

Eden Prairie Track & Field Association

Coaching Objectives

The Eden Prairie Track & Field Association (EPTFA) has provided a few requirements to assist you in starting your season off on a positive note for both athletes and parents.

- 1) Welcome Letter – e-mail (or call) each family or participant on your team roster. This is a good time to welcome the kids to the team, introduce your coaching staff, announce the first practice date, what to expect, and any other pertinent information provided by the EPTFA coaches' coordinator.
- 2) Set-up a 10-15 minute parent and participant meeting at the first practice. This will provide you with the opportunity to meet all parents and establish an open line of communication.
- 3) Cover (and/or hand-out) the following items at your first meeting:
 - Team roster - include contact info (e-mail address & phone numbers) if agreed upon by the parents. Also include coaches' information for emergencies.
 - Practice and Meet Schedules - be sure to include the EPTFA's web address: www.eptfa.org
 - Discuss the "No Snack" Policy
 - Ask kids to bring their own water bottles – can take breaks between events
 - Kid drop-off and pick up policy – BE ON TIME! Coaches (at least 2) will need to remain with your team until the last participant has been picked up
 - Parents Viewing Area – they must stay within field boundaries for watching participants (at practices and meets) – this is inside the track on football field, or outside the fence.
 - Picture Day to be held at first meet
 - Solicit a Team Manager if one hasn't been identified by then
 - Create a Team Name
 - Set a Team Meeting Area – inform them that this is where they will meet before and after each practice & meet during the season.

EPTFA Skills & Drills Progression

Each year there is a different point of emphasis for the skills of the developing track star. As the kids get older, the skill sets get progressively more complex. The drills we suggest will progress as well. Drills will range from a few simple movements for the younger kids, to more difficult and complex movements for older kids.

Coaches can focus on the points of emphasis for their age level, and should reinforce the skills and drills learned in previous years. For instance, when coaching third graders the main point of emphasis may be focusing on elbow swing, heel lift, and tall posture. Therefore, the coach may want to start the season by reviewing certain drills from the previous years, and graduating to the 3rd grade emphasis later in the season.

As the season progresses, the coach can introduce new drills that will encompass several points of emphasis in order to help the kids get into a routine of good habits.

Running Events Skills Progression			
Level	Arm Skill Points of Emphasis	Leg Skill Points of Emphasis	Other Points to Emphasize
K/1	A	A	Run Straight - Stay in Lane
2	C + (A + B)	B + (A)	Eyes Forward - Head Still
3	D + (A + B + C)	C + (A + B)	Tall Posture
4	E + (A + B + C + D)	D + (A + B + C)	Forward Lean
5/6	E + (A + B + C + D)	E + (A + B + C + D)	Active Footplant
Key to Skills	A = Relaxed Hands / Fingers B = Relaxed Shoulders C = Hands by Belt Loop D = Elbows in E = Elbows up on backside	A = Land Heel to Toes B = Lead w/ Knees– Up & Out C = Power from Hips D = Step Over Knee E = Clawing	

Drill Progression to Teach Skills			
Level	Arm Drills	Leg Drills	Other Games/Drills
K/1	Potato Chip Hold Break Egg and Relax Achy Shaky	Moon Skip Heel Kicks High Knees	Tennis Ball Toss Ships Across the Ocean Hands Above the Head
2	Turtle Neck Wiggle Waggle Square Arms	High Knee Skip Marching Band Leap Frog	Library Book Run Hands Behind the Back
3	Don't be a Chicken Shoulder to Shoulder	Carioca Windmill Running	Tennis Ball Trot Backwards to Forwards
4	Elbows to Sky Elbow punches Wheel Barrow Runs	High Knee Cherry Pickers Rabbit Steps	Single File Surges Hip Running Cross Country
5/6	Fast Arms Flapjacks	Standing Claw Claw Skip Hot Track	Leg Lifts & Leg Toss Victory Build-ups

Description of Drills

Arm Drills:

Potato Chip Hold – Teach the kids to run with relaxed arms and hands. In this drill, have the kids drop their hands to their sides. Point out how natural it is for them to lightly touch their finger tip on their thumb. Compare it to picking up a potato chip and hold it while they run...keep in mind to not squeeze and break it.

Break Egg & Relax - Have runners swing their arms like they are running, the athletes clench fists as tight as they can for 5-10 seconds, then relax them (Potato Chip Hold) to show how much easier it is to be relaxed. Older kids (3-6 grades) can actually be running while doing this drill.

Achy Shaky - Runners simply clench their fists and swing their arms across their bodies (zipper line), then shake out their arms and go back to good form. This will show them how much energy is wasted and saved.

Turtle Neck - Runners tighten shoulders like shrugging, and then move their arms as if running. Then have them relax their shoulders as they continue arm swing, shows runners how difficult it can be to run tight.

Wiggle-Waggle (or Shakedown) - While running, have kids shake their hands and arms down to their sides, take a deep breath, lower shoulders on exhale, then “pick-up their potato chips” and back to good form.

