

# Relays

## What Is A Relay?

A **relay race** is a track and field event in which athletes run a pre-set distance carrying a baton before passing it onto the next runner. Often, a **relay team** is a team of four sprinters.

In athletics there are two standard relays: The 4 x 100m Relay & The 4 x 400m Relay

## How Does The Relay Work?

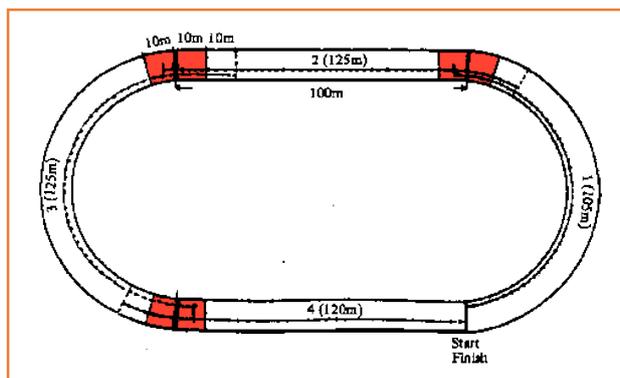
The relay consists of four people. A team with four decent sprinters can out-race a team with four better sprinters by beating the faster team in the exchange zones. The initial runner in the 4 x 100 relay begins the race in starting blocks. The next three runners receive the baton via exchanges. The exchange zones are 20 metres long and are preceded by a 10-meter acceleration zone. The receiver begins running in the acceleration zone but the baton can only be passed within the exchange zone. In the relay, runners do not switch hands when carrying the baton. Therefore, if the first runner holds the baton in the right hand, the second runner will receive the baton in the left hand, the third will receive and carry the baton in the right hand and the final runner will handle it in the left hand.

## The Acceleration Zone

Also known as the pre-changeover zone, it is the section of the track leading up to the changeover zone which allows the athlete who is going to receive the baton to start and pick up speed. NOTE: The baton **cannot** be exchanged in the acceleration zone but the outgoing runner can wait within the 10m acceleration zone.

## The Changeover Zone

This is the area in which the changeover of the baton to the next athlete takes place. It is 20m long and the baton **must** be exchanged in this zone. A mark is



usually put down on the track by the runner to let the outgoing runner know when to start, this mark is found through training before the event, usually 15 - 20 foot before the outgoing runner is.

## How The Baton Can Be Transferred

### 1. The UpSweep Technique

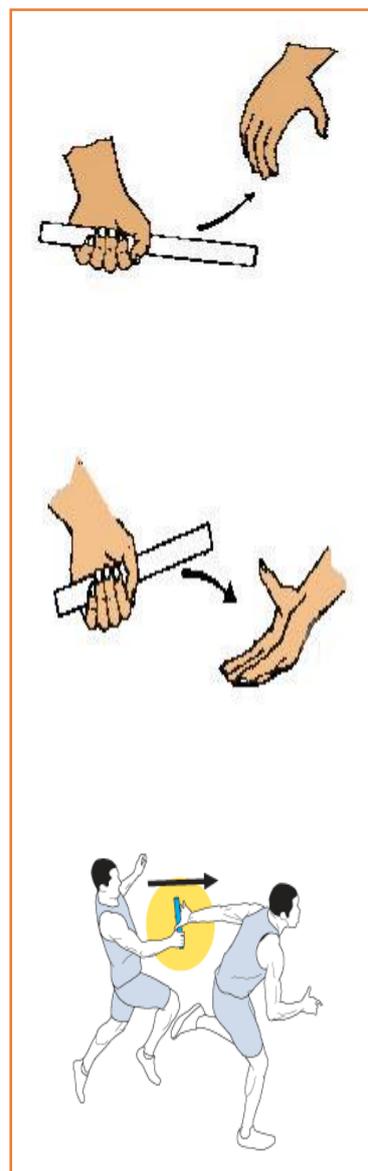
The receiving hand is extended behind them at hip height with the palm facing down and a wide angle between the thumb and the rest of the fingers. The incoming athlete passes the baton in an upward movement into the receiving hand. The advantage of this method is that this is a normal position for the receiving hand. A disadvantage is that it may require some manipulation of the baton in the hand to make the next exchange safely.

