

Track and field

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Track and field (or athletics in British English) is a sport that includes athletic contests based on running, jumping, and throwing skills. The name used in North America is derived from where the sport takes place, a running track and a grass field for the throwing and some of the jumping events. Track and field is categorized under the umbrella sport of athletics, which also includes road running, cross country running and race walking. Though the sense of "athletics" as a broader sport is not used in American English, outside of the United States the term athletics can either be used to mean just its track and field component or the entirety of the sport (adding road racing and cross country) based on context. The foot racing events, which include sprints, middle- and long-distance events, race walking, and hurdling, are won by the athlete who completes it in the least time. The jumping and throwing events are won by those who achieve the greatest distance or height. Regular jumping events include long jump, triple jump, high jump, and pole vault, while the most common throwing events are shot put, javelin, discus, and hammer. There are also "combined events" or "multi events", such as the pentathlon consisting of five events, heptathlon consisting of seven events, and decathlon consisting of ten events. In these, athletes participate in a combination of track and field events. Most track and field events are individual sports with a single victor; the most prominent team events are relay races, which typically feature teams of four. Events are almost exclusively divided by gender, although both the men's and women's competitions are usually held at the same venue. One exception are mixed relays, in which two men and two women make up the four-person team. If a race has too many people to run all at once, preliminary heats will be run to narrow down the field of participants. Track and field is one of the oldest sports. In ancient times, it was an event held in conjunction with festivals and sports meets such as the Ancient Olympic Games in Greece. In modern times, the two most prestigious international track and field competitions are the athletics competition at the Olympic Games and the World Athletics Championships. World Athletics, formerly known as the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), is the international governing body for the sport of athletics.

Records are kept of the best performances in specific events, at world, continental, and national levels. However, if athletes are deemed to have violated the event's rules or regulations, they are disqualified from the competition and their marks are erased.