Square Arms - Runners make a square in front of their bodies with their arms. In other words, their elbows should be at 90 degree angles. Have them drop their elbows into their bodies and then they begin the running arm action maintaining the 90 degree angle.

Don't be a Chicken - Runners move their arms as if running, and focusing on keeping their elbows in. Incentive is to not appear like a chicken when they run. Older kids (3-6 grades) can run during this drill.

Shoulder to shoulder - Runners stand shoulder to shoulder and practice arm movement. The goal is to not have chicken arms. The runners should not bump arms with anyone.

Elbows to the sky - Focus on the backward swing of the arms, the object is to bring their elbows up as high as they can on the back side. Try this while running, as well.

Elbow Punching – Pick a partner – one runner stands behind another runner with his/her hand at his/her partners shoulder level with palms facing down. The runner who is working on arm action tries to hit the palms of his/her partner with their elbows.

Wheel Barrow Runs - Pick a partner – Partner #1 lays on his/her stomach in a push-up position. Partner #2 picks-up his/her feet, while #1 pushes up on his/her hands. Looking like #2 is pushing a wheel barrow, the team goes 10-30 meters as fast as they can. Team races and relays can be added.

Fast arms - The focus on this drill is to have fast arms. Keeping elbows in, having elbows go back as far as possible, the runner has fast arms. Fast hands, fast arms = fast feet.

Flapjacks – 10 push-ups, then flip over and do 10 crunches, then flip over and repeat (do it continuously and the kids will look like flapjacks). Younger kids can do (2- 3 continuous sets), older kids (3-5 sets)

Leg Drills

Moon Skip (Cherry Pickers) - Kids skip for height holding their up knee at waist height – this drill is not a race, keep the motion slow and powerful as they jump for height. Looks like an astronaut on the moon or have the kids jump to the top of the cherry tree and pick some cherries!!

Heel Kicks – Kids will run between 10-20 meters at a time kicking their heels up to their bottoms. This is an exaggerated kick, therefore, teach them to SLOW down...this is NOT a race!

High Knees - Runners bring knees up quickly – height and quickness are key. This can be done in one spot, or over 10-20 meters – it is NOT a race, teach them to SLOW down!

High Knee Skip - Runners skip for speed holding their knees up high. Or runners skip for distance holding their knees high. The focus is on high knees

Marching Band - Runners march like people in marching bands. Keep knees up and toes up.

Leap Frog – Pick a Partner - #1 squats on all fours like a frog - #2 puts his/her hands on #1's back and leaps over him/her – as #2 lands he/she immediately squats like a frog and #1 prepares to jump over #2. Do this continuously so each partner leaps 5-10 times. Host races or relays with your team.

Carioca - The runners move sideways, their left foot crosses in front of their right, their right foot steps right, their left foot crosses behind their right, then their right foot steps right, and the pattern repeats. The runner's hips should turn side to side, but their head and shoulders do not move.

Windmill Running – Run “wind” sprints down the straight-aways of the track while doing arm swings rotation (arms straight) – see if the runners can stay in their lane – try swinging the arms faster!

Rabbit Steps – Gather the kids in a circle with either the coach or a “captain” in the middle. The person in the middle (leader) demonstrates the rabbit steps and the rest of the kids follow along. Rabbit steps are short quick steps, like a sprint, but **not** moving anywhere. Have the leader go faster, then slow down, then faster, and then stop. Mix it up - go in circles, switch directions, see if the team can keep up.

Standing Claw - Kids stand by fence, with knees in high knee position, knees up toes up. Coach counts to 20 in uneven time intervals, each time the coach says a number the kids quickly claw the track and return to high knee position.

Claw Skip - Kids begin drill with a basic high knee skip, then when instructed they try to claw the ground while continuing to skip.

Hot Track - While running, the runners are told the track is hot and they should quickly claw the track and get their feet off the ground as quickly as possible.

Other Games/Drills

Tennis Ball Toss – Outside the track fence in open grassy area – coach has 2 tennis balls in hand – he yells out the name of a kid and tosses the ball one direction, and almost immediately does the same with a second kid and the second ball (may be same distance or varied distance) – the kids have a race to see who can get the ball and return it the fastest.

Ships Across the Ocean – Outside the track fence in open grassy area - line the team up on one end of the field (mark off about 30-50 meters long & wide – put up cones for boundaries). These are the “ships” ready to cross the ocean (field). Pick 1 or 2 kids to be the “captains or pirates” of the ships – they stand out in the “ocean” and face the “ships” – they yell out “ships across the ocean” and the team runs to the other side of the “ocean”, while the “captains or pirates” run around and tag as many “ships” as they can before they get across the ocean. These “ships” turn into “captains or pirates” and help them tag the “ships” in the next crossing of the ocean. The game keeps going until the last “ship” remains untagged.

Hands Above the Head – Have the kids run in Zone 3, 4, and 5 with their hands above their head. See if they can run in a straight line, see if they can keep their hands above their head (30-50 meters).

Library Book Run – Have the kids practice keeping their heads still and eyes focused straight ahead. Either bring books to place on their heads or pretend they have a book on their head...don't let it fall as you run!!

