



# TRACK AND FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM

## SESSION 8 // RELAYS // THE RELAY START, BATON EXCHANGE & TECHNIQUE

### GUIDELINES FOR RELAYS

In relays, individual runners come together as a team. Use this event as an opportunity to discuss teamwork and good sportsmanship. Official relays are run on the track and consist of four legs, each run by a different runner. During practice sessions you can add more legs and do different drills as

noted below. The goal of a relay team is to move the baton around the track as quickly as possible. Athletes must move at a fast pace whenever they have the baton.

### SESSION COMPONENTS

### ACTIVITY

#### WARM-UP

**Relays** (5-10 minutes)

You will need cones and a stopwatch. Divide the group into even teams two meters apart from each other on a line. Each group stands opposite a cone 10 to 50 yards away (depending on the level of the group). Relay legs can include sprints, side steps, high knees, butt kicks, two-legged jumping, and hopping. Team members should tag each other on the hand at the changeover. This can serve as dynamic stretching at the same time.

**Developing Fitness**  
(5-10 minutes)

Lead athletes in fitness exercises. *Please see the Supplementary Session on Aerobic Capacity.*

#### SKILL DEVELOPMENT

##### SKILL:

**The Relay Start** (5-7 minutes)

*Athletes should practice each leg in a relay race.*

#### STARTING WITH THE BATON

You will need cones and relay batons. For younger groups, the starting runner can use the standing start with the baton grasped in all fingers of one hand. An older student can use the crouched start, gripping the baton with the middle, ring, and pinkie fingers and placing the thumb and forefinger behind the starting line. Depending on their level, athletes should practice both starts.

##### SKILL COMPONENTS:

**Baton Exchange**  
(15-20 minutes)

#### BATON EXCHANGE

##### The Exchange Zone

The baton must be passed in a 20-meter exchange zone. Either runner may be outside the zone during the exchange, but the baton must be inside the zone.

##### Holding the Baton

The baton should be held at the bottom end for the easiest exchange.

##### Timing

Two subsequent legs' runners match their speeds during the exchange. This requires the outgoing runners to start running when the incoming runner is five to six meters away.

## SESSION COMPONENTS

## ACTIVITY

### BATON EXCHANGE TECHNIQUE

Except for the first leg, relay runners use a modified start. There are two types of baton exchanges: the Visual Exchange and the Blind Exchange (see Session 14 for the Blind Exchange). For the 4x100m relay, a Blind Exchange is generally used, but it is good to develop your students in this area by progressing from a Visual Exchange to a Blind Exchange.

#### Visual Exchange

The most effective starting position for the Visual Exchange is the crouch start. The outgoing runner's body should face forward with the left hand extended behind her—she can turn her head to look over her left shoulder (she will then see the baton go into her hand). It is the responsibility of the incoming runner to place the baton in the outgoing runner's left hand (she can then switch it to her right hand while running). Remind students to always receive with the left hand and pass with the right. The incoming runner must keep running at full speed until the outgoing runner has secured the baton.

Have athletes practice in pairs for five to 10 minutes for 50 to 100 meters and then in teams of four for five to 10 minutes.

### WRAP-UP GAME

(5–7 minutes)

#### Olympic Relay

You will need cones and a stopwatch. Divide runners into teams and have each team choose a country to represent. Make each station a different strength-training exercise (jumping jacks, push-ups, sit-ups, etc.). Runners go from one station to the next doing a set of repetitions at each station. You can have each runner do the entire course, or assign them “legs.” For a more difficult relay, add more stations or require more repetitions at each station. *Please refer to the Supplementary Sessions for more station options.*

### COOL DOWN

**Light Jog** (2–5 minutes)

Lead the group on a light jog.

**Static Stretching** (3–5 minutes)

Have students form a circle around you and lead them in static stretches. *Please see the Supplementary Session on Stretching.*