Track & Field

Track and Field History
Track and field events originated almost with the beginning of humanity. Competition in track and field events, also known as athletics, is considered to be the oldest of organized sports. The Greeks formulated games involving the fundamentals of track and field during their Homeric Age. They held many track and field games, but the most famous were the Olympic Festivals. They began in 776 B.C. and continued to be held every four years until 393 A.D. Interest and participation in the sport grew rapidly in North America after the New York Athletic Club promoted indoor meets in the 1860s.

The U.S. men’s Olympic track and field teams have done well since the first modern-era Olympic Games held in 1896. Research is constantly being conducted to improve techniques so that the competitor will receive a better time for the sprints, a little more distance in the long jump, and a greater height in the high jump.

Object of the Games
Competitors try to run faster, jump higher or farther and/or throw objects farther than their opponents. The first person to the finish line wins track events; the best height or distance wins field events.

Competition Area
Outdoor competition takes place on and around a 400-meter oval track. A track has six to nine lanes, a path marked on the track in which a runner must stay during the race. The surface is usually a synthetic composition. Running events take place on the track; field events take place on the field inside the track or in a field away from the track.

Events
Running events (sprints, hurdles, middle distances, distances, and relays); throwing events (discus, hammer, javelin, shot put, and weight throw); and jumping events (high jump, long jump, triple jump, and pole vault).

Field Events
Shot Put:
The shot is made of solid iron, brass, or stainless steel. The weight of the shot is 16 pounds for men and 8.8 pounds for women. Contestants “put” (throw) the shot from a 7-foot diameter ring with foul lines at a 45-degree angle. Distance is measured from the spot where the shot lands (not rolls to), known as the mark, to the inside edge of the toe board. The competitor must enter and exit from the rear of the circle. Any violation of rules results in a "scratch" and the throw does not count.

Discus:
An official discus is made of wood and has a smooth metal rim. The men’s discus weighs a little over 4 pounds and the woman’s a little over 2 pounds. Throwers throw from an 8-foot diameter ring with foul lines at a 45-degree angle. Distance is measured to where the discus lands (not rolls to) to the inside edge of the circle. A cage surrounds the throwing area to protect spectators.

Long Jump:
Competitors sprint to a take-off board and attempt to leap the farthest into a sand pit. The equipment used for the long jump includes: a runway, a take-off board, and a landing area. The runway has no set length. The take-off board is a white wood board, eight inches wide and sunk level across the end of the runway. The jumper’s foot must not mark beyond the takeoff line at the far end of the board. The landing area is a moistened sandpit. The jump is divided into four parts: the approach, the take-off, position in the air, and the landing. The measurement is taken from the nearest edge of any break (mark) made in the sand by any body part to the take-off line. The jump is a foul (scratch) if the jumper touches the ground beyond the take-off board, takes off beyond either side of the take-off board, or walks back through the landing area.

For class you must choose at least one event from each category: Field – shot put, high jump, long jump; Sprints – 100m, 200m, hurdles; Mid-distance – 400m, 800m; Relays – 4 x 100m, 4 x 200m
**Triple Jump:**
Competitors sprint to a take-off board and take a hop, step, and jump into a sand pit. The jumping area is the same as for the long jump, except there is an additional runway area between the take-off board and the landing pit. At take-off, the competitor pushes off of one foot and lands on the same foot (the hop), takes a leaping step and lands on the opposite foot, and then jumps off that foot and lands with 2 feet into the pit. All other rules for take-off, landing, failures, measurements, winning and so on are the same as the long jump.

**High Jump:**
In the high jump, men and women attempt to leap over a bar resting on 2 uprights. The bar is raised after each round. The runway is a fan-shaped area extending in front of the jump. The crossbar is a wood or metal rod with flat ends to rest on uprights. The uprights are two rigid metal standards set 4 meters apart with a mechanism to raise the crossbar, as needed. The landing pit is a foam rubber cushioned area, approximately 13 feet long x 16 feet wide. Competitors decide the length and direction of their run up to the bar. They must take off from one foot, but may jump with their chest up (flop) or down over the crossbar. The measurement is made between the lowest part of the top edge of the bar and the ground. A jump is a failure if the bar is knocked off the uprights or a contestant touches an area beyond the uprights without first going the bar.

**Track Events**

**Starts & Finishes:**
Start Objective: To get to top speed as quickly as possible

All competitors must be completely behind the starting line, with no parts of their bodies touching it or extending beyond it. For races of 400 meters or less, the commands are “on your marks” and “set”. When all competitors are set, the starter fires a starting pistol. For races beyond 400 meters, the command is “on your marks”, and when runners are ready, the gun is fired. Delaying in getting set, or resetting once a runner is set, will result in a false start.

When there are more runners than there are lanes on the track, the runners are divided into groups called heats. Blocks are often used in races up to 400 meters for a quicker start. A runner officially ends their race when their torso reaches the finish line. The head, neck, arms, hand, legs, and feet do not count.

**Sprints:**
100m, 200m, 400m
A runner’s left hand is always toward the inside of the track; all races are run counter-clockwise. Sprinters run in the same lane the whole race. In the 200m and 400m events (where curves are involved), the starting places are staggered so that each runner runs the same distance.

**Hurdles:**
100m – high (women), 110m – high (men), 300m – intermediate (HS women and men)
Hurdles are sprint races in which the runner must jump over 10 barriers. The hurdle is an L-shaped metal frame with a wood or plastic top bar. The height and spacing of hurdles depends on the event. A runner must clear the hurdle with both legs, but is not penalized for knocking it over. The runner is disqualified if they run around a hurdle or intentionally knock over a hurdle.

**Middle and Long Distances:**
800m, 1600m, 3200m
In 800m events, runners run in lanes until after the first turn, when they can cut to the inside lane. Races beyond 800m, have a “bunch” start (runners bunch together), at the waterfall line, and do not run in lanes. These races are usually run at a pace, a set speed which the runner desires to run.

**Relays:**
4 x 100 (400m relay), 4 x 200 (800m relay), 4 x 400 (1600m relay), 4 x 800 (3200m relay)
A relay race is made up of teams of four runners each. Each runner runs a set distance before passing a baton to a teammate. The fourth leg is called the anchor and is usually the fastest runner. A baton is a hollow tube, usually made of metal. The baton handoff must take place in a 20 meter exchange zone. If the handoff occurs outside of this zone, the team is disqualified.

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