Hand Behind the Back – Have the kids run in Zone 3, 4, 5 with their hands behind their back. Focus is leg power without using momentum from their arms. How fast can they go? (30-100 meters)

Tennis Ball Trot – Similar to the Tennis Ball Toss above, but this time the entire team runs slowly around the field (Zone 2), and continue to run while the kids are off chasing the ball when their name is called.

Backwards to Forwards – Spread the kids out in a long line (arms-length apart from each other) – all facing away from the coach – blow a whistle or say “go” and all the kids run backwards towards the coach, after about 20-30 meters of running backwards, yell “turn” (or something fun) and the kids must turn around and continue running forward. Lesson – balance the leg muscles, and can they run on tired legs?

Single File Surges – Get into team of about 5-7 kids – have them line up in a single file (one behind the other) – have the kid in the front run at Zone 2 (slow) – then have the kid at the back of the line in Zone 4 or 5 (fast/sprint) to the front – at the front he/she slows down to Zone 2 – as soon as the kid gets to the front, the next person goes – this continues until each kid has sprinted to the front 4-6 times

Hip Running – A great drill to teach the kids how to “lead” a race/pack, and how to “follow” a pack/race. Pick a partner - #1 is the leader – he/she sets the pace, the course, etc. #2 focuses on #1's hip – in other words, #2 goes where ever #1 goes – all they focus on is staying close to his/her hip and matching his/her stride. So if the “leader” runs fast, so does the “follower”, if

Cross Country – Set up a distance run on the grassy area, set up cones to run around, trees to weave through, etc. Create one big loop, or repeat a shorter loop – be creative (400 meters to a mile)

Leg Lifts & Leg Toss – Pick a partner - #1 lays on his/her back in the grass - #2 stands over #1's head facing his/her feet - #1 holds onto the ankles of #2 – then he/she lifts his/her legs (feet together) to #2's hands - #2 then throws the feet back to the ground while #1 resists enough to not have his/her feet slam to the ground – repeat 5-10 times - #2 can toss the legs to the left, to the right, or straight back.

Victory Build-ups – go to the grassy area outside track fence – spread the kids out side-by-side in a long line facing the other end of the field – set cones out about 50-100 meters – have the kids start in Zone 2 and build up speed to Zone 4 or 5 by the end of the run – have the kids think of this as the final straight-away of a race and the crowd is cheering them on and they are feeling good as they prepare for a victory!! If the weather is nice, have the kids do this barefoot...also good to do at the end of practice!!

Practice Stretches

Before practice, stretches should not be static, but instead moving, dynamic stretches are recommended. These stretches, along with drills will be used both for coordination and flexibility.

Use the analogy of “Silly Putty” when showing how important stretching is to a track star. If you take the silly putty out of the egg and try to stretch it right away it will break in two – but if you warm it up in your hands a little bit, it will warm up and you can stretch it all over (even make pictures on comics!!).

Stretch Descriptions

On Ground	Standing
Bicycle	Arm Circles
Scissors Front to Back	Leg Swings Front to back
Scissors Side to Side	Leg Swings Side to Side
Front Eagles & Back Eagles	Reach for the Sky
Rollover hurdle	Touch your Toes
Hurdle seat exchange	

Bicycle - Athletes lie on back with legs in the air and make bicycle pedaling motion. Pedal for 10-20 seconds.

Scissors front to back - Athletes lie on their backs with their legs in the air as straight as possible. They move their legs front to back over their head. Repeat 10-20 times.

Scissors side to side - Athletes lie on their backs with their legs in the air as straight as possible. They move their legs side to side over their head. Repeat 10-20 times.

Arm Circles - With arms held straight to the side the athlete makes increasingly larger circles.

Leg Swings front to back - Make sure there is enough room between the athletes so they are not kicking each other. Athletes stand by a fence for support. They move their legs front to back as high as they can, keeping their legs straight as possible. Make sure there is enough room so they are not kicking each other.

Leg Swings side to side - Make sure there is enough room between the athletes so they are not kicking each other. Athletes stand by a fence for support. They move their legs side to side as high as they can, keeping their legs straight as possible.

Front Eagles - Athletes lie on stomachs in a spread eagle position. The athlete alternately brings the right foot to the left hand and then the left foot to the right hand. Repeat 6-10 times

Back Eagles - Athletes lie on back and use the same alternate leg motions as front eagles

Hurdle Seat Exchange - Athletes start in hurdle stretch position with lower leg oriented inward. Then they roll backward onto their backs, then roll forward off their backs and finish in the hurdle stretch position with their leg position exchanged (which ever leg was straight is now the curled in leg).

Rollover Hurdle - Athletes start in hurdle stretch position with leg oriented outward. The back leg is brought forward over the straight leg. As the leg is coming forward the athlete rolls to the side in the same direction as the backward leg is moving. The athlete completes the roll with his/her legs in opposite positions as the start. Rollover 8-10 times.

