

## Athletic Activities: Running Challenges - Sprinting

Athletic activities offers opportunities for pupils to develop fundamental movement skills. They should be taught to master basic movements including running, jumping and throwing, as well as developing their flexibility, strength, balance, agility and co-ordination.

Not all pupils enjoy formal, timed sprinting drills yet sprinting is one of the easier ‘running challenges’ to present to a large group. ‘Sprinting challenges’ have the potential to be enjoyable, active experiences with pupils gaining plenty of opportunities to ‘have a go’. Minimal equipment is required and the activities are easy to organize; with minimal waiting time, activity is maximised.

Teachers should try to avoid ‘technical overload’ as there is a danger that pupils will very quickly lose interest. There is also the danger that the public nature of performance makes some pupils awkward and embarrassed if they are asked to perform drills that require a level of coordination that exceeds their abilities. Most of the activities below are high activity, gross motor movements that require minimal skill to perform.

### Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Pupils will be able to perform the basic technique for effective and economical sprinting.

Pupils will be able to replicate the correct posture, arm action and leg action.

Pupils will be able to evaluate the performance of self and others and suggest ways techniques may be improved.

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Material/Equipment:** A stack of disc cones/markers, preferably in five different colours. Relay batons, stop watches and clipboards for recording.

**Environment/Space:** School field, athletics track.

**Additional Staff:** Learning support as appropriate

### Health and safety

- Do the pupils’ clothing and footwear help their learning and keep them safe?
- Is the space safe and clear enough to work in?
- Are the children aware of others when they are moving and working?
- Have all the children warmed up and cooled down properly?

### Description of Activities

The following activities represent a range of ‘Sprinting Challenges’ that teachers can call upon in designing their lessons. The number used will depend largely upon the amount of time available to the teacher and the ability of the pupils to sustain high levels of application.

**Warm Up: ‘Fartlek’ (Speed Play)**

- Fartlek running involves varying pace throughout a run, alternating between fast segments and slow jogs.
- Define the area to be used for the activity e.g. school field, tennis/netball courts, athletics track. Groups of 6 pupils, in a line, ‘follow the leader’ who dictates the direction, pace

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(walking, jogging, striding etc) and pattern of running style (forwards, backwards, sideways, long strides, short strides, skipping etc).

- After 30 secs the leader goes to the back of the line to allow the next pupil to lead the group.

### Sprinting Challenge 1: Orientation

- Groups of up to six students line up behind a different coloured marker/disc cone, opposite a marker/disc cone of the same colour placed up to 20/30 metres away.
- Space the teams far enough apart from each other to avoid interference. If a track is available, each group could occupy a lane.
- One from each group will run at a time. The pupils do not run until the previous runner either reaches defined half way mark or completes the run.
- When the pupils reach the other end, they stay there and line up again, facing back towards the point from where they have just run.

Repeat.

### Sprinting Challenge 2: Run with “Big Steps”

- Organisation as for Sprinting Challenge 1
- Ask the pupils to run to the other end as they take the biggest, “bounciest” steps (bounds) that they can.

Ask them to count the number of steps that it takes them to cover the distance.

- Can they do it in less than twenty strides?
- Can they improve their previous score during the return run?

### Sprinting Challenge 3. Run with Small Steps

- Organisation as for Sprinting Challenge 1
- The pupils run with fast little steps to the other end. (They do not have to count their steps!)
- Encourage light, quick steps.
- Watch for the pupils who drag or “rub” their feet along the ground. Ask them to “tap” their feet, not “rub” them along the ground.
- Watch for pupils who simply jog along. Instruct them to move forward at only one foot length at a time.

Encourage the pupils to “pump” their arms.

### Sprinting Challenge 4: Run with Arms Folded

- Organisation as for Sprinting Challenge 1
- To emphasize the importance of arms when running.
- The pupils run over the 20/30 metres with their arms folded across their chest.
- Ask those waiting in line to observe the effect that folding arms has on the runner (i.e. what does it look like?)
- Once each runner has attempted running with their arms folded, ask the group:
  - How did it feel?
  - Was it the best way to run?
  - What did it look like?
- Common answers are that it was hard and that they felt unbalanced.
- Some pupils notice that the runners’ shoulders were swinging or “wobbling” from side-to-side.
- Ask the pupils how they would fix this. The answer usually is to “use your arms”.
- Explain how good use of arms in sprinting will help them be balanced and “not wobble”.

### Sprinting Technique: Teaching Points

At this point it is appropriate to identify some of the key technical features:

- The head is kept level; vision to the front.
- The trunk and shoulders are held square to the front.

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- The head and trunk are held upright.
  - The feet and limbs are moved in a straight path.
- The arms are pivoted about the shoulder joint and remain bent at the elbow at approximately 90 degrees.
- Talk to them about lightly gripping an egg in each hand. Their hands should be more or less “closed” but not tight.
  - Tell them to pump their hands from “hip to lip”.
  - The knees and feet should be “picked up”.
  - Light, quick movements are used.
  - A generally coordinated, economical, rhythmical action is required.

