletes to 'Stand Up', before recommencing the procedure.

Basic rules

- Assembly distance from the start line for all track events is three metres.
- A standing start may be used by athletes in all track events.
- Athletes must use a standing start for track events longer than 400m.
- A crouch start may be used only by athletes in the U11 to U17 age groups for all track events up to and including 400m.
- In all track events up to and including 400m, each athlete is allocated a lane.
- For the 800m event, the start is in staggered lanes, two athletes may share the one lane.
- For the 1500m and all Race Walking events, athletes line up side by side (pack start) along a curved start line.
- The Starter should adopt the following procedure to assist Timekeepers in recognising what commands are given by the Starter's actions.
 - **'On Your Marks'** — the Starter raises the gun/starting device arm parallel to the ground.
 - **'Set'** — the Starter raises the gun/starting device vertically above the head.
- The pause between each command is not fixed, but a reasonable length of time is necessary to allow the athletes to settle and all movement to cease. The time will vary for athletes using standing or crouch starts.
- Athletes must start from behind the start line, **not** touching the start line or the ground in front during the starting procedure.
- If the start was not fair, the gun/starting device is fired a second time.
- Only the Starter issues warnings and advises an athlete of disqualification.
- More than one athlete may be warned or disqualified for a false start.
- In Little Athletics:
 - an athlete responsible for two false starts will incur disqualification.
 - an athlete responsible for three false starts in multi-events will incur disqualification.
 - at Centre level, some latitude can be given.
- Athletes in the U11 to U17 age groups are permitted to use starting blocks in laned events and the first leg of relay events.

False start

A false start occurs if:

- an athlete leaves (breaks) before the gun/starting device is fired.
- after the 'On Your Marks' command, an athlete disturbs any other athlete through sound or otherwise.
- an athlete fails to comply with the 'On Your Marks' or 'Set' commands, and the Starter is of the opinion a reasonable time has elapsed.
- one or more athletes gain an advantage.

Handy hints for Starters

- Organise the athletes waiting for a race into heats and lanes.
- Call the next race up as soon as the prior race has begun.
- Communicate with the Track Referee and/or Chief Timekeeper and start the next race as soon as the 'All Clear' signal is given.
- Do not hold the younger age groups, especially U6 to U8 age groups, in the 'Set' position for too long. It can be difficult for younger age groups to remain steady.
- At Centre meets run two tracks simultaneously, use inside lanes (1-3) for distance events and outside lanes (5-8) for sprint events.



Handy hints for the athletes

When doing a standing start:

- **'On Your Marks' position:** place one foot forward up to but not on the start line, weight on front foot; place other foot back and lift heel; feet about shoulder width apart pointing down the track; stand up straight, arms by side and look straight ahead.
- **'Set' position:** bend knees, weight further over front foot, lean body forwards; bend both arms with opposite arm forwards to front foot; focus on finish line and wait for gun.
- **Action on gun:** push off on front foot, drive back foot through; arms move straight forwards/backwards at side to drive legs; drive arms and legs.

When doing a crouch start:

- **'On Your Marks' position:** kneel with both knees on start line, move back knee level with the toes of front leg; place hands, shoulder width apart behind the start line; shoulders high and arms straight.
- **'Set' position:** roll shoulders over hands; raise hips slightly higher than shoulders; both legs remain bent (front leg at about 90°, back leg at about 120°); look just in front of start line and wait for gun.
- **Action on gun:** drive back leg and hips forwards, not upwards; drive arms and legs.