Coaches Checklist: Running Form

Head

Jaw relaxed
Shoulders relaxed
Eyes up
Head level, not up

Arms

Hands relaxed
Action front to back
Elbows up on backward swing
Hands to chin on forward swing
Elbow angle $< 90^\circ$ forward swing
Elbow angle $> 90^\circ$ backward swing

Posture

Shoulders down, but not hunched
Tall through torso
Forward lean
Lean from ankles not waist

Legs

Foot plant under hips
Active foot plant
Knees up
Ankle step over knee
Foot dorsal flexed
Full extension of hip
Full extension of knee
Full extension of ankle

Points of Emphasis

Relaxed running
Front to back motions not side to side
High Knees
Elbows back

Coaches Vocabulary

“Potato Chip”
“Hands at Your Belt Loop”
“Don’t Cross the Zipper Line”
“Shakedown”

Coaches Checklist: Standing Long Jump *(Kindergarten only)*

Practice jumping over obstacles (mini-hurdles) to encourage jumping up and out.

Three arm swings is generally thought of as the best number for the optimum jump

Teach to fall forward instead of backward, and explain that the measurement is taken from the closest mark.

1. "READY" – Toe the edge of the sandpit
2. "SET" - Bend Knees - Swing Arms Back
3. "JUMP" - Kaboom!! Swing Arms Forward - Explode up and forward into the sand!

Coaches Checklist: Long Jump Drill Progression *(Grades 1-6)*

The Takeoff

To effectively set up a takeoff, the running pattern and heel recovery is changed on the last two steps of the approach. The penultimate (next to last) step is a full foot contact with a rocking action. This is the longest step of the entire approach. Foot contact will still be underneath the body like the previous steps. The recovery of the heel will be over the ankle or mid calf only. Attempting to run over this step while the foot is still on the ground is a great cue. The takeoff step will be similar to the penultimate in ground contact (full foot, rocking action) and stepping over the ankle instead of heel to butt, but it will be shorter in length. Ground contact will be a little in front of the body.

Takeoff Drills

Power skips and single leg skips where left or right foot takeoffs are emphasized.

Approaches with a "pop up", short run emphasizing the take-off action and the vertical impulse

The Landing

Often this technique in the air is the technical focal point for coaches and athletes. Controlling or limiting forward rotation is the goal of all in the air action. Much of the jump distance is already determined by the approach and takeoff actions. There are some drills listed below which address these areas.

Landing Drills:

1. Begin with a standard **Standing Long Jump (SLJ)** with an UPRIGHT landing
2. SLJ with a SQUAT landing
3. SLJ with a ROLLING OF THE BOTTOM to where the feet touch down
4. **Short Approach Jumps** - Progress from slow to fast, teach the kids to bring the takeoff leg forward and extended so that both feet are together, they learn how to get their bottom to where their feet land.



Coaches Checklist: Running Long Jump

1. One leg takeoff
2. Jump up, not forward
3. 7-9 step approach
 - a. Determine start point – mark it if you wish
 - b. Consistent run up
 - c. Jump off same foot each time

Points of Emphasis

1. Jump up, not out
2. Start point and consistent run up

Coaches Vocabulary

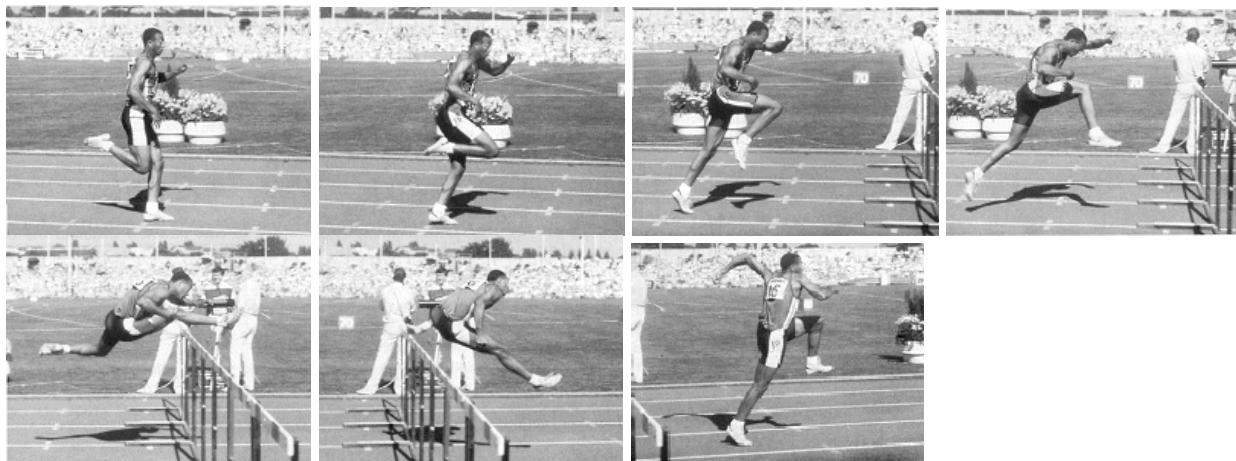
“Run the same way each time you go”

“Jump up”

“Chest up, eyes up”

Hurdle Drill Progression (Grades 4-6)

Drills can be done by all age levels which are allowed to hurdle. Coaches should do both lead and trail leg drills in practices. Start with lower barriers early in season and move up to higher barriers later in the season.



