

P.E. SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

FIELD EVENTS



“It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret.”

Jackie Joyner-Kersey, American retired track and field athlete

INTRODUCTION

Field events are competitions which involve jumping and throwing: the long jump, the high jump, the javelin throw, the discus throw, the hammer throw, the pole vault and the shot-put.

HISTORY OF FIELD SPORTS

Track and field events are commonly known as “athletics” in England and on the European continent. Such events are among the oldest form of competitive sports ever recorded. These events were encouraged among young athletes in ancient Egypt and Asia.

The Olympic Games, which are held every four years, showcase the talents of international athletes who specialize in track and field events. Other competitions for track and field participants include the European, Commonwealth, African, Pan-American and Asian competitions.

HOW THE SPORTS ARE PLAYED

THE LONG JUMP

The long jump, formerly known as “the broad jump,” is considered the least difficult of field events. The most important ingredients for success in this jump are an agile body and “springy” legs, which is a popular way of describing legs whose muscles are capable of the kind of



explosive power required to hurl the mass of the body a long distance.

The long jump requires the athlete to jump from a takeoff board and leap into the air. There are four basic parts to this jump: the approach, the takeoff, the airborne position and the landing.

The approach: An athlete is allowed three separate tries in this jump. As the runner approaches the takeoff board, he/she uses a sprinter's stride with the knees kept high and the arms moving back and forth rapidly. Achieving the correct approach speed is critical. An approach that is too fast or too slow will adversely affect the final jump.

The takeoff: As soon as the runner's toe hits the takeoff area or toe board, his or her body should be held straight. The runner then moves forward and upward. The takeoff leg comes out while the opposite leg moves forward and the arms and head swing up.

The airborne position: Once the runner is in the air, the arms must be kept up without allowing them to fall behind the body. The legs should remain in a semi-sitting position, although they should not be too far forward.

The landing: As the runner lands, the back is straight but not rigid, with head and arms held forward. Falling with the legs forward is essential since the jump is measured from the edge of the takeoff board to where the heels break the surface of the sand. If a runner falls back at this point, the jump is measured from the point where he or she fell.

THE HIGH JUMP

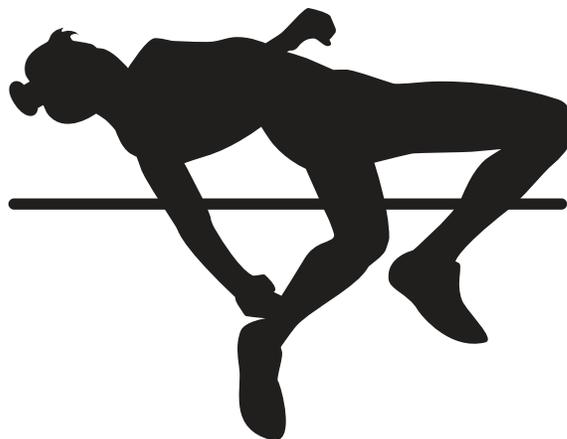
The goal of the high jump is to go over a thirteen-foot-long raised bar without knocking it over. A good high jumper needs two main attributes: excellent leaping skills and precision control.

High jumpers get three attempts to finish the jump. There are three common techniques for high jumping: the scissors kick, the Fosbury flop and the straddle roll.



THE SCISSORS KICK

The scissors kick is taught to beginners since it is considered the easiest of the three moves to learn. The runner approaches the high bar from the right, using seven to eight steps in his or her approach. Then he/she jumps with a push from the left leg as the right leg moves to cross the bar. The left leg then follows the right leg over the bar. The jumper will appear to spectators to be in a sitting position for the split second while in the air.



The Fosbury flop was created in 1968 by U. S. Olympic champion Dick Fosbury. As the jumper moves toward the high bar, he or she places a foot parallel to the bar. The jumper then springs up, twisting the back toward the bar, arches the back, and arcs over the bar to fall backward, head first. Once the hips clear the bar, the chin is tucked into the chest to help protect the head on landing. A large foam rubber pit is used to break the fall of all jumpers using this move.

In the straddle roll, the jumper's stomach faces the ground as it goes across the bar. The arms are tucked in and the trailing leg is bent at the knee. The head and hips are rotated as the jumper goes over the bar.

In all high jumps, a coach should always be present to oversee practice sessions. The high jumps are complicated to perform correctly, so it is important that all young athletes be properly supervised during practice.

THE JAVELIN THROW

The javelin throw is one of the oldest field events known to humankind. It was introduced in the Olympic Games of 708 B.C. as a direct descendent of spear-throwing contests.

The javelin throw involves hurling a long, hollow, spear-like shaft over the athlete's

shoulder at the end of an approach run.

Javelin throwing looks deceptively simple to the casual spectator. However, it is quite difficult to execute correctly. Many times, spectators have been injured from incorrect throws, so it is important to exercise caution in this event.

The javelin rests in the palm of the hand, held firmly but not tightly by the fingers. The thumb and index fingers are the most important throwing fingers. The throw itself can be broken down into seven basic steps. As it is with a golf swing, these seven parts of the javelin throw should appear as a smooth, flowing movement:



1. Sprint forward with the javelin, maintaining good balance as you move forward.
2. Drop the arm holding the javelin to about waist level.
3. Keep the arm holding the javelin bent as you point the javelin up and away from the body.
4. Twist your body as you plant one leg firmly while the other leg crosses over and extends.
5. Bring the extended leg down as your body leans backward and you prepare to throw.
6. Push off with your back foot as your body and arm move forward.
7. Throw the javelin in one fluid motion. Note that the actual release of the javelin is a whip-like motion. The javelin must land with the point in the ground, although it does not have to stick in the ground.

