

# Starting Race Walk Events

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Key points: The start process for a race walk is exactly the same as any other track race longer than 400 meters. Race Walk technique rules do not apply to body positions on the start line so a walker's start position can be slightly crouched and forward leaning, similar to runners.

Being qualified to start running events means you already have all the knowledge required to start a race walk. Both are started generally by the firing of a gun, although a cannon or air horn are also allowed. In road races which include a large number of race walkers, five-minute, three-minute and one-minute warnings before the start of the race should be given.

In both track and road races, the command "On your marks" is given. The athletes assemble on the start line in the manner determined. For example, this can be in ascending hip number order from the inside lane or in rows by seed time. Rule 162.8 states that "all starts shall be made from a standing position" and does not dictate any specific position for a race walker's legs, such as the straightness of their knee, prior to the start. To optimize their propulsion, most walkers start from a forward leaning position with both knees bent (modern push-start technique). The starter ensures that athletes have assumed a standing position and that no walker has their foot (or any part of their body) touching the start line or the ground in front of it. They then start the race.

The rules of race walking require "a progression of steps" in compliance with the technical definition in the rules. A progression starts at the first foot strike beyond the start line. Judging decisions are based on the technique observed at and after the first foot strike. Therefore, race walk judges have no role in deciding the fairness of the start, just as the starters have no role in adjudicating the fairness of the athletes' race walk technique.

The USATF online coaching education campus includes an 8 hour course on coaching the race walk events. You can enroll in this course and others using your USATF Connect account. There is a fee to take the course. Based on this course, a short video on optimal starting for race walkers is available for free on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/t109FPeNfWk>