Methods of establishing lead leg *(this should be the first hurdle drill each season)*

1. Kick a ball. The kicking foot is lead leg.
2. Lean forward until off balance, forcing to take a step forward. Forward leg now is lead leg.
3. Coach gives a slight push from the back, forcing the athlete to step forward. Forward leg is lead leg.
4. Run over barriers (like pizza boxes, banana steps, cones, mini hurdles, poles).

Trail leg drills

Effective trail leg movement is set by the knee making an arc to the side of the body, moving up toward the armpit and finishing in front of the body at waist level. Also, of note is the toe of the trail leg needs to point out, not down.

Hurdle Terminology:

Left Lead Leg - stand in front of and to the **left** of a low pizza box or banana step.

Right Lead Leg - stand in front of and to the **right** of a low pizza box or banana step.

Walking Trail Leg - Athlete's arms move in unison while walking. The athlete walks to a series of banana step/pizza box and clears trail leg over each banana step/pizza box using proper trail leg mechanics.

Jogging Trail Leg - Jog to banana step/pizza box; clear trail leg over banana step/pizza box using proper trail leg mechanics. As athlete progresses, move to a larger banana step, or pizza boxes set slightly higher each set.

Key points:

Trail leg knee should lift under arm pit.

Arm pulls back and around as trail leg passes over banana step/pizza box.

Lead Leg drills

The sequence of movement for an effective lead leg is knee up, heel up, pull leg down straight.

Lead Leg March - High knee marching, hands moving like running lifting lead leg every third step.

Lead Leg Jog - High knee jog, hands moving like running, step over small banana step/low pizza box with lead leg. Repeat entire sequence moving to a hurdle set at lowest height.

Lead leg and trail leg drills

Place a pizza box at 27" on trail leg side.

Place a 5" banana step on the lead leg side.

Clearance Drill - Arms moving in unison to walking steps: Walk to hurdles; clear lead leg over short banana step and trail leg over higher hurdle. Repeat drill jogging to hurdles. Repeat entire sequence for several sets, gradually raising the height of the lead leg hurdle until it is even with the trail leg barrier.

Shuttle Hurdle Relay - Set up several banana steps/pizza boxes with the hurdles the same distance apart, but of all different heights. (Do not be concerned about clearance technique or strides between obstacles). Set up a couple teams, line up athletes at both end of hurdle flights and have a fun race. Make sure not to use real hurdles, because the athletes should never go over hurdle backward.

Coaches Checklist: Hurdles

Take Off

Lead Leg

Basic Skill A, B

Lead with knee

Sagittal Plane

Thigh above horizontal (Guys only)

Trail Leg

C Action

Toe out

Begins when lead leg is at or over hurdle

Heel follows knee

Arms & Shoulders

Shoulders square

Lead arm check watch, or block

Miscellaneous

Body lean

Distance from hurdle

Center of gravity path

Hurdle Clearance

Lead leg

Lead leg sagittal

Straight leg or flexed

Trail leg

Horizontal plane of motion

Position/rotation of knee

Knee angle

Heel and toe

Total action

Length of total clearance

Center of gravity curve

Position

Pawing of arms

Body Lean

Hips forward

Balance

Coaches Vocabulary

"Knee up, heel up"

"Toe up"

"Lead with your knee"

"Check your watch"

"Keep running on landing"

Softball Throw - (K-3)

- Find dominant hand – if not known, have athlete pick up softball from the ground and have them use that hand until a favored hand is established.
- Have the athlete concentrate on pushing, stepping, and following through on their throw.
- Step into throw.
- Emphasize warming up before competing.

Shot Put Drill Progression

1. Holding the shot put

- The shot is held at the base of the fingers not the palm
- The fingers are slightly spread apart with the thumb for support.
- The hand will be bent back in the cocked position when holding the shot.
- It looks like you are carrying a pizza.

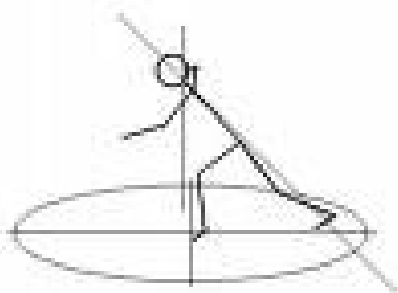


2. Holding the shot on the neck.

- Raise the shot above your head
- Lower the shot straight down until it is under your jaw
- Push the shot into your neck
- Lift your elbow parallel to the floor.
- Don't squeeze your elbow towards your back
- Check to see that your thumb is pointing down towards your clavicle
- The palm should be pointing towards the throwing direction



3. Power Position and use of legs



- Body position in the power position
- The thrower will stand perpendicular to the throwing direction
- The feet position will be shoulder width apart or a little wider with left foot slightly behind the right foot (toe heel relationship)
- The right foot will be perpendicular to the throwing direction
- The thrower needs to be in an athletic position
- Power Position: The thrower will shift 80% percent of his/her weight onto the right leg
- The thrower will twist his/her upper body completely opposite the

