

Track – Sprints

Getting Started

(The following is the policy of Athletics Southland – other areas have their own rules. However, as block starts are an integral skill of the sport, block use should be encouraged.)

In accordance with Athletics Southland rules for protection of the Surrey Park track, any athlete using a crouch start must use blocks. And IAAF rules state that all laned events (100m, 200m, 400m, sprint hurdles) must use a block start. Starting blocks are as much a part of the sport as a bar on the high jump and the skills required are as fundamental to athletics as knowing how to hold a shot put. In short, block starting technique is part of the sport and should be taught to young athletes.



The policy at Surrey Park is

- **13 year olds and up must use a crouch start and blocks**
- **Athletes of 10 to 12 have the option of a crouch or standing start.**
- **Athletes under 10 must use a standing start.**
- Note – all athletes wearing spikes MUST use blocks – however it is not essential to have spikes when starting with blocks, BUT conversely it is essential to use blocks when wearing spikes. So, no standing starts for sprinting races for athletes wearing spikes.

As some of the skills of a standing start are required for block starts it is necessary that standing starts are taught and practised by athletes prior to learning a crouch start.

STANDING START

Front leg is the power leg, back leg the speed leg. Power leg concentrates totally on power, achieving as much force forward as possible. Speed leg moves forward as fast as possible, with short first step (long stride becomes a long lever and slows down foot movement.) Make sure arms are correct, with “opposite arm” forward.

1. At “take your marks” athlete stands with power leg foot just behind line, back foot (speed leg foot) approx 30 to 40 cm behind front foot.
2. On “set”, lower body and bend knees slightly, with weight over front foot. Arms in sprint position. Rules stipulate that there is no moving at the “set” position – even wriggling the heel can result in a break.
3. At “go” step out with back foot (speed) and drive hard off the front foot. Front foot pushes (power leg) – back foot moves fast (speed leg). Arms are driven vigorously.

CROUCH START

The standing start leads naturally into the crouch start. The start described here is the “medium start”, the best option for teenagers.

Determining Feet Position.

1. Place forward knee (power leg knee) on start line.
2. Rear knee is placed approx level with toe or instep of front foot. This can vary depending on athlete but you don't want rear knee further back than opposite instep or further forward than toe of other foot
3. Blocks are set where feet are.

This should have the front foot approx 35 to 40 cm back from the line and 40 cm from front to back foot and body weight directly over the hands with arms vertical.

Taking Mark

1. Hands are placed just behind the line with weight supported on fingers – fingers and thumb form a V. Hands are shoulder width apart.
2. Body weight divided evenly between hands and back knee – feel balanced.
3. Head relaxed, loose, hanging (not looking up at track or finish line)

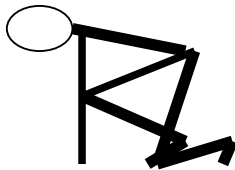


Set.

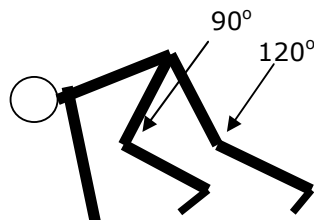
1. Raise hips slightly higher than the shoulders.
2. Shoulders slightly forward of the line.
3. Front knee is approx 90° angle, back knee around $110^\circ - 120^\circ$.
4. Head is looking down, not up.

Go

1. Drive hard with power leg with speed leg coming through – speed leg is first to move.
2. Arms driven hard.
3. Head is kept on natural plane or looking down slightly.
4. All movement must be forward, not up.



"On your marks" – rear knee level with point between front foot instep and toe. Weight over hands, arms vertical.



"Set". Hips higher than shoulders, front leg 90° , rear leg 120° – shoulders only slightly ahead of hands – head looking down, not at finish line.

Getting Ready

Make sure blocks are available and at the start line.

Ensure officials and timekeepers are ready and there is good communication, either by radios or flags, between finish line and start line officials. It can easily happen for a race to start before judges and timekeepers are ready.



Have athletes lined up in their respective heats well behind the start line and call them up when the previous race has been completed.

Officials

Timekeepers start watch on sight of flash from gun, not the sound. Watch is stopped when torso crosses line, not head, arms or legs. Timekeeper should be in line with the finish. If two watches are used, take the slower of the two, when there are three watches, the middle time is taken. Hand times are **rounded up** to the next tenth of a second. (e.g. 14.24 becomes 14.3)



Judges need to be at least 5m from, and in line with the finish with each watching a particular place e.g. third, second etc. Athletes need to stay in their lanes until judges/timekeepers have made their decisions and only then should athletes be told to report to the recorder.

Rules

- Hands or feet cannot touch or be over the start line or the touch or be outside the runner's lane.
- Runners must take their marks when told to by the starter and any delay could result in a false start.
- At "set" the runner must stay still until the gun goes – any movement may be called a false start.
- An athlete who distracts or disturbs other competitors by movement or sound can be given a false start.
- Two false starts (whoever causes the second false start irrespective of who was warned for the first) means disqualification.
- For events up to and including 400m the commands are "on your mark", "set", then gun. In laned events runners must stay in their lane or face disqualification – however if they stray out of the lane but gain no advantage or do not interfere with another runner they shall not be disqualified. For example going out of the lane on the straight or going outside the outer line on a bend is OK providing there is no interference.