### Sprinting Challenge 5: Arm Action Rehearsal

- Organisation as for Sprinting Challenge 1
- Standing in their lines and spaced far enough apart to avoid interference, the pupils rehearse a basic sprinting arm action at increasing speeds.
- Key teaching points:
  - The hands should be relaxed as if the pupils are holding an egg in each hand.
  - Allow the pupils to experiment with swinging their arms incorrectly by keeping them straight at the elbow, and also across their body (elbows out) to better understand the advantages of a correct action.
- Ask the pupils to rehearse a sound arm action as they run on the spot.

### Sprinting Challenge 6: Run with Arms “Pumping”

- Organisation as for Sprinting Challenge 1
- The pupils run over the twenty metre distance practicing the arm action learnt previously.
- Emphasize that the pupils “pump” their arms when running.

### Sprinting Challenge 7: “Through Shallow Water”

- Organisation as for Sprinting Challenge 1
- Ask the students if they have ever run through shallow water, and if so, what they did to stop themselves from falling in the water. Answers usually will be that they lift their knees or feet up.
- Explain to the pupils that you want them to imagine that there is shallow water covering the 20/30 metre area over which they are about to run. Instruct them to run “over the water”, picking up their feet.
- Be prepared for some interesting interpretations of the skill!
- Watch for pupils who lean back and/or lift their knees too high.
- Some pupils will forget about the arm action.

### Sprinting Challenge 8: Standing Starts

Firstly, teach the basic “On Your Marks” and “Set” positions for a standing sprint start

#### **“On your Marks”.**

- Stand with one foot forward and one foot back; it doesn’t matter which one. (Whichever is comfortable for the child).
- Make sure that the front foot is pointed forward. It should be behind and not touching the starting line.
- Ensure that the back foot is also pointed forward, with the heel raised off the ground.
- The toes of the back foot should be about one foot-length behind the heel of the front foot.
- The feet should be shoulder-width apart, rather than one directly behind the other.
- Look forward to the finish line.

- The arms can be relaxed in this stance. After the pupils have had the opportunity to learn the basics, allow them to try a full standing start and sprint over twenty metres. Use a whistle as the “go” signal.

### “Set”

- 1 Flex at the hips and knees, weight evenly distributed over both feet.
- 2 Look downwards towards the front foot.
- 3 Place the opposite arm and leg forward.

### “Go!”

- 1 Push off with both feet, springing away from the starting line.
- 2 Drive with a big, strong arm action.
- 3 Keep the eyes down so that all of the power is being directed through the top of the head.
- 4 Push, push, push!
- 5 Gradually rise up to the full sprinting position.

### Sprinting Challenge 9. Shuttle Relays

- Explain the format of a shuttle relay - the teams of 6 are divided in half with 3 participants at each end of the “track”. The relay simply progresses back and forth.
- All runners use a normal running action. The relay baton is held at the bottom end. “Pump your arms”.
- The incoming runner holds the baton vertically with an extended arm when nearing the receiver.
- The recipient receives the baton with their arms extended at chest level (not at face level!) and with hands held together in a “butterfly” position (thumbs in; palms facing outwards; fingers extended out).
- The incoming runner approaches slightly to the side of the outgoing runner to avoid interference collisions.
- Conduct one or more shuttle relays. If the teams have uneven number of runners I conduct a “One-minute relay” during which the teams run for one minute. The team that is ahead at the one-minute mark is declared the winner.

### Watch for pupils who:

- Hold the middle section of the baton.
- Run the whole way with the baton extended (common with very young pupils).
- Attempt to receive the baton with one hand, or with hands apart.
- As an incoming runner, run directly at the recipient, blocking their way.

### Sprinting Challenge 10: ‘Getting Close to Usain Bolt’.

- This activity is done in pairs.
- This activity is based on the idea that top class sprinters complete the 100 metres in under 10 secs.
- If one is available, this activity is most appropriately done on an athletics track. Alternatively, runs can be organised across football/hockey pitches.
- Pupils work in pairs with up to 2 pairs allocated per lane.
- Number 1 lines up to run while Number 2, acting as a spotter, is positioned at a point approx 40 metres from the start line.
- The teacher starts a ‘ten second’ run.
- Number 2 places a marker (disc cone) at the point reached by number 1 when the 10 secs are called by the teacher. The two pupils change roles.

- The markers provide some indication of the distance they can cover during the time it takes for Usain Bolt to complete the 100 metres.
- The activity can be repeated to see whether pupils can get any ‘closer to Usain’.

### Sprinting Challenge 11: How Far?

- Organise the pupils into groups of four (starter, timekeeper, recorder, runner).
- The starter calls “On Your Marks”, “Set” and then “Go!”
- The timekeeper records 5 seconds, calling “Stop” when time is up. The runner travels as far as they can in 5 seconds.
- The recorder marks the spot with a disc cone/marker.
- The pupils then swap/rotate roles.
- After all pupils have had their turn increase the duration to 10 seconds. Pupils have repeated goes to try to beat their own distance.
- Pupils can measure or estimate the distance they have run.