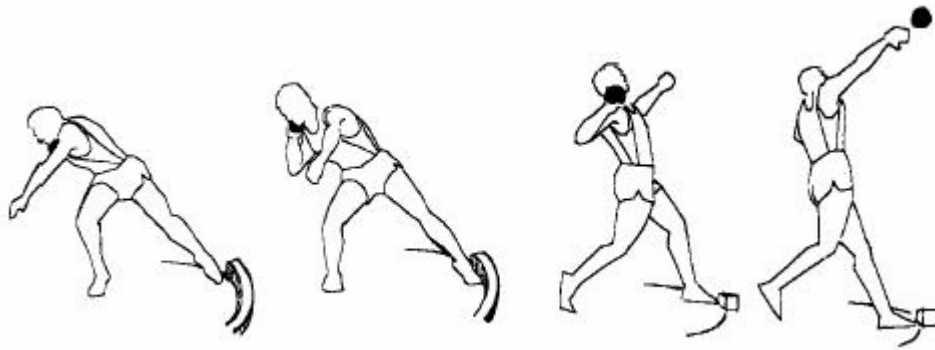
throwing direction

- This position from up above will look like an X
- The chest, knee and toe should be in line with each other
- The thrower places the shot into his/her neck
- The left arm will be extended and out from the body with a right angle relationship to the right elbow

Power Position Drill (with softball)

- Points to remember as you practice the drill:
- Tuck softball into chin
- Rotate body 180 degrees
- Keep focal point at the back of the circle

- Right knee should come down and in to turn hips
- Release softball
- This exercise can be done with a softball or a variety of weighted objects



4. Throwing from the power position

Use the legs in the throw – power comes from the hips

- Sequence of the throw will be legs - hips - back - arm
- Push the weight from right leg to the left leg in an upwards direction
- When driving up with your legs your right heel (hips)

needs to be turned out

- There will be a stretch reflex reaction between your upper body and lower body
- The upper body will start coming around
- As your upper body comes around sweep the left arm around and then bring it tight to your body
- Stop the left side of your body to aid in accelerating the shot
- Push the shot out with the arm, make sure the elbows stay high
Keeping thumb down, flick the wrists at the end of the throw

Release Drill (with softball)

- Points to remember as you practice the drill:
- Softball is tucked into chin
- Tuck left arm in and push bean bag up simultaneously
- Keep block solid (no bending at the waist)
- Palm should be out and thumb down

Wrist flips - Use this drill for proper release of the shot.

- The thrower will stand facing the sector
- The thrower starts with the softball above his head in his throwing hand
- The thrower will flip the softball out of his hand

Arm strike - Use this drill for the arm delivery in the shot put.

- The thrower will be standing tall facing the throwing direction
- The thrower will place the shot against his neck
- The thrower will sky the eyes to the ceiling and push the shot away from his neck focusing on driving through the shot towards the throwing area
- The thrower needs to flip the wrist at the end

Shot Put coaches Vocabulary

“To get power bend your knees”

“Feet at 12 and 3”

“Extend”

“Flick wrist”

“Thumb down”

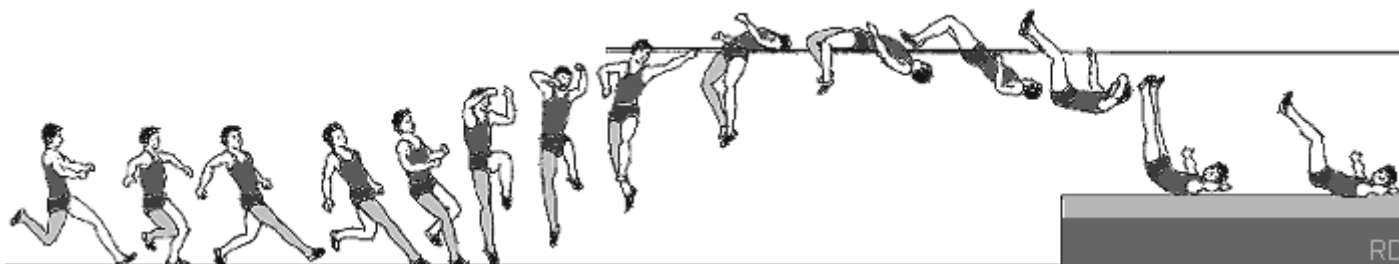
High Jump Drills and Skills

High Jump Background

- The approach portion of the high jump is the most important aspect of the entire event. It should be practiced hundreds of times each season to ensure correct technique and the correct take-off position.
- The athlete needs to establish their steps and be able to correctly measure these steps to have complete accuracy throughout the season.
- The approach involves a gradual J toward the high jump cross bar. This J type of approach allows for:
 1. More Horizontal speed
 2. The ability to turn in the air (centripetal force)
 3. Places athlete in a good take off position
 4. Is easy to teach

The approach should be a gradual acceleration that is neither a sprint nor a jog, but rather a hard controlled stride. The approach should be somewhere between 8-12 strides in which the athlete runs with a tall, bouncy, gazelle like running form. Emphasis should be placed on proper running mechanics. The athlete should focus on the transition into the curve phase of the approach. This part is where many great jumps are lost. The athlete should ensure that they are **leaning from the ankles and not the hips**. They should also make sure that they are not stepping out of the curve, but actually **putting one foot in front of the other**. Many high jumpers are former basketball players or football receivers these athletes are accustomed to "cutting" in or out. Make sure they stay on that curve.

