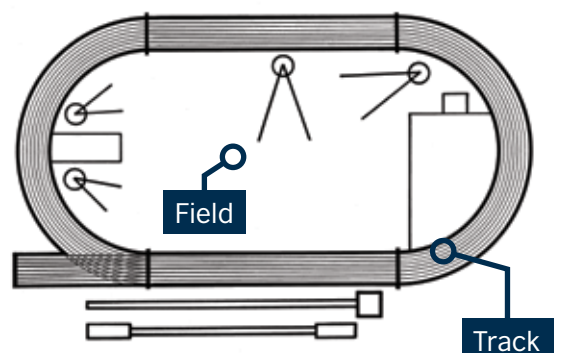
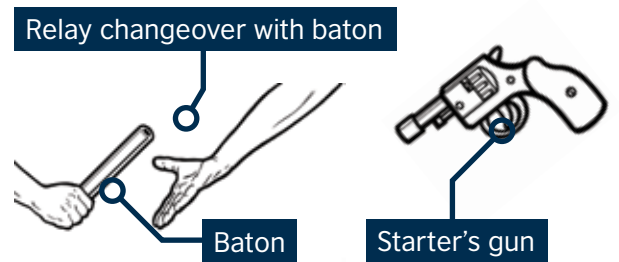
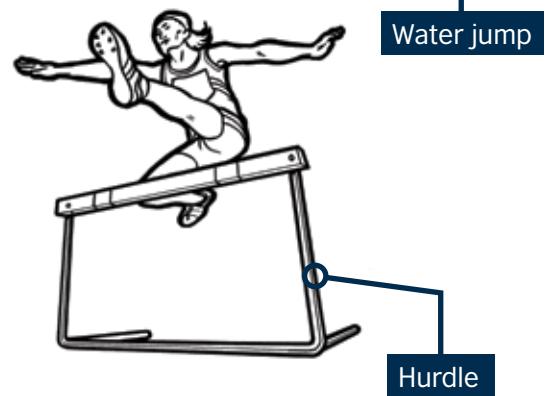
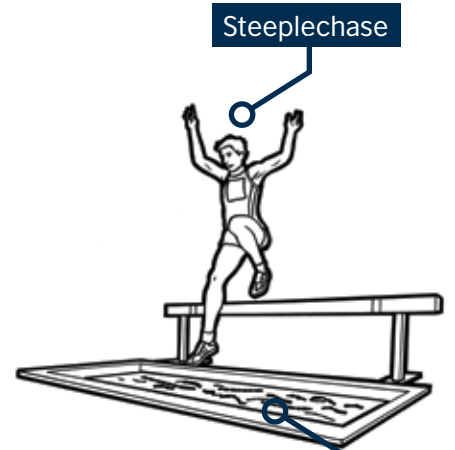
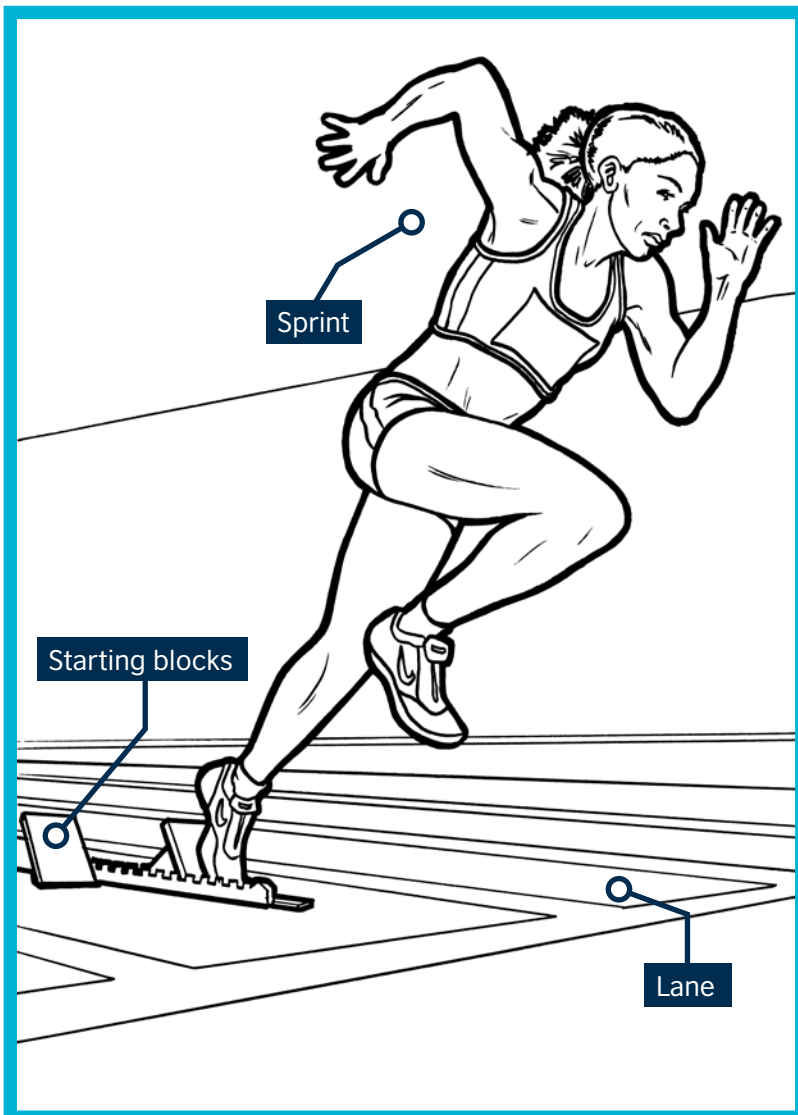