### 2. The DownSweep Technique

The receiving hand is extended behind them at hip height with the palm facing up and a wide angle between the thumb and the rest of the fingers. The incoming athlete passes the baton in a downward movement into the receiving hand. The advantage of this method is that it will require no manipulation of the baton to safely make the next baton exchange. A disadvantage is that it is not a natural position of the outgoing athlete's hand to receive the baton.

### 3. The Push-Pass Technique

The outgoing runner's arm is extended out behind them parallel to the ground and the hand is open with the thumb pointing down. The incoming runner holds the baton vertically and pushes it straight into the open hand.



## A Good Selection Of Team Members

**First Leg** - Priority goes to an athlete who has a good start, can run the bend and pass the baton well. **Second Leg** - The choice goes to an athlete who is confident in receiving and passing the baton, runs well in the straight and possesses sufficient speed endurance. **Third Leg** - The selection goes to the sprinter who is confident and reliable in receiving and passing the baton, can run the bend well and possess sufficient speed endurance. **Fourth Leg** - Here we normally select a runner who receives the baton well, is efficient in running the straight and has a high degree of competitive spirit

## Rules Of A Relay

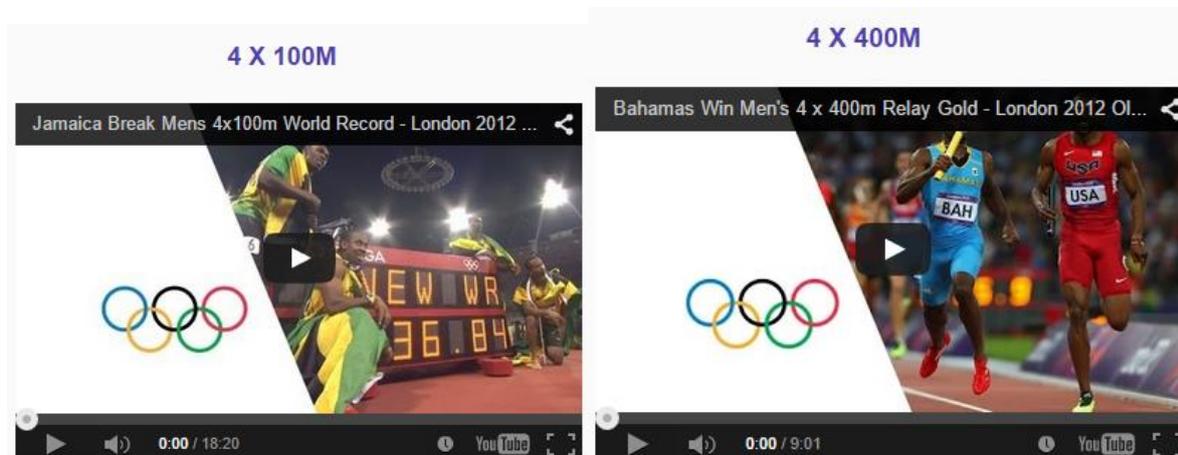
A team may be disqualified from a relay for

- Losing the baton (dropping the baton)
- Making an improper baton pass
- False Starting (usually once but sometimes twice)
- Improperly overtaking another competitor
- Preventing another competitor from passing
- Wilfully impeding, improperly crossing the course, or in any other way interfering with another competitor.

## Tips In Relation To A Relay

- The most common baton transfer technique is the downsweep technique.
- Practice is key when preparing for a relay Practice Make Perfect.
- Make sure all athletes know the rules of the relay.
- Don't forget you are allowed to mark on a track a point so the athlete about to run knows when to, based on where the incoming runner and the mark is.

## Videos



## More Resources

Relay World & Olympic Records - [Click Here](#)

International Association Athletics Federations - 4 x 100m Relay - [Click Here!](#)  
4 x 400m Relay - [Click Here!](#)

Wikipedia Relay - [Click Here!](#)

Brian Mac Website - [Click Here!](#)

Athletics Ireland - Relays - [Click Here!](#)