Many times athletes do not want to practice approaches they just want to jump. Remember you can't change for flight path once you leave the ground so the approach must be perfect.



Approach Drills

These drills can be done with all age levels of high jumpers.

Circle runs or skips

Try increasing speed on the approach. Emphasize pushing to the outside and single track running. Run or skip the circle 2-3 times in a row. They can be done with takeoffs (pop ups) as well

Straights with circles

Have the athlete run in straight line (like the linear part of the approach) and then run 2-3 circles. This is a good drill to link the two parts and can be done away from the pit

Pit Circles

Once the athlete has learned how to run the earlier circle drills try this one. Have them start an arm length away and just inside the near standard. They will run a circle drill and pop up into the pit, landing on their

feet. It may take a couple of attempts to figure out how many steps are needed. Once this is determined, mark the far point of the approach with tape or a marker. You will see that this drill can be set up to closely match the kids' turn. Try it with a slower straight away run emphasizing the transition, complete a circle and pop up.

The Takeoff

During the takeoff, kids will transition from a curved approach to a vertical takeoff. During the takeoff steps the athlete should maintain speed and "stay away" from the bar. The last two steps of the approach also need to be done on the turn with foot contacts directly in front of each other. Watch for the tendency of the athlete to lean into the bar upon planting the takeoff foot. If the takeoff is executed properly the athlete will feel like they are planting the foot "inside" because they are still leaning away from the bar and running on the turn. The penultimate and takeoff steps will be rocking action, full foot contacts. There should be no heel recovery on these steps, as the foot will only step over the ankle or mid calf. The plant for the takeoff will occur just inside (towards the far standard) the near standard with the toe of the takeoff foot aiming at the far standard. Arm action can either continue single arm or be double arm at takeoff. When the athlete plants the takeoff leg, it will need to be braced or ready for the jump. They will be getting great energy back from the plant, so they need to make sure to continue moving over the top of the leg. If the approach was done correctly their back should have been to the bar at the plant. The knee of the penultimate leg will be brought up because of stored energy from the previous step. Coaching of this leg action should be to get the ankle to the bar and knee away from the bar. Athletes should leave this knee up and let the takeoff leg come up to meet it.

Takeoff Drills

These drills can be done with all age levels of high jumpers.

3 and 5 Step Jumps - Have the athlete run back (arm length from the bar, just inside the near standard) 3 or 5 steps marking the spot where the step is. This mark will be inside of their normal run because they will not be moving as fast. Make sure they still run the turn.

Walk in or Jog in 5 Steps - Same as above but move to the takeoff spot by either walking or jogging in. This is good linking to the full approach and less stressful than full approach jumps.

Bar Clearance and Takeoff

Like the other jumps, it is difficult to separate this phase from previous ones. There are a couple of drills listed that will work on the dynamic flexibility and spatial awareness needed to arch over a bar. During the takeoff the head should have been looking at the far standard. As the athlete becomes airborne, with hips near the bar, the head should look directly back so that the hips will rise over the bar. To get the feet to clear the bar, the athlete will bring their head back to the chest, finally landing on their upper back in the pit.

In the Pit Drills

These drills can be done with all age levels of high jumpers.

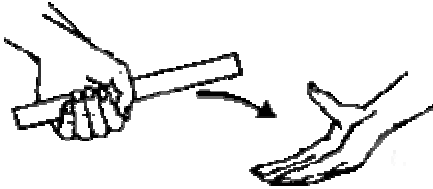
Back Arch - Have athlete place their hands on the ground next to their head (fingers pointing towards shoulders) and press up. Progress to doing this drill in the pit.

Standing bar clearance - Have the athlete start standing on a box, with their back to the bar on two feet. Clear the bar and land in the pit.

Relays Skills Progression & Drills

Passing the Baton, Open Exchange

- Runners hold the end of the baton in the right hand with the fingers wrapped around the end of the baton and the thumb lying on top of it.
- As they run to the exchange zone they stay to the inside of their lane.
- In the exchange zone pass the baton with an extension of the right arm to the outgoing runner's left hand.
- Do not ever slow down before the exchange.
- Coaching tip: Put tape on the baton to show where to grip the baton.