Athletics (track)

When athletes come together from around the world to compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, they are fulfilling their dreams and competing at the highest level. Billions of people across the globe join in; watching, listening to and reading about the greatest global celebration of sport. To celebrate the London 2012 Games, the British Council is making a wide range of classroom resources available for learners of English worldwide.

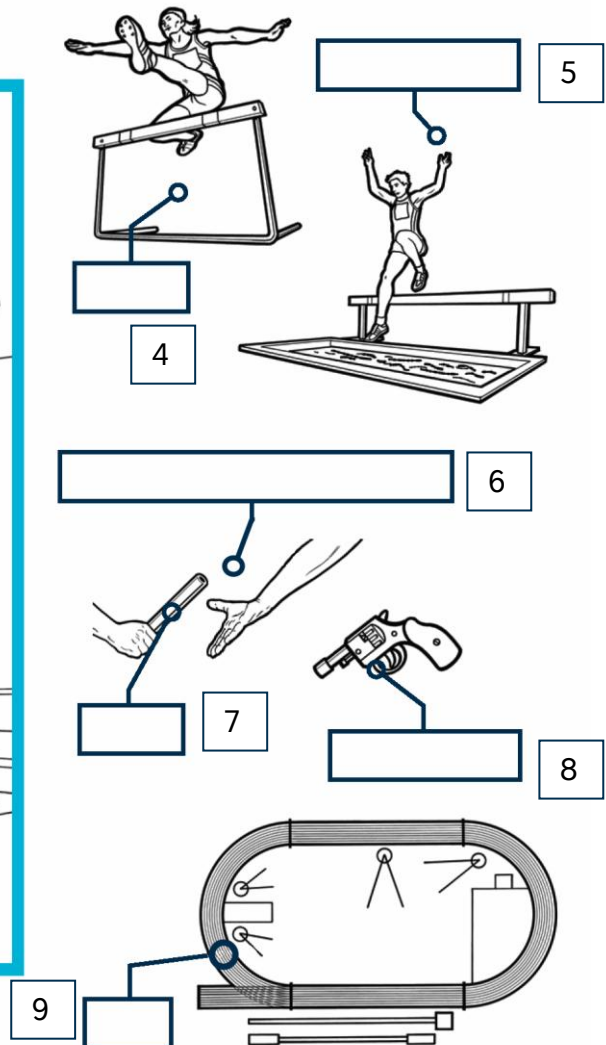
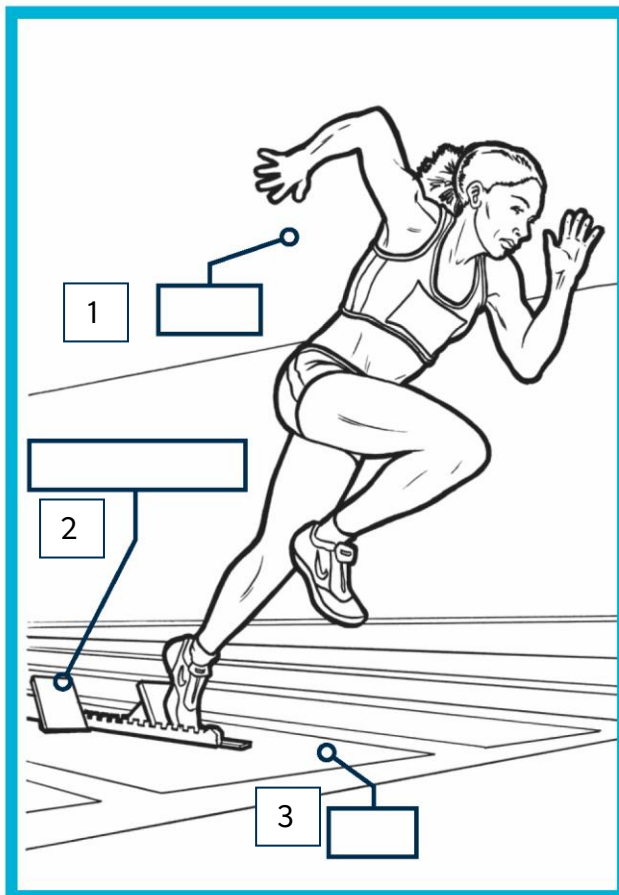
Athletics is the biggest sport at the Olympic Games. More than 2000 athletes take part in the athletics programme. They compete at distances ranging from the 100 metres sprint to the 50 kilometres road walk. Have you ever taken part in a race, or even just run for fun? Learn more about the track and road events that feature at the Olympics.