THE DISCUS THROW

The discus is perhaps the single item most often associated with field events. The discus was mentioned as early as the 8th century B.C. in accounts of athletic contests. Today it continues to be an important part of the Olympic Games.

The discus is a four-pound, saucer-shaped object. A two-pound discus is usually used in women's competitions. It is thrown from a circle measuring about eight feet in diameter. Here is how to throw the discus:



1. Start the throw facing the rear of the circle. Hold the discus with the index finger and thumb around the outer edge and the palm against the center of the discus. You must remain inside the throwing circle at all times; otherwise, the throw is not considered legal.
2. Spin your body while completing one and a half turns before releasing the discus.
3. Then throw the discus with a snapping motion of the arm. Despite its weight, a properly thrown discus will seem to sail through the air like a Frisbie. Each thrower performs the event three times.

Like the javelin throw, the discus throw looks simple but is hard to do well. The first man to throw the discus over 200 feet was Al Oerter at the 1956 Olympic Games. Oerter set four world records in this event.

SHOT PUT

The shot is a 16-pound metal ball (9 pounds for women). It is not thrown; instead the arm is extended at the elbow (straightened) to push or heave the shot away at a 45 degree angle. The shot is pushed or heaved from a circle seven feet in diameter. Since the ball is so heavy, many shot putters practice weight training in preparation

for this event. Remember that you need explosive power to do the shot put. Consequently, if you weight train for the shot put, you should work not for strength alone, but for fast, explosive power in pressing movements such as the bench press. Shot putters tend to be among the larger athletes in track and field events; some weigh up to 300 pounds. Here is how to do the shot put:



1. Hold the shot in the palm of your hand, with the elbow bent and the shot resting against your neck, just below the ear. Face opposite the direction in which you will aim the shot.
2. Spin your body 180 degrees across the circle in order to gain momentum. Be careful to turn your head away from the shot during the turn in order to avoid injury.
3. Extend your arm with an explosively fast movement, and snap the shot into the air with a snap of your fingers.

HAMMER THROW

Many professional athletes consider this the most difficult of the events to learn. The hammer throw requires great strength as well as precision.

The “hammers” used in the event are not traditional building tools, but metal balls attached by a wire to a handle. The entire piece of equipment weights 16 pounds. Here’s how to do the hammer throw:

1. Grasp the handle and swing the hammer around your body a minimum of four times to gain momentum.
2. When you have gained maximum momentum and are at precisely the point in your spin that will send the



hammer in the right direction, release the hammer into the air. Timing is everything in this throw.

This event was one dominated by Irish Americans. John Flanagan set 17 world records and won three Olympic events between the years 1900 and 1908. After 1930, this event came to be dominated by Eastern European athletes.

POLE VAULT

Pole vaulting requires superior upper body strength, balance, control, agility and great courage. In short, it is an extremely difficult event, requiring hours of gymnastics and weight training in preparation for its performance. Here's how to do the pole vault:



1. Hold the 16-foot-long fiberglass pole with both hands.
2. As you start your run toward the crossbar, keep a firm grip on the pole with both hands. Lift the pole to a horizontal position. One arm should be bent at the elbow, and held against the body with the hand near the ear as it grips the pole. The other arm should be bent at the elbow but held out away from the body, with the hand still gripping the pole.
3. As you approach the crossbar, drop the tip of the pole and securely place it into the ground at the spot prepared for it.
4. Kick off with your legs, and at the same time pull up with your arms so that your body makes an arc as the pole helps propel you through the air.
5. As you go over the crossbar, push the pole backwards so that it does not knock over the crossbar. Most vaulters go over the crossbar backwards (see the description of the “Fosbury Flop” under the High Jump above).
6. Tuck your head in to avoid injury and fall over the bar to the padded area below.

EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Field event clothing is traditionally loose-fitting to allow for maximum freedom of movement. Tank tops are standard for men, leotards or shirts for women. Shorts are standard for both.



FIELD EVENTS NOTES

Track usually dominates the track and field news, but if you have ever watched field events on television or in person, you know that they can be as thrilling as any track event.

Field events are competitive at several levels. Most middle and high schools offer both track and field event competitions for both females and males. At the college and university level the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sponsors both men and women competitions and championship tournaments.

Track and Field is also an Olympic sport. This competition occurs every four years in the summer, where gold, silver and bronze medals are given to the top men and women teams. Events like long jump, high jump, triple high jump, shot put for men and women, javelin throw, hammer throw and discus, pole vault, are all part of the Olympic Games events. These events make the Games special and give it a touch of uniqueness. Athletes from various nationalities participate in these field events. The discus and javelin are the first known 'field' events competed at the Olympics.

USA Track and Field (USATF) is the National Governing Body for track and field in the United States. USATF encompasses the world's oldest organized sports, the most-watched events on Olympic broadcast, the number one high school and junior high school participatory sport.

There are, however, many levels of track and field competition. Most cities and towns offer amateur competition. Some are sponsored by such organizations as YMCA's or local park districts.

Track and field is the second-most popular sport in the world, following soccer. But in America, track and field's loyal fans feel more and more like a niche group, waiting for their red, white and blue brethren to wake up and realize what they're missing. It's a great sport around the world but here in the U.S. we have a tendency to show more interest in football, basketball and baseball.

Check out these websites for more information about Field Events:

www.ncaa.com

www.usatf.org