Receiving Baton, Open Exchange

- Identify the 20M exchange zone.
- Stand just in front of first zone line (nearest start line), and to the right side of lane.
- Face inward to the middle of the track.
- Place right foot forward, facing forward, left foot back facing inward, and look back over the left shoulder.
- Hold inside hand back (left hand in this case) and keep body weight forward slightly.
- Look back over inside shoulder for incoming runner.
- Begin running forward when incoming runner reaches a point 4-5m from exchange zone.
- Take three fast steps facing forward.
- Twist upper body to the left while extending left arm backward to receive baton.
- Hand is palm up with thumb in hitchhiker position.
- Watch incoming runner pass baton into your left hand.
- Turn to look forward, while passing the baton to right hand.

Relay Drills

Hitchhiker - Runners hold arms back to receive baton with palm up and thumb extended.

Light Touches Drill - With full relay team, line up in a line as if running relay. Fourth leg is in front of 3rd leg, in front of 2nd leg, in front of 1st leg. First leg has baton in right hand, runners begin an easy jog and first runner will pass to 2nd leg and so on until baton reaches 4th leg. Fourth leg drops baton, first runner picks up baton. Repeat.

Continuous Relay - Five athletes will run continuous 100M intervals over 400M. Each runner will remain at position they finished running their 100M while baton is carried around track. The 5th runner takes baton at finish line, brings it to first runner. Repeat.

Starting Skills and Drills

"ON YOUR MARK" POSITION IN THE STARTING BLOCKS

- Teach the skill



- Set the front block two foot lengths behind the start line; the back block should be set one foot length behind the front block.
- Kneel on the track and position the feet firmly against the blocks so the toes barely touch the ground.
- Place hands shoulder-width apart on the track just behind the start line; set the fingertips down so the thumbs point in toward each other, the fingers out, and the arches formed by the index fingers and thumbs lie parallel to the start line.
- Roll the body forward slightly, and keep the arms straight and rigid, but not locked.
- Distribute weight evenly over hands and back knee.
- Hold the head up in line with the spine.
- Focus on a spot a few meters in front of the start line.

Coaching points

Set the blocks for a medium position, or when the athlete is kneeling in the blocks, the front knee barely touches the start line and the back knee is in line with the ankle of the front foot.

"SET" POSITION IN THE STARTING BLOCKS

- Assume the correct "on your mark" position.
- Elevate hips so back leg forms a 120 degree angle at the knee, and distribute weight evenly over hands
- (hips should be slightly higher than the shoulders).
- Take a deep breath while rising to the "set" position.
- Hold the head in line with the spine and focus two meters down the track.
- Assume a balanced "set" position and concentrate on reacting to the sound of the gun (or command).



SPRINTING OUT OF THE STARTING BLOCKS

- Teaching the skill
- Assume the correct "set" position.
- At the sound of the gun (or command), exhale forcefully and thrust the back knee and opposite arm forward strongly.
- Keep the body low and push hard off the power foot.
- Extend fully the power leg, then drive the legs and arms forward to accelerate into full sprinting stride.
- Sprint 15-20 meters, and slow to a jog.



Suggestions for the teacher/coach

At the start signal, give the athlete a slight push to initiate an explosive start. Emphasize using arm action to get out of the blocks quickly. Remind the athletes to wait for the starting signal so as not to commit a false start.

ACCELERATION TO TOP SPEED

Teaching the skill - Use short, quick steps out of the blocks allowing stride to increase in length as velocity increases. Make sure the feet strike the ground directly under the center of gravity. Use the arms vigorously, bringing the loosely-closed hands to the chest line during the upswing and stopping them at the back side of the hips on the downswing.

Starting Drills

Hopping Start - Start with power foot forward and fast foot backward. Have runners imagine the lane line is six inches high. Hop over it twice, and when you land the second time begin your start focusing on proper hand movement or proper feet movement

Falling Start - Kids start with their power foot forward and their fast foot backward, body parallel to the track, and their hands hanging down. Kids lean forward until they feel as if you are going to fall on their face. When they feel like falling they begin their start focusing on proper hand movement or proper feet movement

Fast Hands - Start with feet together, body parallel to the track, and hands hanging down. On the command "go" athletes bring their lead arm up to eye level, and their back arm goes back and becomes long and straight. They pause in this position for a split second. Then slowly raise their trunks as they quickly drive their hands from chin to back pocket focusing on fast, fast, fast hands.

3 Point - Start in the three point position. On the go command begin your start focusing on the specified skill.

Sticks - From which ever starting position/drill as you take your first steps place them with backward power on the sticks and recover your feet over your ankles the entire way through the sticks.

Coaches Checklist: Starts

Blocks	Loading	"On Your Marks"	"Set"	"Go"
Spacing	Load Backward	Hands bridged	Bottom rises until back foot is firmly in contact with pad	Focus on fast hands or feet
Distance to Start Line	Spike plate on track	Arms a bit wider than shoulders	Front leg ~90 degrees	Lead arm up to eye level
	Balance of foot firmly on pad	Arms long & tall – make a "tall bridge"	Back leg ~ 130 degrees	Back arm long and straight
		Shoulders over hand	Eyes up 2-3 feet down track	Push with both feet
		Eyes up 2-3 feet down track		Low heel recovery
				Fast hands

Best advice is to put all this into your own words...let it come naturally!

Good luck, Coaches!