1. Vocabulary

a. Write the correct words in the spaces provided.

a. hurdle	b. starter's gun	c. sprint
d. baton	e. lane	f. steeplechase
g. starting blocks	h. track	i. relay changeover with baton



2. The rules of athletics – track events

The rules of athletics track events are simple: the athlete who crosses the line first is the winner. In addition, there are rules for starting, running and finishing.

Starting

- In the longer races (1,500 metres to 10,000 metres) the athletes do not begin running in lanes and the start line is curved. This means that all athletes begin the same distance from the finish.
- When an athlete is getting ready to run in an event like the 100 or 200 metres sprint, they bend down and touch the track with their hands in the 'set position'.
- After taking the set position, the athlete must wait for the starter's gun to be fired. If the athlete starts before the gun, it is a false start and the athlete will be disqualified.

Running the race

- In all races run in lanes, each athlete must keep inside his lane at all times, or be disqualified.
- An athlete who obstructs another athlete in a way that affects his progress is disqualified.

The finish

- An athlete finishes the race when any part of his torso reaches the finish line. 'Torso' means chest or stomach but not head, neck, arms, legs, hands or feet.

a. Match the words in the table with their definitions below.

a. baton	b. false start	c. hurdle	d. lane	e. set position
f. sprint	g. starter's gun	h. starting blocks	i. steeplechase	j. track

1. A frame for jumping over in a race.
2. A long race in which athletes have to jump over obstacles on a track.
3. A short and very fast race.
4. A special strip of sports track that is used to keep athletes separate during a race.
5. A stick that is passed from one runner to another in a relay race.
6. The instrument that is used to signal the start of a race.
7. The instrument on which a runner places his feet at the start of a race.
8. The position of a runner, close to the ground and leaning forward, in the moment while he waits for the starter's gun.
9. The ring-shaped area which has been specially designed and built for athletics races.
10. When one competitor in a race starts too early, before the official signal to begin.

3. Questions & Answers

Why do you think the running races at the Olympics are so popular?

Maybe because it's so natural – everyone does it.

I don't! Or at least, not if I can help it!

Well, most of us do. People have been running in races for a long time. At the ancient Olympic Games the *stadion* race, where the athletes ran from one end of the stadium to the other, was one of the most important events.

I see. What about at the modern Olympics – there are lots of different races, aren't there?

That's right. There are 12 races for both men and women, from 100 metres to 10,000 metres.

Why so many?

Well, there are sprints, middle- and long-distance races, hurdles and steeplechase, and relays.

Can you explain all those names?

The sprints are the short races. Middle-distance means the 800 and 1,500 metres, and long-distance is the 5,000 and 10,000 metre races. In the hurdles and steeplechase they jump over obstacles. The relays are team events where they have to pass a stick, or baton, from one person to the next.

OK. Can you tell me about some famous runners at the Olympics?

How about Paavo Nurmi, the "Flying Finn"? He won nine gold medals from 1920 to 1928. Or Emil Zatopek, the "Czech Locomotive"? He won the 5,000 and 10,000 metre races in 1952 and then the Marathon as well!

So if you're really good you get given a nickname, right?

It seems so! And speaking of which, did you hear about the great Ethiopian runner Kenenisa Bekele - the current 5,000 and 10,000 metre champion? He's known as the "Ethiopian Lion" and he was once chased by a lion while he was training!

Really? I think even I'd run in that situation!

a. Decide if the following statements are true or false according to the text.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. The first speaker likes running. | a. True |
| | b. False |
| 2. The <i>stadion</i> was a long-distance race. | a. True |
| | b. False |
| 3. The 400 metres race is a sprint. | a. True |
| | b. False |
| 4. The speaker says there are five different types of track events. | a. True |
| | b. False |
| 5. Paavo Nurmi, Emil Zatopek and Kenenisa Bekele were all middle-distance runners. | a. True |
| | b. False |
| 6. All long-distance runners are given nicknames. | a. True |
| | b. False |

b. Complete the sentences using one of the prepositions in the table

at	By	for	From
in	over	to	

- There are many different running races (.....1.....) the Olympics.
- People have been running in races (.....2.....) a long time.
- In the *stadion* race, the athletes ran (.....3.....) one end of the stadium (.....4.....) the other.
- There are 12 races (.....5.....) both men and women.
- (.....6.....) the hurdles and steeplechase they jump (.....7.....) obstacles.
- He was once chased (.....8.....) a lion.

Answers

Exercise 1a

1. c; 2. g; 3. e; 4. a; 5. f; 6. i 7. d; 8. b; 9. h

Exercise 2a

1. c; 2. i; 3. f; 4. d; 5. a; 6. g; 7. h; 8. e; 9. j; 10. b

Exercise 3a

1. False; 2. False; 3. True ; 4. True; 5. False; 6. False

Exercise 3b

1. at; 2. for; 3. from; 4. to; 5. for; 6. In; 7. over; 8. by